



Cabinet Member Report for Finance

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 9th March, 2020

Finance

On the 24 February 2020 the Council considered and approved the proposed Budget for 2020/2, with associated reports.

We are still awaiting the final Local Government Settlement, but do not anticipate any material change from the values they have indicated.

The Finance Team continue to busy with our External Auditor (EY), who are currently working through their audit of 2018-19 in December 2019. They will also be commencing preparatory work for the closedown of 2019-20.

The Budget Monitoring Report which will be going to Cabinet for discussion on 25 March 2020, will reflect that our overspend position is being managed and is coming down in year. Cabinet and Corporate Management Board, continue to mitigate the projected overspend and I am confident we may reduce the overspend further by year end.

Business Rate News

Northampton Borough Council is implementing the revised Government Business Rate Relief scheme that will benefit retail businesses in the town. Retail orientated Businesses with a rateable value of less than £51,000 in 2020/21 will be eligible for a discount of 50% of the business rates due, after all other discounts are applied. This is an increase in the discount provided previously and will mean that £2.4million of rate relief is given for retail businesses such as shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, post offices, charity shops and music venues.

The Council will also be implementing the Pubs discount, which will award up to £1,000 of additional relief to pubs and continuing with the other schemes it already has in place to support businesses.

This new version of the scheme is great news for small businesses in our area, and with the existing discounts as well, it will save them up to £9million during the next financial year, as part of our commitment to support the local economy.

Our Revenues and Benefits team are already applying the discount to approximately 2,800 businesses that they are certain qualify. We will also be contacting other businesses to see if they are also eligible for the discount and welcome enquiries to ensure we help as many businesses reduce their costs as possible.

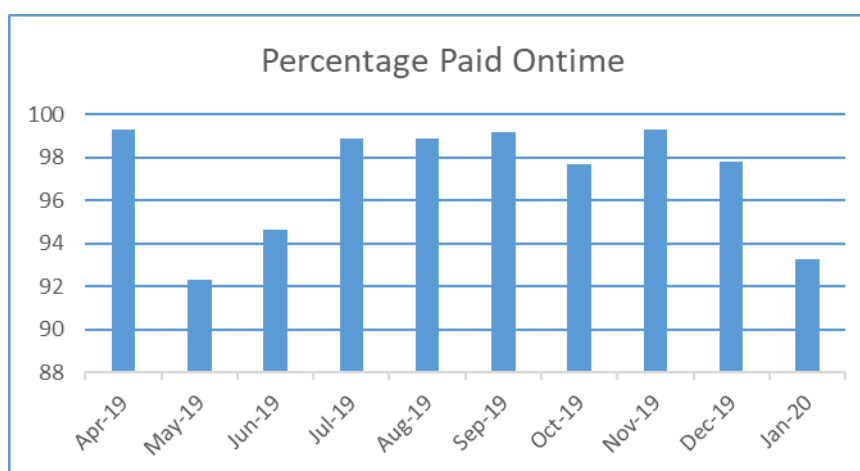
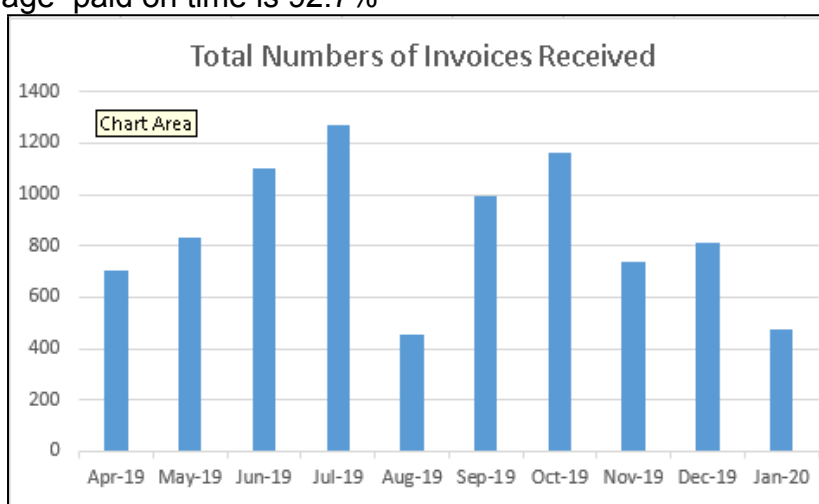
Revenues & Benefits

The Revenues and Benefits Service continues to deliver to service standards. I am pleased that we will be applying the same Council Tax Reduction Scheme in 2020/21 as we have applied in 2019/20, to help those most in need with support.

The Single Person Discount review is reaching a conclusion, with several households being invited to update their status as appropriate. SPD is a 'benefit' and misuse can be considered a fraud and the Council is required to administer DWP benefits correctly. This has had an 'administrative' impact on the collection rate profile, as the value to be collected increased as a result of this exercise. The Service is actively managing this and impact of an increase in 12 monthly instalments against the traditional 10 monthly instalments.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE / RECEIVABLE

The table below reflect that 8850 Invoices were received, up to the end of November 2019, the average paid on time is 92.7%



In respect of recorded sundry debt as at the end of January 2020 there was a total of £2,008,256.97 (excluding Housing Benefit Debt) on the sundry debtors system of which £766,883.4 was older than 61 days. The largest service area debt is Asset Management with £679,568.71 of debt. The CFO Governance Team continues to work with the Asset Management Team to improve processes, procedures and debt management to reduce the level of aged debt.

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

- Painting of meeting rooms and communal areas continues
- All maintenance requests complete within requisite timescale
- A total of 45,243 items of post dispatched
- 1,248 incoming documents scanned
- Overall scanning accuracy – 99.8%
- 1178 incoming Revs and Bens documents indexed in total
- Overall indexing accuracy – 99.4%, 3061 incoming Revs and Bens e-mails indexed
- High level cleaning programme commenced
- Hosted meetings for Reed Global, NCC, Age UK and Credit Union, a wedding Ceremony in the Gt Hall and filming of “the Fortune Cookie” in the Courtyard for the Lunar New Year.
- Secured over £4K of bookings for weddings and receptions and £1.7K for private and corporate bookings
- Out of 19 queries, 10 have confirmed bookings

NORTHAMPTON LOTTERY

Cllr King and I sponsored the launch of Northampton Lottery to support a wide range of local good causes. It has now been running for five months and in addition to the proceeds earned through their respective ticket sales, the five core causes, will each be receiving a cheque for £600.00 from the ‘central pot’.

The Council does not receive any funds from the lottery, all proceeds are disbursed to the good causes associated with the scheme.

- **78 Derngate**

The only house in England designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Now a multi award-winning visitor attraction offering an unforgettable day out in Northampton.

- **Delapré Abbey**

An urban country house and park alive with the possibilities of the present, surrounded by echoes of the past.

- **Inspiration FM**

A community led radio service, providing access, information, entertainment and training.

- **The Lewis Foundation**

Visits local hospitals every week with a trolley full of gifts for people to pick what they would like during cancer treatments, free of charge.

- **The Lowdown**

A counselling, sexual health and LGBTQ support service in Northamptonshire offering a free and confidential service six days a week to children and young adults.

<https://www.northamptonlottery.co.uk/>

Councillor Brandon Eldred
Cabinet Member for Finance