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Overview and Scrutiny
Town Hall
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Dear Member

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - WEDNESDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2013

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at the Overview and Scrutiny Board to be held on Wednesday, 18 September 2013, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No	Item	Page
5.	Welfare Reform Circulated at the meeting	(Pages 123 - 124)

Yours sincerely

Kate Spencer
Overview and Scrutiny Lead

Agenda Item 5

Overview & Scrutiny - 18 September 2013

Customer Enquiries – Further Breakdowns

Housing Benefit - Phone Calls	May 2012	May 2013	%age Change
Offered	8,261	12,553	+51.9%
Handled	6,399	7,646	+19.5%
Abandoned	1,862	4,907	+163.5%
% Abandoned	22.5%	39.09%	

Housing Benefit - Phone Calls	June 2012	June 2013	%age Change
Offered	7,019	11,185	+59.3%
Handled	5,216	6,424	+23.1%
Abandoned	1,803	4,761	+164.06%
% Abandoned	25.6%	42.5%	

Housing Benefit - Phone Calls	July 2012	July 2013	%age Change
Offered	8,138	13,214	+62.3%
Handled	6,263	6,837	+9.1%
Abandoned	1,875	6,377	+240.1%
% Abandoned	23.04%	48.2%	

Housing Benefit - Phone Calls	August 2012	August 2013	%age Change
Offered	7,707	10,499	+36.2%
Handled	5,319	5,967	+12.1%
Abandoned	2,386	4,543	+90.4%
% Abandoned	30.9%	43.2%	

Definition

Offered	Total number of calls received
Handled	Total number of calls answered , including calls terminated
Abandoned	Total number of calls where the caller hung up

What are the different “crisis” funds held across the Council?

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)
Council Tax Exceptional Hardship Payments (CTEH)
Crisis Support (previously known as the Discretionary Social Fund administered by DWP)
Section 17 Payments

The Council's approach to the delivery of the new Crisis Support scheme is set within the broader agenda of the welfare reform programme. The council runs a number of discretionary payment schemes as mentioned in the report as well as Section 17 payments, currently administered by Children's Services..

The Crisis Support scheme is administered in Finance, alongside Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) and Council Tax Exceptional Hardship (CTEH). The advantage of this approach means that the processing of an application may result in an offer or sign-posting to other discretionary awards.

It is therefore sensible, where possible, for residents to be assessed for their eligibility for this type of support in a holistic manner rather than having to pass through multiple assessment procedures.

The Revenues and Benefits team have historically delivered the DHP scheme. They are already skilled in delivering regular and one off awards in a consistent, measured and secure way, so are ideally placed to deal with the new Council Tax Exceptional Hardship scheme as well as provide advice to the newly formed Crisis Support team.

In administering these schemes the teams coordinate activity and exchange information to ensure the best use is made of these limited resources.

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 states that it is the general duty of every local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are in need within their area; and so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their own families, through the provision, range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs. Furthermore, the service provided by the local authority in the exercise of Section 17 may include giving assistance in kind or, in exceptional circumstances, cash.

The intention is, over time, to establish and develop a universal assessment process that provides a holistic solution in terms of accessing the scheme in addition to a range of council services and we are working with Children's Services around Section 17 payments with this in mind. Furthermore, applications received which are covered through other provisions will be refused and applicants appropriately signposted and supported to access an alternative provision.