

Report

Report to:	Finance and Corporate Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	4 March 2020
Report by:	Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Revenue Collection and Approval for Write Offs
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ advise Committee of Revenue Collection performance for financial year 2019/2020 to 31 January 2020
- ◆ advise Committee of performance in the Business Rates Incentivisation Scheme (BRIS) to date
- ◆ seek approval for write offs

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that performance in the collection of revenue be noted;
- (2) that performance against the BRIS target be noted; and
- (3) that write offs for the following be approved:-

◆ Council Tax	£100,310.91
◆ Non-Domestic Rates	£635,990.18
◆ BID Levy	£1,861.73
◆ Sundry Debt	£651,930.52
◆ Housing Rent and associated charges	£137,562.44

3. Background

3.1. Responsibility for the collection of Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) and Sundry Debt is the responsibility of Finance and Corporate Resources. This report and the attached appendix provide information on collection performance and proposals for write off.

4. Current Collection Performance

4.1. The first table in Appendix 1 presents the collection performance for Council Tax, NDR and Sundry Debts for financial year 2019/2020.

4.2. The annual Council Tax collection target for 2019/2020 has been set at 95.8%. Council Tax collection is currently 94.34%, behind target by 0.21% and behind comparable performance in 2018/2019 by 0.18%.

4.3. A collection target of 98.0% for NDR has been set for 2019/2020. NDR collection is currently 92.1%, ahead of target by 0.1% and ahead of comparable performance in 2018/2019 by 0.1%.

- 4.4. The 2019/2020 annual target for Sundry Debt collection has been set at 98.0%. Sundry Debt collection to 31 January 2020 was 97.9%, below target by 0.1%.

5. Arrears Collection Performance

- 5.1. Arrears collection performance for Council Tax, NDR and Sundry Debt is presented in the second table of Appendix 1.
- 5.2. The 2019/2020 arrears annual target for Council Tax has been set at £3.500m, with collection to 31 January 2020 of £2.887m, behind target by £0.049m (1.4%).
- 5.3. The 2019/2020 arrears target for NDR has been set at £2.800m, with collection to 31 January 2020 of £1.084m, behind target by £1.370m (48.9%). The low arrears collection is directly related to a lower value of additions made to the valuation roll by the Assessor in March 2019.
- 5.4. The 2019/2020 arrears target for Sundry Debt has been set at £8.991m, with collection to 31 January 2020 of £8.250m, behind target by £0.156m (1.7%).

6. Business Rates Incentivisation Scheme

- 6.1. The Business Rates Incentivisation Scheme (BRIS) is a Scottish Government initiative to incentivise growth of the local business tax base, with a view to increasing NDR income yields.
- 6.2. The Scottish Government sets annual targets for growth (buoyancy) and Councils who achieve their target retain 50% of the additional income generated.
- 6.3. The provisional annual buoyancy target for South Lanarkshire Council in 2019/2020 has been set by the Scottish Government at 1.0%. This is a measure of the increase in the total rateable value of the non-domestic properties on the Valuation Roll (including certain categories of public undertakings).
- 6.4. Performance against the BRIS target will be reported to Committee on a quarterly basis. Buoyancy for the third quarter, to the end of December 2019, was 1.69%.
- 6.5. The tax base has therefore already exceeded the provisional target by 0.69%, which may result in the securing of additional income under the Scheme.

7. Proposals for Write Off

- 7.1. Approval for write off of the following irrecoverable debts is requested from Committee. The Council has a statutory obligation to write off accounts where the debtor is deceased, sequestrated, in liquidation or the debt is prescribed.
- 7.2. The proposed write off of Council Tax accounts dating from 1993/1994 to 2019/2020 totals £100,310.91, relating mainly to prescribed debt, sequestrations and estates of the deceased.
- 7.3. The value of accounts currently marked for write off in the NDR system from rating years 2017/2018 to 2019/2020 totals £635,990.18. These debts are deemed to be irrecoverable because the debtor is in liquidation, has ceased trading or has been sequestrated.
- 7.4. Approval is sought for the write off of Business Improvement District (BID) Levies totalling £1,861.73, administered by the Council on behalf of the Hamilton, Carlisle and Lanark BID companies. There is no financial impact on the Council for these write offs.

- 7.5. Following consultation and agreement with Resources, the proposed write off of Sundry Debt totals £651,930.52.
- 7.6. Approval is sought for the write off of former tenant rent arrears of £89,529.58, factoring arrears of £130.23 and Housing Benefit Overpayments of £47,902.63.
- 7.7. A full list of all debts proposed for write off is held by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources).

8. Employee Implications

- 8.1. None.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1. Provision has been made for the financial impact of all write offs.

10. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 10.2. There are no Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications arising from the information presented in this report.

11. Other Implications

- 11.1. The main risk associated with the Council's revenue collection is a failure to monitor collection rates and take effective corrective action where required, resulting in a significant reduction in collection performance and Council funding. The risk is managed through monthly performance reporting and review of performance at monthly Senior Management Meetings.

12. Equalities Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 12.1. There is no requirement to carry out an impact assessment in terms of the proposals within this report.
- 12.2. There is no requirement to undertake any consultation in relation to the content of this report.

Paul Manning

Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

12 February 2020

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Accountable, effective, efficient and transparent
- ◆ Ambitious, self-aware and improving

Previous References

- ◆ Finance and Corporate Resources Committee - 11 December 2019

List of Background Papers

- ◆ System Reports from Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rates, Sundry Debt and Academy Housing

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact: -

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SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL
REVENUES COLLECTION
FOR PERIOD ENDING 31 JANUARY 2020

	Annual Cash Budget £000's	Budget Target to 31/01/20 £000's	Actual to 31/01/20 £000's	Variance to 31/01/20 £000's		% Variance to annual budget	Notes
FINANCIAL YEAR 2019/2020							
Council Tax	132,977	131,228	130,946	(282)	under	-0.21%	
Non-Domestic Rates	341,032	320,153	320,529	377	over	0.1%	
Sundry Debt	101,632	101,632	101,579	(53)	under	-0.1%	
ARREARS							
Council Tax	3,500	2,936	2,887	(49)	under	-1.4%	
Non-Domestic Rates	2,800	2,454	1,084	(1,370)	under	-48.9%	
Sundry Debt	8,991	8,406	8,250	(156)	under	-1.7%	