

Agenda Item	
Report No	RES/36/19

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Corporate Resources Committee

Date: 28 August 2019

Report Title: **Corporate Resources Service - Quarterly Performance Report**

Report By: Interim Chief Officer Resources (Care & Learning)

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides performance information against the Accounts Commission's Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) together with key performance measures as at 30 June 2019.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. consider these statutory and key performance indicators.

3. Implications

Resource – the resource implications are detailed within the report.

Legal – there are no legal implications arising from this report.

Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – the prompt processing of benefit claims and the proactive support to customers from Welfare Support will help to mitigate some of the poverty challenges.

Climate Change/Carbon Clever – there are no climate change / carbon clever implications arising from this report.

Risk – there are no risk implications arising from this report.

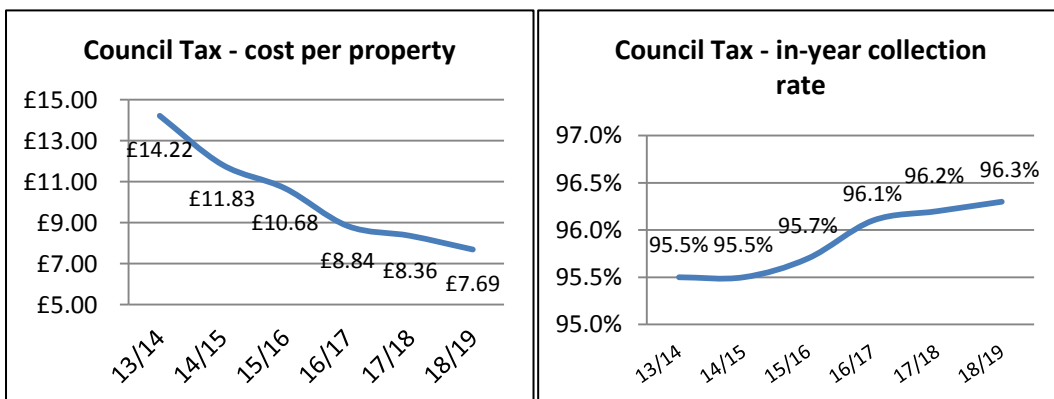
Gaelic – there are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

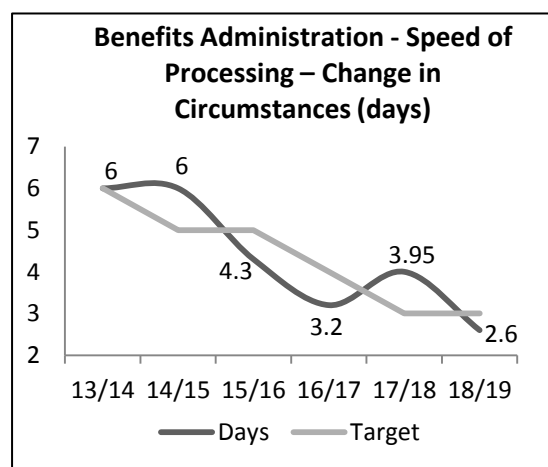
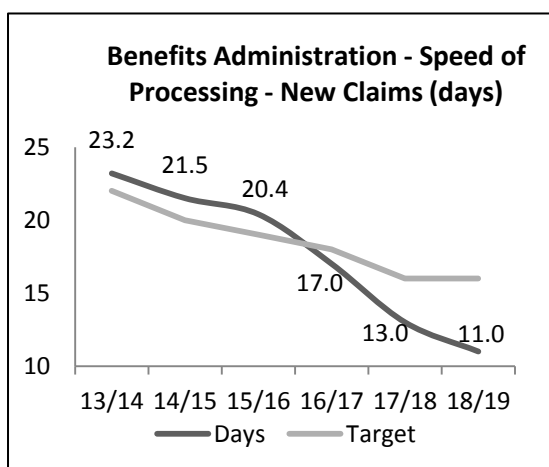
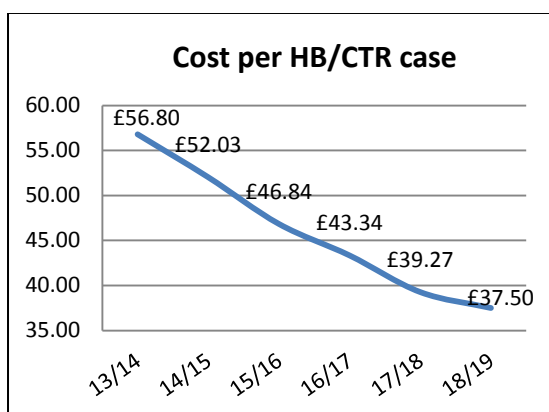
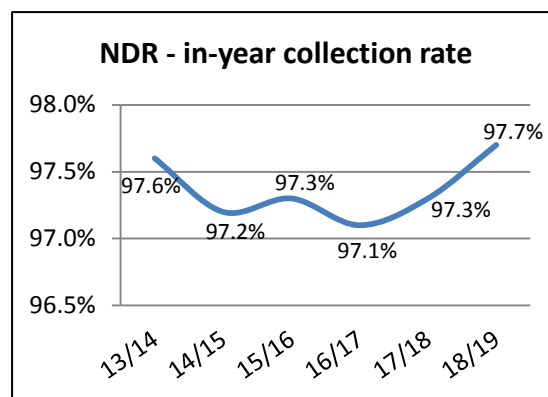
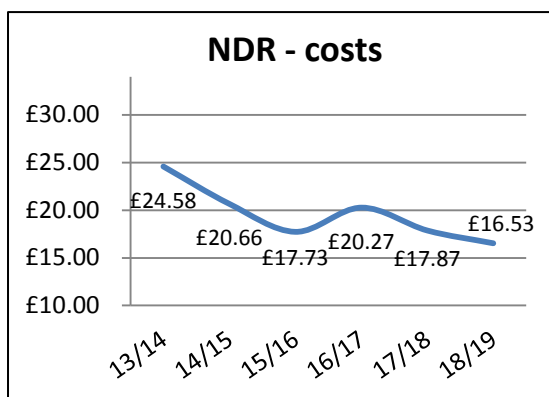
4. Background

- 4.1 This report includes performance against the Accounts Commission's Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) together with key performance measures.
- 4.2 Current year figures are compared with those from the corresponding period in the previous financial year where these are available. In addition, figures from previous years are included where appropriate so that trends may be identified.
- 4.3 Where definitions have changed, direct comparisons can only be made within the time period to which that definition has applied.
- 4.4 Reports will continue to be brought to Committee on these performance indicators on a quarterly basis so that trends can be monitored.
- 4.5 A list of the current SPIs for the Corporate Resources Service is attached as **Appendix 1**.

5. Cost of collecting Council Tax, Non Domestic Rates and administering Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction to 18/19

- 5.1 The Service has a strong commitment to continuous improvement and delivering efficiencies that very much support the Council at a time of significant financial challenge. Importantly, whilst costs are materially reducing many results are seeing significant improvements. This information, including cost information for 18/19, provides Members with some helpful context in considering current performance for 19/20.
- 5.2 The graphs below detail costs (inputs) and results (outputs) of performance since 2013/14 and all generally reporting continuous improvement.





5.3 The table below provides further information on costs which perhaps reinforce the **scale** of cost reduction whilst delivering improved results.

Year/ Cost	Council Tax £m	NDR £m	HB/CTR £m	Total £m	Movement £m
2013/14	1.63	0.43	3.09	5.16	
2014/15	1.36	0.36	2.76	4.49	-0.67
2015/16	1.24	0.31	2.40	3.95	-0.54
2016/17	1.03	0.36	2.12	3.52	-0.43
2017/18	0.98	0.35	1.80	3.14	-0.38
2018/19	0.91	0.32	1.62	2.87	-0.27

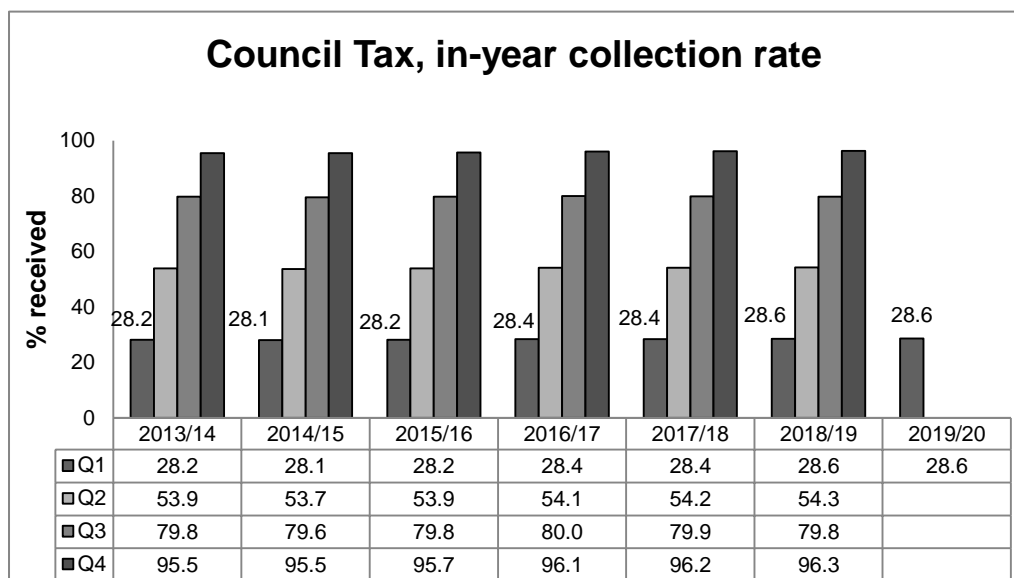
5.4 The overall cost of these service areas has reduced by **£2.29m (44%)** since 13/14. This is a significant achievement especially when many results such as increased Council Tax collections and quicker HB/CTR processing times are

reporting improvements. Combined, these service areas also report a year-on-year reduction in costs as detailed in the “movement” column. Unsurprisingly this rate of cost reduction delivered is reducing but, whilst challenging, there is a strong commitment by all involved to continue to deliver further efficiencies wherever possible.

5.5 The Highland Council’s Revenues and Benefits team has recently been long listed by CoSLA for the 2018/19 Service Innovation and Improvement category. Having been successful in the UK’s Institute of Revenues Rating & Valuation (IRRV) awards in the autumn, winning Best In Scotland and then winning *Benefits & Welfare Reform Team of Year*, the team is proud to have this continued recognition of their work to make a positive difference in delivering for the people of the Highlands.

6.1 Council Tax In-Year Collection Rate

6.1.1

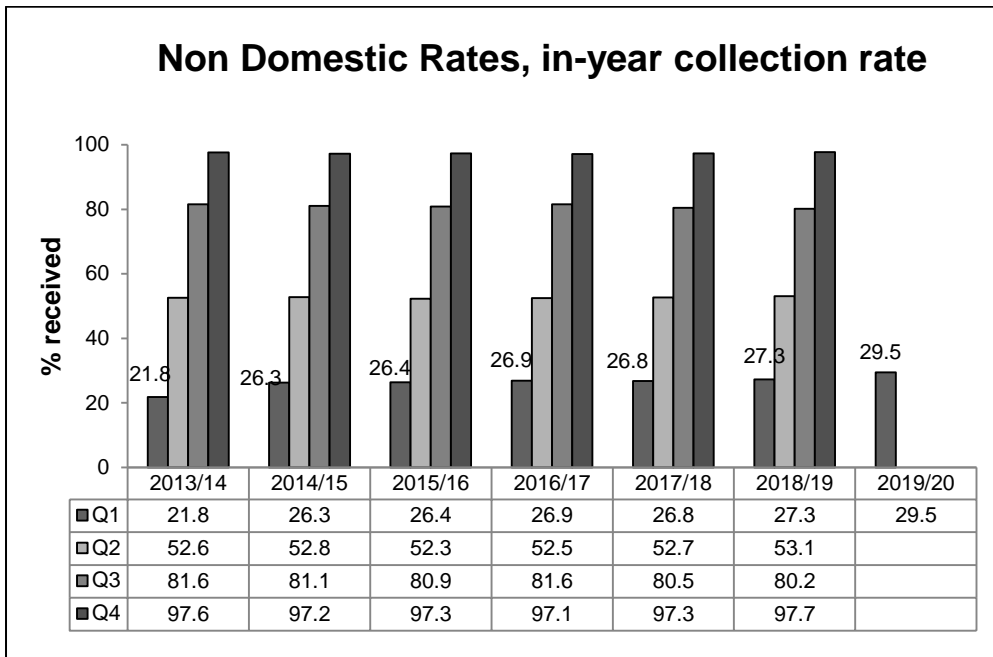


6.1.2 Council Tax in-year collection rate is 28.6%, the same Q1 figure as 2018/19. The improvements are mainly attributable to ongoing improvement in business processes and resource management. There has been an increase of 1% in payers paying over 12 months rather than 10 months, compared to this time last year which can affect payment profiling.

6.1.3 Direct debits now make up 74.1% of bill payment representing 79.7% of receipts. These report an improvement on the prior year position of 73.3% and 79%, respectively. Increase Direct Debit take-up supports collections performance. For example, Direct Debit take-up was 64.7% in 13/14.

6.2 Non Domestic Rates in-Year Collection Rate

6.2.1

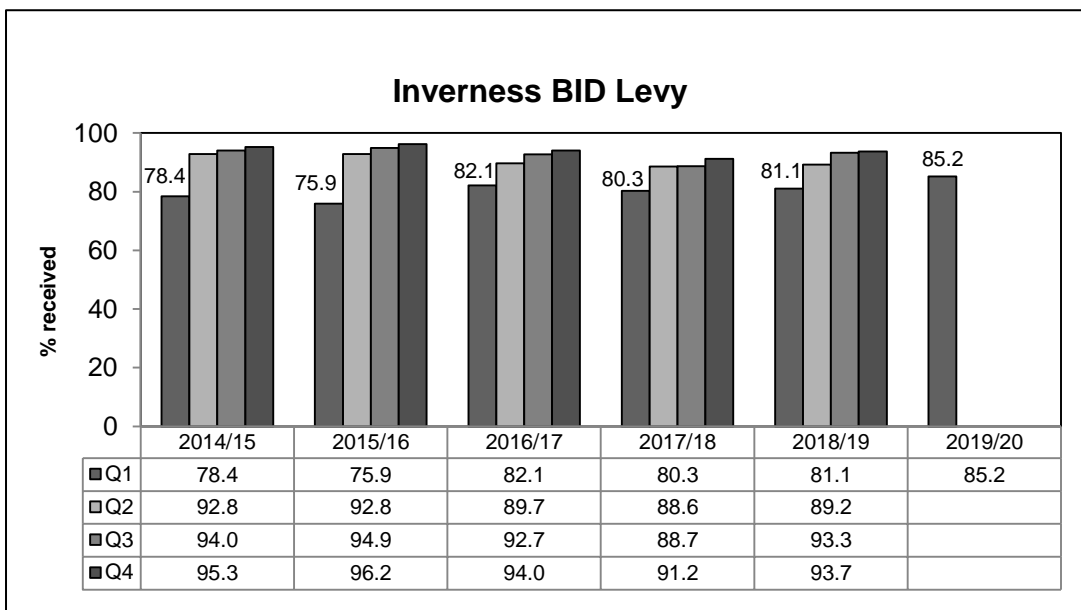


6.2.2 The NDR in-year collection rate for Q1 2019/20 is 29.5% compared to 27.3% prior year, and is the higher rate on the figures shown for Q1.

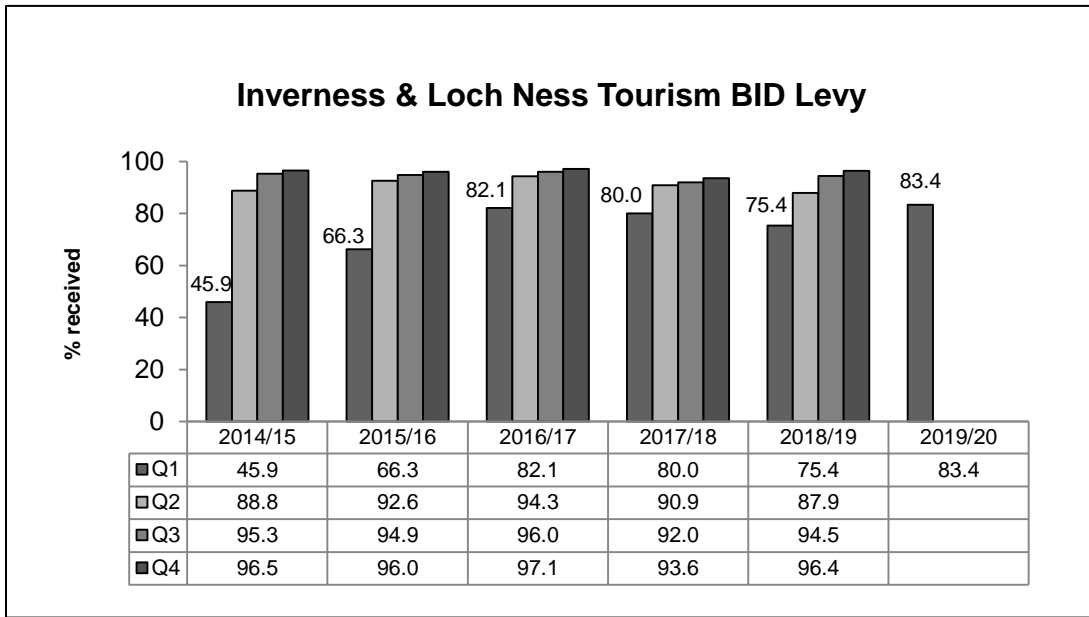
6.2.3 The Council continues to use all relevant measures available under the Rating regime to assist local businesses including encouraging payment by monthly instalments and directing businesses to available rate relief schemes such as the Small Business Bonus Scheme and Transitional Relief. Claims can be made on-line on the Council's web-site (or via paper if businesses so require).

6.3 Business Improvement District (BID) Levies

6.3.1



6.3.2



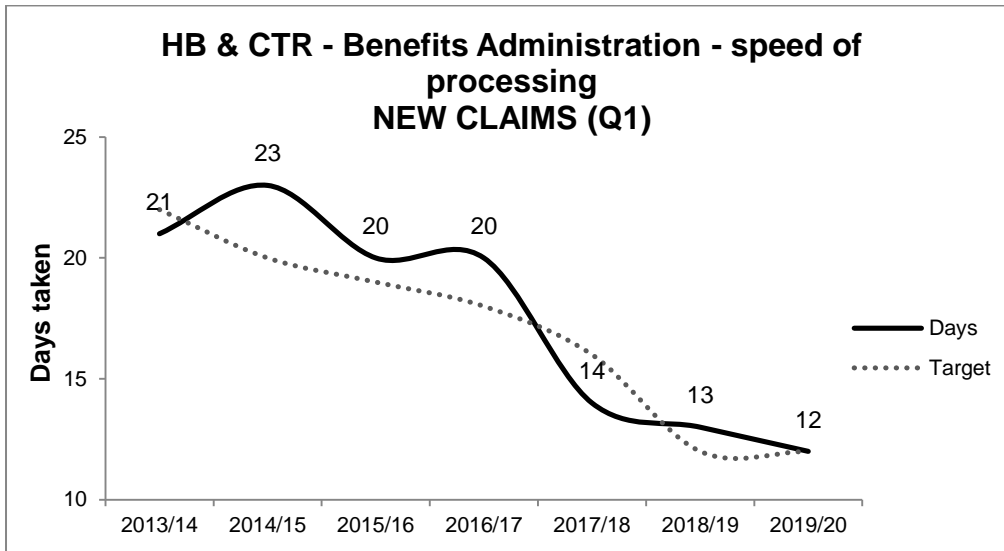
6.3.3 In Q1, the collection rate for the Inverness BID levy was 85.2% compared to 81.1% prior year. This indicates a continued improvement on the prior year and Corporate Resources Service staff continue to work with the BID management team to ensure payment rates are maximised.

6.3.4 In Q1, the collection rate for the Inverness & Loch Ness Tourism BID levy was 83.4% compared to 75.4% prior year. Corporate Resources Service staff continue to work with the BID management team to ensure payment rates are maximised.

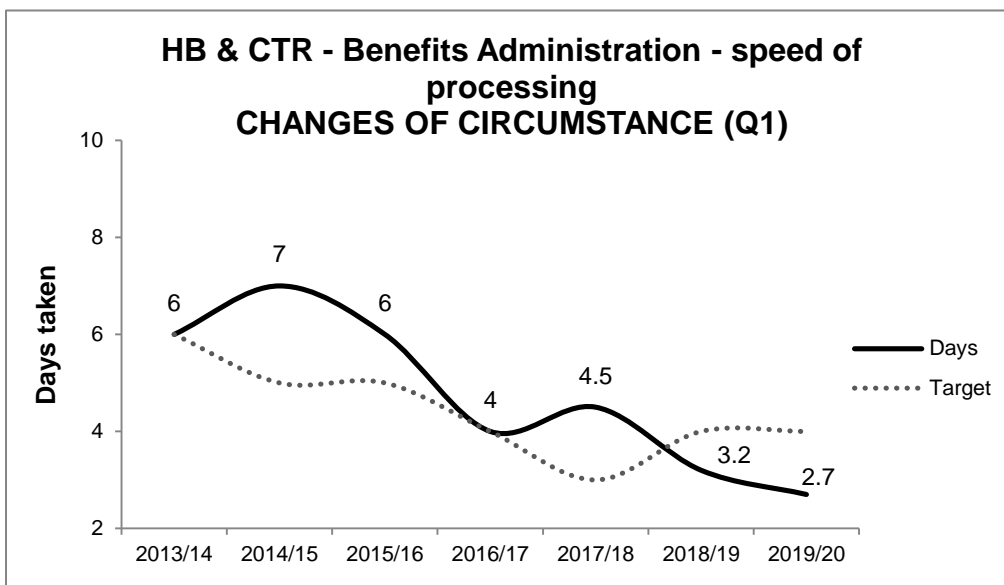
6.3.5 Bills were also issued in October 2018 for the recently established Nairn Business Improvement District – **Nairn Connects**. As at June 30th, the collection rate for this BID levy was 86.3%. As with the 2 other BIDS, the Council recovers in full collection & administration costs.

6.4 Housing Benefit & Council Tax Reduction Benefits Administration - Speed of processing (days)

6.4.1



6.4.2



6.4.3 These indicators reflect the Council's ability to process work as quickly as possible to ensure applicants receive their entitlement on time and at the correct rate.

6.4.4 Prompt processing times for New Claims and Change in Circumstances assists customers in being advised of the outcome of a new claim/ change in their circumstances as quickly as possible. This also helps collection levels and supports the Housing Benefit budget and maximises Department for Work and Pensions subsidy.

6.4.5 In Quarter 1, the average processing speed for new claims was 12 days and 2.7 days for changes of circumstance.

6.4.6 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have recently reported Housing Benefit processing performance for 2018/19. We are pleased to report Highland is ranked 1st for New Claims in Scotland and ranked 1st for Change in Circumstances.

6.4.7 Highland Council continues to see continuous improvements in processing – at the same time material reduction in costs as detailed at 4.3.

6.5 Welfare Support

6.5.1 Financial benefit to the customer from advice given (£000) (backdated and annualised)							
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2018/19 Q1
1 Apr–31 March	1,635	3,975	4,015	4,651	6,024	6,188	1,333

6.5.2 Welfare Support (formerly Income Maximisation) continues to support customers and maximising benefits awards. For Q1 2019/20, 773 customers have received additional financial gain totalling £1.333m. Of this, £448k relates to back-dated awards and £885k to the annualised weekly gain (i.e. the weekly gain multiplied by 52 weeks).

6.6 TalentLink (Recruitment)

6.6.1 The Council uses CoSLA's on-line recruitment system called *TalentLink*. The system enables applicants to apply for positions online, and allow Council Managers to complete the recruitment process electronically.

6.6.2 TalentLink	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20 Q1
Number of posts advertised	2,199	2,403	1,914	1,947	1,258	218
Percentage of posts advertised on time	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number (& percentage) of electronic applications	17,301 95.8%	15,217 95.9%	14,427 95.3%	17,206 97.5%	11,044 97.2%	1,300 93.3%
Percentage of paper applications processed within 2 working days	100%	100%	99.3%	100%	99.7%	100%

6.6.3 There were 1,300 applications received during Quarter 1; 1,213 (93.3%) were received in electronic format.

6.6.4 Receiving applications electronically provides numerous benefits including significant reductions in paper (and photocopying), increased information security and reduced filing space. Additionally managers are able to access applications in real time, reducing delays and supporting a consistent and auditable approach to the recruitment process. In terms of paper reductions, the annual equivalent exceeds 250,000 pages with a consumables saving of approximately £5k per annum.

6.7 Single Grant Applications (SGAs)

6.7.1 Business Support provides support to a number of Council staff such as Ward Managers in the administrative process of SGAs. The role is primarily logging SGAs (onto SharePoint), issuing an acknowledgment to customers and distribution of the SGAs to relevant staff.

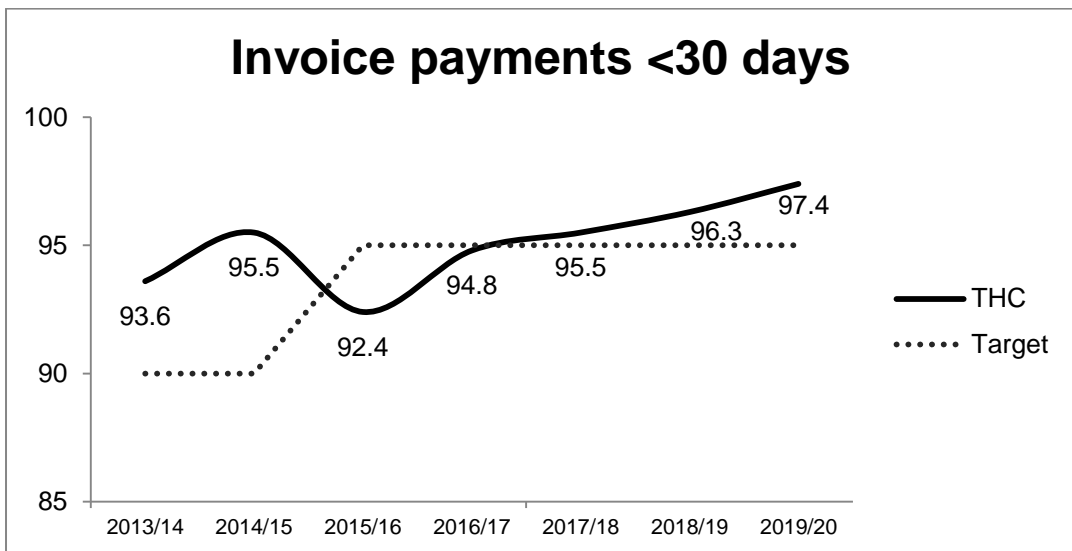
6.7.2 143 Single grant applications were received in Q1, 100% of these processed within 5 days. This totals the year to date figure.

6.7.3

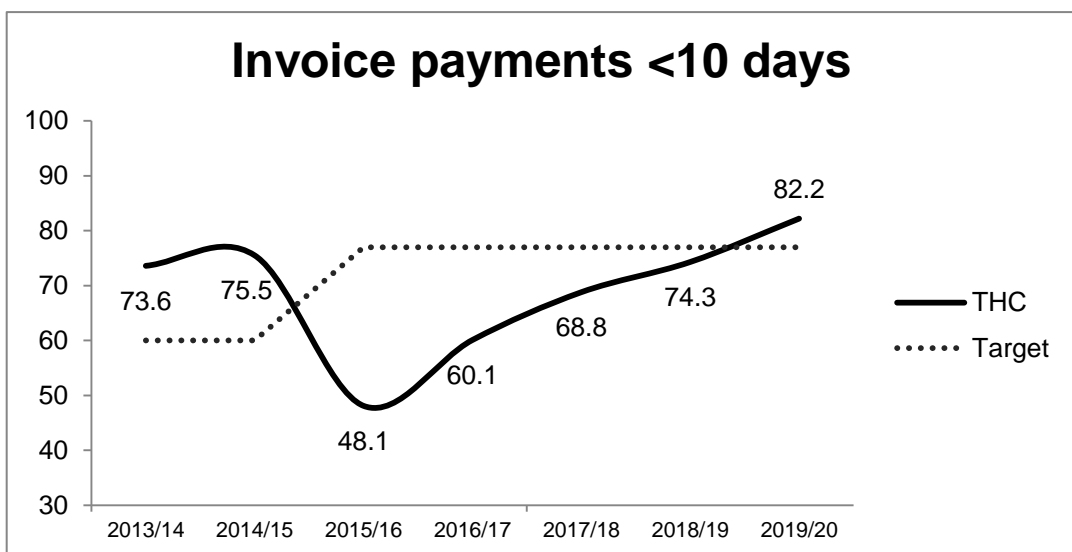
Single Grant Applications	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Percentage logged, acknowledged & distributed within 5 days	97.7%	97.9%	98.3%	99.2%	96.8%	100%

6.8 Payment of Invoices

6.8.1



6.8.2



6.8.3 These indicators measure the efficiency of the Council in paying invoices. They look at the number of invoices paid within 10 days and 30 days of receipt, as a percentage of all invoices paid. Performance at Service level is

detailed in **Appendix 2**.

- 6.8.4 Quarter 1 performance reports ongoing improvements in both 10 and 30 days compared to prior year with both 10 days and 30 days exceeding their respective targets of 77% and 95%.
- 6.8.5 As reported to previous Committees, Corporate Resources Service staff continues to review all processes looking to deliver improvements wherever possible including the speed of information coming from Services to enable invoices to be processed.

6.9 Attendance Management

6.9.1

	17/18		18/19
	Q3	Q4	Q1
Corporate Resources	1.8	2.4	1.9
Highland Council (non-teaching)	2.6	3.1	2.8

- 6.9.2 In Q1, the average number of days lost per employee within the Corporate Resources Service was 1.9 days. Performance remains lower than the Highland Council non-teaching average of 2.8 days.
- 6.9.3 The service continues to keep staff absence as low as possible and following the Council's HR policies and guidance, implementing measures such as "return to work" interviews and discussions with staff.

Designation: Interim Chief Officer Resources (Care & Learning)

Date: 13 August 2019

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Corporate Resources

Background Papers: None

APPENDIX 1

Statutory Performance Indicators	Report ref:	Frequency
The average number of working days per employee lost through sickness absence for: b) All other local government employees	6.9	Quarterly
The gross administration cost per benefits case	5.2	Annual
The cost of collecting Council Tax per dwelling	5.2	Annual
Current year income from Council Tax: a) The income due from Council Tax for the year, net of relief and rebates b) The percentage of a) that was received during the year	6.1	Quarterly
The number of invoices paid within 30 calendar days of receipt as a percentage of all invoices paid	6.8	Quarterly
The number of invoices paid within 10 calendar days of receipt as a percentage of all invoices paid	6.8	Quarterly
Internal Audit - cost of audit/£1m net expenditure		Annual
Insurance - cost/claim processed		Annual
Creditors - unit cost/creditor invoice issued		Annual
Payroll - cost/payslip produced		Annual
Pensions - cost per member		Annual
Cost of Accounting % Net Rev Budget + HRA		Annual
Cost of completing the Annual Accounts		Annual
Cost NDR collection/chargeable property		Annual
% NDR collected by year end	6.2	Quarterly
Cost sundry debtors/debtors account issued		Annual
% income sundry debtors collected during year		Annual
Cost Corporate Finance % Net Revenue Budget		Annual
Cost Procurement section % Net Revenue Budget		Annual

Other performance measures	Report ref:	Frequency
Processing time benefit – new claims (average days)	6.4	Quarterly
Processing time benefit – change in circs (average days)	6.4	Quarterly
Welfare Support	6.5	Quarterly
Business Improvement District (BID) Levy	6.3	Quarterly
Business Support - Talentlink	6.6	Quarterly
Business Support – Single Grant Applications	6.7	Quarterly

APPENDIX 2

Invoice Payments <30 days								
DIRECTORATE	TARGET 19/20	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20 Q1
Care & Learning	95%		93.7	89.7	94.5	94.9	93.8	96.7
<i>Corporate Development</i>			93.6	93.1	92.8	94.5		
Chief Executive's			95.4	96.1	94.1	92.3	94.8	97.0
Community Services			91.8	92.9	93.1	95.4	97.0	98.1
Development & Infrastructure			90.6	88.4	91.7	95.4	96.7	96.7
<i>Finance</i>			99.0	96.9	98.1	98.9		
Corporate Resources							97.5	98.5
Highland Council			93.3	94.3	91.3	94.0	95.3	95.7

Invoice Payments <10 days								
DIRECTORATE	TARGET 19/20	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20 Q1
Care & Learning	77%		67.4	49.2	57.6	65.7	66.1	82.6
<i>Corporate Development</i>			72.0	71.3	75.1	78.2		
Chief Executive's			84.0	75.2	76.7	72.5	77.3	80.4
Community Services			75.6	62.8	65.8	76.4	81.4	84.1
Development & Infrastructure			85.0	51.0	55.8	65.3	67.2	70.7
<i>Finance</i>			91.0	76.8	91.4	83.0		
Corporate Resources							77.7	85.0
Highland Council			73.4	76.9	56.5	63.3	71.1	73.7