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**North
Northamptonshire
Council**

Meeting: Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee
Date: Tuesday 21st June, 2022
Time: 7.00 pm
Venue: Council Chamber, Swanspool House, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, NN8 1BP


To members of the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee:

Councillors Mark Pengelly (Chair), Richard Levell (Vice-Chair), Scott Brown, Jim Hakewill, Ken Harrington, Larry Henson, Ian Jelley, Matt Keane, King Lawal, Paul Marks, Steven North, Mark Rowley and Malcolm Ward.

(Substitutes: Councillors Clive Hallam, Jan O'Hara, David Sims, William Colquhoun, Anne Lee and Emily Fedorowycz).

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Adele Wylie, Monitoring Officer
North Northamptonshire Council



Proper Officer
Monday 13 June 2022

This agenda has been published by Democratic Services.

Committee Administrator: Raj Sohal

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ITEM	NARRATIVE	DEADLINE
Members of the Public Agenda Statements	Requests to address the committee must be received by 5pm two clear working days before the meeting. Statements must relate to a matter detailed on the agenda. You will have a maximum of three minutes in which to make your statement and you will make it at the start of the agenda item.	5pm Thursday 16 June 2022
Member Agenda Statements	Requests to address the meeting must be received by 5pm two clear working days before the meeting. Statements must relate to matters detailed on the meeting agenda. You will have a maximum of three minutes in which to make your statement and you will make it at the start of the agenda item.	5pm Thursday 16 June 2022

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Where a matter arises at a meeting which **relates to** other Registerable Interests, you must declare the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but must not take part in any vote on the matter unless you have been granted a dispensation.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which **relates to** your own financial interest (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest) or **relates to** a financial interest of a relative, friend or close associate, you must disclose the interest and not vote on the matter unless granted a dispensation. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting.

Members are reminded that they should continue to adhere to the Council's approved rules and protocols during the conduct of meetings. These are contained in the Council's approved Constitution.

If Members have any queries as to whether a Declaration of Interest should be made please contact the Monitoring Officer at – monitoringofficer@northnorthants.gov.uk

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Minutes of a meeting of the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee

Held at 7.00 pm on Tuesday 10th May 2022 in the Council Chamber, Swanspool House, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, NN8 1BP

Present:-

Members

Councillor Mark Pengelly (Chair)
Councillor Valerie Anslow
Councillor Scott Brown
Councillor Jim Hakewill
Councillor Ken Harrington
Councillor Larry Henson

Councillor King Lawal
Councillor Paul Marks
Councillor Steven North
Councillor Mark Rowley

Officers

Mark Dickenson
Claire Edwards
Guy Holloway
Raj Sohal

Assistant Director of Finance and Strategy
Assistant Director – Finance Accountancy
Assistant Chief Executive
Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance – Councillor Lloyd Bunday

43 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors: Richard Levell, Ian Jelley and Malcolm Ward.

Councillors Matt Binley and Clive Hallam were in attendance, as substitutes.

44 Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 April 2022

RESOLVED that:

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th April 2022 were approved as a correct record.

45 Members' Declarations of Interest

The Chair invited those who wished to do so to declare interests in respect of items on the agenda.

No declarations were made.

46 Budget Forecast 2021/22 as at period 11

The Committee considered a report by the Assistant Director of Finance and Strategy, which set out the budget forecast as at period 11.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- Members queried whether representatives from the Northamptonshire Children's Trust would attend Finance and Resources Scrutiny to provide detailed insight in the Trust's budget position.
- One member posited that budget underspends should not always be viewed positively and expressed concern that with increasing levels of need across service areas, more money would need to be spent. The member drew attention to the underspend concerning waste management and also acknowledged that additional funding would need to be allocated to support schools accepting political refugees.
- Members queried whether sufficient funding was available through the contingency budget.
- One member queried whether the authority had considered the impact on the budget of social care exercise and suggested that there should be a further outlay, once this exercise had been completed.
- Members queried whether North Northamptonshire Council anticipated the cost of borrowing to increase and questioned how this potential budget pressure would affect future forecasts.
- Regarding the Hardship Fund and Council Tax Energy Rebate scheme, one member queried how much funding had been made available to support residents across North Northamptonshire and when these rebates would be delivered. The member expressed disappointment concerning the political communication surrounding the Rebate scheme.
- The Chairman queried whether the Committee would be able to receive the closing figures of Northamptonshire County Council's accounts, following this report being provided to the Audit and Governance committee.
- Members queried what provision had been built into the budget to fund increasing energy costs for Council assets.

In response, the Assistant Director clarified that:

- Representatives from the Northamptonshire Children's Trust would be invited to attend a Finance and Resources Scrutiny in the imminent future.
- The contingency balance had been reduced, as it was sufficient for 2021/22. Therefore, officers anticipated this amount would again be sufficient for 2022/23. Due to the new authority's increased certainty across service areas, the need for contingency had stabilised.
- Generally, officers had attempted to estimate the costs of social care packages, in line with inflation.
- North Northamptonshire Council had inherited loans from legacy authorities however, these were established at a fixed rate of 3%, which would not change. Nevertheless, officers anticipated that future borrowing would be more costly.

- Regarding the Council Tax Energy Rebate scheme, officers would provide the Committee with regular updates concerning payments to residents. The easiest payment to administer would be to 46,000 residents who paid Council Tax via direct debit, who would be contacted the week following the meeting. The local authority was also in the process of navigating to a single system of payments – the delay had largely been caused due to the existing four different systems.
- Despite the fact that auditors were not obligated to provide the closing figures of Northamptonshire County Council to North Northamptonshire Council, officers would endeavour to bring a report, regarding the closing position, to the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee.
- The 2022/23 budget had considered the anticipated increase of utilities costs. The authority would also need to ensure that it was as energy efficient as possible.

RESOLVED that:

The Committee noted the report.

47 Performance Indicator for Corporate Services 2021/22 as at period 11

The Committee considered a report by the Assistant Chief Executive, which provided an update on the performance of the Council's corporate support services. as at Period 11, as measured by performance indicators.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- Members requested additional data regarding the proportions of agency staff and full-time staff employed by the Northamptonshire Children's Trust.
- Members queried whether staff absences correlated to people working from home and if the authority could ensure employees were provided with the correct equipment to support remote working.
- Regarding mental health support services for Council staff, the Chairman of the Committee suggested that the authority should also consider what mental health support would be made available for elected members.

In response, the Assistant Chief Executive clarified that:

- Officers would seek to include information regarding agency and full-time staff employed by the Children's Trust in the next performance indicator report.
- Further detail regarding reasons for staff absences and sickness would be provided in future reports. Generally, higher percentages of injuries were sustained by employees carrying out manual labour.

RESOLVED that:

The Committee noted the report.

48 Timetable Going Forward

The Committee considered the timetable for future scrutiny activity.

The Assistant Director of Finance and Strategy suggested that members carry out budget scrutiny in two major stages; the first of which would take place in October 2022. He posited that the second stage of scrutiny should analyse each service area of North Northamptonshire Council, in close detail, around January 2023.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- Members maintained that the Committee would require the opportunity to efficiently scrutinise the budget outturn of the Northamptonshire Children's Trust, before a final position would be signed off on. One member expressed concern that previously, this scrutiny activity had been carried out too late and that representatives from the Trust should attend a meeting of the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee before November 2022.

The Chairman requested that officers continue to revise and make amendments to the scrutiny timetable, as necessary, and bring it back to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that:

The Committee noted the report.

49 Close of Meeting

Scrutiny Review - Planning & Scoping Document

<p>What is the Purpose of the Review?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Specify exactly which Outcome(s) the review is examining?</i>• <i>Also being clear what the review is <u>not</u> looking at</i>• <i>What is the Scrutiny Review seeking to achieve?</i>• <i>Where possible refer to value for money issues of service cost, service performance and/or customer satisfaction.</i>	<p>Scrutiny review is seeking to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review and understand the underlying data that relates to the funding and performance of the maintained nurseries in North Northamptonshire.2. To understand the value for money of the 4 maintained nurseries from 2017- 2022.3. To understand the service cost and service structures of the 4 maintained nurseries.4. Explore the local offer of the 4 maintained nurseries and the outcomes for those children accessing the maintained nursery provision.5. Engage with and explore the views of schools who provide the onward destination for children leaving the nurseries.6. Understand and learn from parents and carers of children accessing the 4 maintained nurseries.7. Understand the wider funding arrangements of the maintained nurseries including any additional funds that the nurseries secure, and the additional outcomes delivered.8. Make recommendations to the Schools Forum and the council regarding future proposals for the funding of the maintained nursery supplement.
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<p>What are the Criteria for Selection?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why has this particular topic been considered to be a priority issue for scrutiny?</i> • <i>Which of the principle criteria promoted by the Centre for Public Scrutiny does it satisfy?</i> 	<p>The distribution of the Maintained Nursery Supplementary fund is considered a priority for a scrutiny review for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is an historic and significant disparity of funding identified by NNC for the 4 maintained nurseries. 2. The local authority receives the Maintained Nursery Supplementary Fund based upon the numbers of children participating in the universal free entitlement however they have not distributed the fund to the maintained nursery against these criteria. 3. The item is of significant community concern as the settings support children by promoting their best start in life – including preparation for early education. 4. The issue is of significant to Children/Parents & Carers/Partners/Stakeholders. 5. A focused scrutiny review is likely to add value to the performance of maintained nurseries and promote efficiencies/savings?
<p>What are the Indicators of Success?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What factors / outcomes will demonstrate that this Scrutiny Review has been a success?</i> 	<p>This review</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aims to tackle issues of direct relevance to local people and seeks to understand the reasons for the apparent inequity in funding across the 4 nurseries. 2. Aims to consider the outcomes of children attending (or who have attended) the nurseries and determine if the delivery of outcomes is proportionate to the funding of the nurseries. 3. Will consider how nurseries can adapt to deliver early years provision that meets the needs of their communities and supports a local and inclusive agenda through a strong start in life. 4. Will arrive at clear proposals to deliver ‘future proofed’ tangible recommendations for equitable, outcome improvements for children accessing maintained nursery provision across the communities of NNC.

<p>What Methodology / Approach is to be followed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What types of enquiry will be used to gather evidence.</i> <p><i>Following a structured and proportionate review process, which is likely to involve the active consideration of evidence, direct representation(s), a review of financial, performance and risk data to arrive at an objective opinion against some Key Lines of Enquiry;</i></p>	<p>Key lines of enquiry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are the outcomes of children proportionately increased/improved because of higher levels of funding? - Are children more/better prepared for school where nurseries receive higher/pupil levels of funding? - Are the staffing structures equitable across the maintained nurseries? - Is the 'local offer' consistent and/or proportionate to the needs of the local community. - How have maintained nurseries adapted their offer/structure as a result of the maintained nursery supplement? - Are staffing : pupil ratios equivalent across settings? - Where settings access additional funds from the local authority (other sources) is this activity monitored/recorded separately? - What has been the impact since 2017 of reducing/increasing budgets on the 'offer' and the outcomes for children? - Is the funding being applied in accordance with the requirements and expectations of the funder (i.e. application of DSG)? <p>Potential enquiry types</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desk top finance and data reviews - Visits to the 4 maintained nursery schools - Evidence and information gathering from the destination schools of children leaving the maintained nurseries - Feedback from children and parents - Feedback from Stakeholders - Feedback from School Forum members - Findings of the Internal Audit Investigation
<p>What specific resources & budget requirements are there?</p> <p><i>What support is required for the review exercise?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>specialist staff</i> • <i>any external support</i> • <i>site visits</i> • <i>consultation</i> • <i>research</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lead officers identified to support in coordinating activity including data and performance management, site visits and developing and administering surveys - Consideration for external independent support to facilitate engagement and review sessions - Internal audit review of maintained nursery funding - Independent review of Special educational needs at the 4 maintained nurseries - Review of Children's Trust Contract(s) with any of the maintained nurseries.

<p>Are any Corporate Risks associated with this Review? <i>Identify any weaknesses and barriers to success</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insufficient resources to support the review appropriately (people) - With any review of this nature there is a risk of creep in scope
<p>Who will receive the review conclusions and any resultant recommendations?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To be confirmed but it is likely that the outcome will be of interest to School Forum, Executive and Full Council.
<p>What is the Review Timescale?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Identify key meeting dates and any deadlines for reports or decisions.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Timescale requires discussion and agreement by the Scrutiny Commission
<p>Who will lead the Review Exercise?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Identify a nominated:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Elected Member</i> - <i>Lead Officer</i> 	<p>Nominated Leads</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A lead elected member that is not an executive member – TBC - AnnMarie Dodds, Executive Director for Children’s Services <p>Other officers likely required to contribute</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Heads and Chairs of Governors of the 4 Maintained Nurseries - Democratic Services – TBC - Early Years Finance - Lead officer - AD Education - AD Partnership and Commissioning - Finance - Audit - Communications - Former NCC Finance Officers
<p>Media Interest / Publicity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Communications Plan</i> • <i>Do we need to publicise the review to encourage community involvement?</i> • <i>What sort of media coverage do we want? (e.g. Fliers, leaflets, radio broadcast, press release, etc.)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish a proportionate communications plan (external and internal) to support the review process. - Will this review be subject to a press embargo? No, community involvement should be encouraged - Who is the lead communications contact? TBC - Who is the designated spokesperson for the Scrutiny Review (Elected Member & Officer)?

Completed by: Date:	AnnMarie Dodds, Executive Director for Children's Services 17 May 2022
Approved by Scrutiny Committee Date:	Scrutiny Commission

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Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee Tuesday 21 June 2022

Report Title	Revenues and Benefits Performance Report 2021/22
Report Author	Lucy Hogston, Assistant Director of Revenues & Benefits lucy.hogston@northnorthants.gov.uk

Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	

[For Internal Sign-off only – to be removed from final published report]

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

Approver	Officer Name	Date Officer Approved Report
North MO	Adele Wylie	Enter approval date
North S151	Janice Gotts	Enter approval date
Other Director/SME	N/A	Enter approval date

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To provide Members with an update on the performance of the Revenue and Benefits Service for the 2021/22 financial year.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. This report provides an update on the performance of the Revenue and Benefits Team for the financial year covering the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.

- 2.2. A previous report was presented to this Committee at its meeting on 2nd November 2021 which set out the performance for the first six month period 1st April 2021 to 30th September 2021.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. It is recommended that the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Note and comment on the Revenue and Benefits performance data for the financial year covering the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.

Reason for Recommendation – to enable Scrutiny to review the annual performance of the Revenues and Benefits Service.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. The Revenue and Benefits Team are responsible for the billing and collection of Council Tax & Business Rates and the calculation and payment of Housing Benefit, Local Council Tax Support and Discretionary Housing Payments.
- 4.2. In addition, since the onset of the pandemic the team has also administered a number of business grant schemes on behalf of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and also Test & Trace Support Payments of behalf of the Department for Health and Social Care.

5. Performance

Performance in the collection of Council Tax

- 5.1. Council Tax is a property tax which is levied on the broad capital value of domestic properties. The Valuation Office split all domestic properties into eight bands from A to H, with an amount charged linked to each band. Calculation of the amount payable follows a weighted calculation set by central government. Properties in Band A pay two thirds of the tax levied on Band D properties; those in Band H pay twice the tax levied on Band D.
- 5.2. The number of properties within North Northamptonshire has been increasing year on year, at the beginning of April 2021 there were 154,160 properties and this has risen to 155,671 by the end of March 2022.
- 5.3. Seventy five percent of the properties are in bands A - C (inclusive), less than 2% (3,216 properties) are in the top two bands of G and H.
- 5.4. The net debit raised (amount to be collected) after discounts, exemptions and Local Council Tax Support was £218m.
- 5.5. The amount of Council Tax collected in the period 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022 was £210m, which equates to 96.42% of the net debit raised. This is 0.55% above the in-year collection rate achieved for 2020/21.

Performance in the collection of Business Rates

- 5.6. Business Rates are collected from 11,832 business properties in North Northamptonshire, with a Rateable Value (RV) of c£338m (as at the end of March 2022).
- 5.7. For billing purposes, a business rates hereditament can be as small as an Automated Teller Machine (ATM) or a parking or advertising space up to the size of an airport or sports stadium. Each hereditament has a separate bill. Depending upon how it is occupied and split, one building may have several hereditaments. The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) works out the rateable value (RV) for a property, the Government set national rules and reliefs and the Council calculates and collects the amount due by applying a multiplier that is set by central government and other calculations where appropriate.
- 5.8. The amount of Business Rates collected in the period 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022 was £128.3m, which equates to 95.77% of the £133.9m net debit raised. This is 1.25% above the in-year collection rate achieved in 2020/21.
- 5.9. The Council is reimbursed for all mandatory reliefs granted.

Recovery Activity

- 5.10. The Council's recovery strategy is based on engagement with residents; the aim being to ensure payment of accruing liability with an affordable payment arrangement towards any arrears. This ensures debt management and a sustainable approach to debt recovery.
- 5.11. Recovery for non-payment of Council Tax and Business Rates started again in May 2021, this was following a pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the courts having limited availability for liability order hearings. During this period official reminders were replaced with letters detailing the help and support that was available for customers who were having difficulties in paying.
- 5.12. Since May 2021, 62,039 reminders and 39,272 final notices for non-payment of Council Tax have been issued. For non-payment of Business Rates 4,851 reminders and 2,913 final notices have been issued. It is worth noting that some of our customers will receive more than one reminder and final notice depending on the number of times they fall behind with their payments.
- 5.13. Following on from the reminders/final notices, 20,820 summonses for non-payment of Council Tax and 729 summonses for non-payment of Business Rates have been issued and liability orders granted by the magistrate's court.
- 5.14. The frequency of court hearings increased from January 2022 to monthly rather than bi-monthly. Members of our Social Inclusion Team attended the courts to engage with our customers and provide them with money and debt advice.

5.15. A national Debt Respite Scheme (Breathing Space) has been brought in to give someone in problem debt the right to legal protections from their creditors for a short period of time to enable them to reflect and put in place plans on how they could manage the debt and repayments due. There are two types of breathing spaces, which both came into force from the 4th May 2021.

5.16. Standard Breathing Space

- Breathing Space will pause enforcement action; freeze interest, fees, and charges, and pause creditor contact.
- Lasts up to a 60-days and can apply once a year.
- It's accessed via professional debt advice.

5.17. Mental Health Breathing Space

- Breathing Space includes a Mental Health Crisis Moratorium for those receiving mental health crisis treatment.
- The protections last for the duration of their crisis treatment, followed by a further 30 days.
- The Money and Mental Health Policy Institute estimate that the median duration of treatment is 34 days.

5.18. The Council has received 81 applications for Breathing Space that have been supported by professional debt advice services therefore the Council has paused enforcement action in line with the scheme requirements.

Performance in Benefits Administration

5.19. At the end of March 2022, the Council was paying out benefit to approximately 17,400 households in North Northamptonshire, this includes Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support claims.

5.20. The caseload is made up of 57% working age and 43% pensionable age claimants.

5.21 The caseload has reduced (approximately 675 claimants) since April 2021.

5.22 The performance target for processing new claims and changes of circumstances counts the overall number of days taken to process a claim, including any time associated with claim follow up or requests for further evidence.

5.24 The performance target for processing new claims is 21 days and changes in circumstances is 9 days; the Service achieved 21 days and 4 days.

Discretionary Housing Payments

5.25 The Discretionary Housing Payment scheme provides funding to deal with hardship in situations where normal Housing Benefit or the Housing Element of Universal Credit does not cover all the rent a person is charged. To qualify

for some consideration for assistance under this scheme the resident must already qualify for some Housing Benefit or the Housing Element of Universal Credit.

- 5.26 From April 2013 the government provided extra funding to ease the introduction of the household benefit cap but also to meet continuing and unavoidable needs resulting from the application of size criteria in the social rented sector rather than catering for these in the Housing Benefit scheme itself.
- 5.27 The government provides councils with a grant amount up to an agreed threshold and any money not spent in the year to which it relates is returned to government as unspent. The Council is able to fund above this amount up to a further threshold, but this would be funded from the Council's budget.
- 5.28 The grant allocated to North Northamptonshire Council for 2021/22 was £546,473. During the financial year 2021/22, 1607 applications have been received, 877 awards made, and 730 applications refused, totalling a spend of £411,460.

Test and Trace Support Payments

- 5.29 The Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme is administered by North Northamptonshire Council on behalf of the Department of Health & Social Care.
- 5.30 From 28th September 2020, individuals were entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment or discretionary support payment of £500. This was to support people on low incomes who are unable to work from home if they are told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace and will lose income as a result.
- 5.31 These payments are designed to help ensure people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and their close contacts self-isolate for the required period to stop the onward spread of the virus. They are also designed to encourage individuals who are eligible for this payment to get tested if they have symptoms. This is important to help stop the transmission of COVID-19 and avoid further economic and societal restrictions.
- 5.32 The scheme ended on the 24th February 2022.
- 5.33 For the period 28th September 2020 to 24th February 2022, payments of 2,201 for the main scheme and 1,324 for the discretionary scheme have been made totalling £1,762,500.

Council Tax Discretionary Discount Section 13A applications

- 5.34 Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 2012), provides North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) with discretionary powers to reduce Council Tax liability.

- 5.35 The provision allows the Council the discretion to aid Council Taxpayers where either the existing legislation does not provide a discount, exemption or reduction or in circumstances where the Council has decided that the level of discount, exemption or reduction is insufficient.
- 5.36 Section 13A awards will be used to help mitigate any unforeseen or exceptional hardship circumstances that threaten taxpayers' ability to pay their council tax or to remain in their homes.
- 5.37 As there is a financial implication when awarding discounts under Section 13A because the Council has to fund all awards from its own funds without any Government support, any such awards must meet certain criteria to ensure they offer value for money to North Northamptonshire's taxpayers.
- 5.38 For the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022, 257 applications have been received and processed. Resulting in 14 awards (totalling £7,408) and 243 refusals.
- 5.39 The majority of those refused all have excess income so it is considered that they are able to afford to make the payments, no one has appealed the refusals and the service can clearly show individuals the methodology used.
- 5.40 In nearly all of the cases the service has had a telephone conversation with the customers and has been able to help in other areas such as Discretionary Housing Payment applications, Personal Independence Payment applications and utilities advice etc.
- 5.41 It is reassuring to see the overall advice and support is being taken up and can make a difference in respect of individuals being able to access benefits, this is an area that the service is seeking to strengthen further.

Business Grants

- 5.42 A number of business grant schemes have been introduced by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy since to Covid-19 pandemic started, these grants have been administered by the Council's Business Rates Team, with the exception of the Additional Restrictions Grant (discretionary) which is being administered by the Economic and Development Team within the Place and Economy Directorate.
- 5.43 All the grant schemes administered by the Business Rates Team have now closed however, there is still ongoing work with regards to the auditing of these grants by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).
- 5.44 The table below details the different grant schemes, the number and value of grants paid.

Grant	No. of Payments Made	Value of Payments Made
Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG) - National Lockdown 2 (November 2020)	1,855	£2,873,286
LRSG - Sectors	6	£10,287
LRSG - Tiers 2/3/4 mandatory (December 2020)	2,190	£672,495
LRSG - Tiers 2/3/4 Restrictions Open (December 2020)	466	£378,067
LRSG – Closed business lockdown payment (January 2021)	1,923	£8,995,000
LRSG - Jan/Feb/March 2021	3,814	£9,127,192
Christmas Support Payment for Wet-Led Pubs	135	£135,000
Restart Grants (April – June 2021)	1,487	£11,162,767
Omicron Grants (January 2022 – March 2022)	460	£1,544,095
Total	12,336	£37,771,475

5. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

6.1.1 This report is for information only therefore there are no resource or financial implications as no proposals are being made.

6.2 Legal and Governance

6.2.1 This report is for information only therefore there are no legal implications as no proposals are being made.

6.3 Relevant Policies and Plans

6.3.1 This report is for information only therefore no proposals are being made.

6.4 Risk

6.4.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

6.5 Consultation

6.5.1 This report is for information only therefore no consultation has taken place as no proposals are being made.

6.6 Consideration by the Executive

6.6.1 This report is for information and no prior consideration or decisions have been made by the Executive here in respect of the report and its recommendations.

6.7 Equality Implications

6.7.1 This report is for information only therefore there are no equality implications as no proposals are being made.

6.8 Climate Impact

6.8.1 This report is for information only.

6.9 Community Impact

6.9.1 This report is for information only.

6.10 Crime and Disorder Impact

6.10.1 This report is for information only.

7 Background Papers

7.1 Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee, 2 November 2021, Revenue and Benefits Performance Report (1st April to 30th September 2021) – six month report.