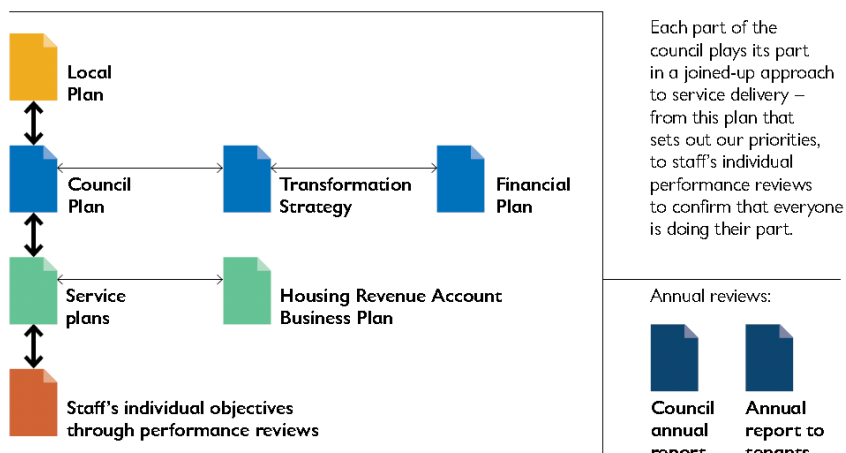


Service Planning 2020-21

Finance Service

Version 2.0

April 2020 – March 2021



Strategic Lead:

Portfolio holders:

Service Plan Template 2020-21: Contents Page

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Notes for Strategic Leads and Service Leads:

*Certain parts of this form will be pre-populated. This will include your turnover, full time equivalent/headcount and absence rates.

Shaded areas are for guidance.

When you have completed your Service Plan:

- ✓ Save to O:\Service Plans. Final versions will be placed on the intranet/internet
- ✓ Communicate it to your staff
- ✓ Keep it under review – make it a live document which adds value!
- ✓ Use it to formulate individual objectives

Section 1 – Brief description of service and purpose(s)

What we do and who we deliver to

Revenues, Benefits, Corporate Fraud & Compliance:

Benefits: Providing means tested financial support in respect of housing and council tax costs in accordance with prescribed legislation and a local determined scheme. We give approximately £30m in Housing Benefits and have 5,212 claimants. We provide Council Tax Support of £7.2m to 7,204 CTR cases.

Purpose - To pay the right amount to the right person at the right time.

Council Tax: This is collected on behalf of Devon County Council, Devon & Cornwall Police Authority, Devon & Somerset Fire Authority, EDDC & town/parishes. Although the charge is set locally this is a national tax which has to be administered in accordance with legislation. We have to collect about £114m this year and have approximately 70K households. Average bill is £1,889.

Purpose - to collect the right amount from the right person at the right time.

Non Domestic Rates: This is a tax that is set nationally but collected by the local authority. A proportion is retained locally to fund Council services. We have 6,767 rating assessments and are responsible for collecting circa £36.2m This has to be administered in accordance with legislation.

Invoicing and collection all Sundry accounts on behalf of other departments of the Council. Total of bills issued is £7m with 7,000 accounts raised.

Benefit Overpayment: Collection of £2.0m.

Corporate Fraud & Compliance: Dealing with main types of public sector fraud and error – welfare benefits, tenancy fraud, council tax, business rates, procurement and payroll.

Customer Service Centre (CSC):

This is the first point of contact to the Council. The team deals with enquiries from various access channels. Primarily telephone, face to face, and web. They are responsible for main Reception, Switchboard and deal with enquiries on a one and done basis from customers relating to: Waste, Street Scene, Street Name & Numbering, Environmental Health (dogs and pests), parking services, Planning & Electoral Registration. The team answered a total of 162,000 enquiries across all access channels.

Financial Services:

Accountancy: Providing financial advice to officers and members of the Council. Budget preparation, monitoring and reporting, Treasury Management, VAT, Statement of Accounts, statutory returns and provision of a financial system and procedures. Latest Statement of Accounts show the Council having gross expenditure of £96m.

Income & Payments: Administer all EDDC creditors and pay all of the council's suppliers through the Creditor's team with over 21,000 invoices paid; administration of the Construction Industry Scheme (CIS). Processing and allocation of all income to the council with over 240,000 transactions (Business Rates, Council Tax, Sundry Debts, Rents, Parking Charges, Benefits Overpayments and Housing Advances) equating to £320m through the Cashier's team.

Procurement:

Professional procurement advice is currently managed through a Service Level Agreement with Devon County Council Procurement Services.

Internal Audit Services:

This service is provided through the South West Audit Partnership. An Annual Audit Plan is approved through the Audit & Governance Committee.

ICT:

This service is provided through Strata; a separate business plan is approved by a Joint Committee of EDDC,

	ECC & TDC. Each of the 3 authorities Council's adopt the Plan annually.
How we deliver and ensure equal access	In the main services are provided in house with specialist and contract support in some areas. Each area has carried out equality assessments and staff have had appropriate training. We provide services in differing ways in order to meet the needs of our customers.
How we compare	Where national performance is measured; Council Tax collection and speed of processing benefits we are one of the top performing authorities. The costs of running our services are low and the service areas offer good value for money.
Statutory elements of the service	The majority of the work carried out is a statutory requirement. The remaining elements are in the main linked to services which are of a statutory nature.
Current net budget (excludes Internal support charges and capital budget)	

Section 2 – Key achievements in 2019-20		
	<i>Briefly describe key achievements and what outcomes were created. This will inform Annual Report at year end.</i>	<i>Strategic link to Council Plan priorities</i>
1	<p>The latest full year statistics (2018/19) show that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Council Tax collection rate of 98.81% is the highest out of all Devon, Dorset, Somerset & Cornwall authorities and 2nd highest in the South West. • We have the 15th highest Council Tax collection rate in England out of 333 authorities. • Achieved a Non Domestic collection rate of 99.4%. Highest in the South West. • We have the 20th highest Non Domestic collection rate in England. • We are the second highest to process new benefit claims out of all Devon and Cornwall authorities –16 days. We're 8th highest in the South West • We are the joint quickest to process changes in circumstances out of all Devon and Cornwall authorities – 4 days. We are 5 highest in the South West. 	An Outstanding Council

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our combined performance for processing both new benefit claims and changes in circumstances is the quickest out of all Devon and Cornwall authorities – 4.78 days. We are ranked 1st in Devon & Cornwall & 9th in the South West. <p>We aim to achieve a similar position at the end of 2019/20</p>	
2	The Council has just had its annual housing benefit subsidy claim audited. This claim is for circa £30m and to have no amendments to the claim is a testament to the service as whole as it reflects on the accuracy of the teams work. Many authorities have this claim qualified with significant financial penalties.	An Outstanding Council
3	Set up processes and procedures to collect developer charges relating to refuse collection receptacles	An Outstanding Council
4	Working with the Capital Strategy & Allocation Group to improve monitoring reports and to review and amend capital appraisal processes for 2020/21 to ensure carbon impact is assessed.	An Outstanding Place and Environment
5	With little notice ensure finance systems and processes worked with the introduction of new software: Manor Pavilion and car park system	An Outstanding Council
6	Transformation targets for reduced staffing costs and increased income have been achieved.	An Outstanding Council
7	Excellent External Audit report covering Final Accounts and value for Money Opinion.	An Outstanding Council
8	Balanced Budget set by Council for 2019/20	An Outstanding Council

Section 3 – Looking forward : what we will do in 2020-21 (service objectives)				
Key Service Objectives (please include consultation or procurement activity required)	Financial/ corporate resource	Lead Officers	Start date	End date
<i>Please highlight any projects so that they may be recorded and monitored in SPAR. See project guidance document for the definition of a project.</i>				
1) Outstanding place and environment				
2) Outstanding homes and communities				
Implementation of a new banded discount scheme for council tax support in 2020/21.	A Reserve has been set aside from New	Revenue & Benefits Service Lead	April 2019	New scheme to start from

	Burdens Funding of £200k which can be used to design and implements a new scheme			April 2020. Customer support to be provided during 2020/21
Implement measures (subject to Council approval) identified within the Poverty report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Corporate Debt Policy Review funding & delivery arrangements for Money advice Set up a series of local events across the District with key stakeholders that focus on universal Credit, Money/Debt Advice, budgeting fuel poverty, etc. Creating a Poverty Strategy 	Funding of £16K has been requested to provide resources to develop a strategy & carry out the Money Advice review	Libby Jarrett/ Amy Gilbert-Jeans	Subject to Full Council approval	March 2021
3) Outstanding economic growth, productivity and prosperity				
New Procurement Strategy to adopted by Council – this was to be implemented in 2019/20 service plan but has been delayed waiting for the release and assessment of a national procurement strategy and tying in with the work of Devon County Council to produce their Strategy with will be aligned to ours. This will now be completed in 2020/21	Existing funding and resources will be directed to this area	Strategic Lead Finance	Started	August 2020
4) Outstanding council and council services				
Within the Revenues & Benefits Service we have started to share some resources with Exeter City Council. We will be looking to progress this by exploring how we can take this forward to the advantage of both Authorities	Within existing funding & resources	Service Lead – Revenues, Benefits & Customer Services	Started	March 2021

Implement e-billing across Council Tax and Business Rates so that customers can elect to have the bill emailed. This will be an additional option to the customer portal.	This has been prioritised with Strata	Service Lead – Revenues, Benefits & Customer Services		March 2021
Carry out a review of telephony and reception services within the CSC. This will include reviewing management data to consider how we can better automate the routing of calls, dynamic automated messages, promotion of online services, etc. Alongside this we will also review resources for customer facing roles across the two sites to see how we can create greater efficiencies.	Subject to Strata resources	Service Lead – Revenues, Benefits, Customer Services, Corporate Fraud & Compliance		March 2021
Start to replace all our existing online forms onto Firmstep. As part of this work we will be looking to create greater integration with back office systems and more automation to create efficiencies. We will also be working with Exeter with the aim of creating common forms across the two Councils	Realigned existing budget into this priority area of work.	Service Lead – Revenues, Benefits, Customer Services, Corporate Fraud & Compliance	April 2020	Review in March 2021 but end time will need to be assessed once
Review and develop improved intranet procurement advice and tools to services across the Council	Existing staff resources	Strategic Lead Finance	April 2020	July 2020
Develop and clearly articulate a Commercialisation Strategy and its key principles. This will be developed collaboratively with key officers, stakeholders and Members to ensure there is consensus and a shared understanding of the approach.	Special item request £60k from Transformation Fund. Suggested priority areas to review Home-safeguard, Business Refuse/Recycli	Strategic Lead Finance	Jan 2020	June 2020

	ng collection, Handyperson Service			
Review and monitor our financial position through the prism of our three key strategies of Commercialisation, Fit for Purpose to deliver the Council Plan and Careful Choices.	To be delivered within existing resources	Strategic Lead Finance	Jan 2020	Once established ongoing
Undertake the statutory requirement of producing the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts, incorporating new accounting standards, and their external audit.	Existing staff resources	Financial Services Manager	Started	Accounts: May 2020 Audit: July 2020
Production of Balanced Budget to be set by Council for 2020/21.	Existing staff resources	Strategic Lead Finance	Started	Feb 2021
Procurement of new finance management system working collaboratively with partners (TDC & ECC)	Capital bid submitted (partnership project budget £940,000).	Strategic Lead Finance	Started	March 2022
Review our Corporate Fraud and Compliance Strategy	Delivered within existing resources	Service Lead – Revenues, Benefits, Customer Services, Corporate Fraud & Compliance	Apr 2020	March 2021
Fraud & Compliance and Income generation Initiatives (Income optimisation) – identify £100,000 additional income to the Council in 2021/22.	To be delivered within existing resources	Service Lead – Revenues, Benefits, Customer Services, Corporate Fraud & Compliance	Started	March 2021

**Section 3 a – Looking forward: any Service challenges or pressures for the next three years?
(Revenue/Capital)**

1. As identified in the objectives the implementation of a council tax banded scheme will require systems and process to be amended and customer advice and publicity to be managed.
2. There is ICT financial system convergence project with Exeter City and Teignbridge District Councils. This will be one of the biggest and wide ranging conversion projects to date and will have significant implications on the Finance Team in particular.

Section 3 b– Looking forward: options for doing things differently – this section is vital due to the funding gap we face over the next few years.

Please outline any opportunities to do things differently using the following key strategic themes:

Commercialisation

Fit for purpose

Careful choices

1. Areas have been identified as part the Council overall targets to meet the budget deficit in the Medium Term Financial Plan. In additional to managing the overall process and ensuring the Council set balanced budgets specifics for the service include.
 - Planned reduction of posts in Revenues & Benefits Service through non replacement of vacant post.
 - Income maximisation £100k target (included as an objective)
 - Reduction in Financial administration resources
 - The formulation of a Commercialisation Strategy and actions across the authority to deliver savings/additional income (included as an objective)

Section 3 c – Looking forward: Changes to measures and performance indicators - what we will measure, how often and for whom

Measure/indicator	How often – monthly, quarterly, bi-annually, annually	For whom? Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny	Link to Corporate Priorities (listed on page 3 1,2,3 or 4)	Responsible Officer for production of management information	Retain this measure (yes/no) or new
Percentage of Council Tax Collected	Monthly	O&S and Cabinet	4	Service Lead Revenues & Benefits	Yes

Percentage of Non-domestic Rates Collected	Monthly	O&S and Cabinet	4	Service Lead Revenues & Benefits	Yes
Creditor days - % of invoices paid within 30 days	Monthly	O&S and Cabinet	4	Income & Payments Team Leader	No This does not seem relevant any longer
Days taken to process Housing Benefit new claims and change events	Monthly	O&S and Cabinet	4	Support Team Leader	Yes

Section 4 – Resources and workforce planning

Full time equivalents/Headcount as at 01/04/2019	FTE = 70.3 Headcount = 78
Turnover (April 2018 to March 2019)	Voluntary Turnover = 2.7% Voluntary & Non Voluntary Turnover = 2.7%
Absence (April 2018 to March 2019)	Days lost per person: 6.8 days

Section 5 – Training and development

Team based skills/development required – please identify training required that is not currently available	Who for	Expected outcome	When
1. Finance Team will be undertaken Statement of Accounts year end technical training.	Accountancy	Ensure Statement of Accounts completed accurately and in line with code and standards	By completion of A/C's
2. Technical training in specific areas of Rev's & Ben's	Rev's & Ben's Team	Ensuring the service is compliant with current legislation and regulations	Dec 2020

Section 6 – Risks

New/emerging risks description – See attached Risk Register for current service risks	Impact [minor, significant]	Likely-hood [remote, unlikely, likely,	How managed/controlled What action will you take to reduce/minimise risk

	serious, major]	very likely]	
1. Risk Register is up to date and reflects the current risk status			

Section 7 – System thinking		
Which services have been reviewed	Main elements of Rev's & Ben's & CSC have been reviewed and aspects of other services	
Future systems to be reviewed	Service	Date of review
	This is now embedded into the services and the service and staff continually use system thinking principles to review their work.	

Section 8 - Equalities and safeguarding		
New / emerging equalities risks	Impact Level [High, Medium, Low]	How managed/controlled
1. 1. Undertaken at time of publication/proposed change.		

Section 9 – Climate change
There will be a corporate action plan around climate change but please note here any particular climate change initiatives which will be implemented within your service.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We will ensure supplier details and expenditure details can be analysed to inform carbon footprint calculation 2. E-billing will help to reduce the amount of paper bills we send out to customers 3. Council Tax Reduction Scheme – New proposed scheme will reduce the amount of adjustment notices we will need to send out and cut the overall paper we send.