

**NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL REPORT**

To: Policy & Resources (Finance & Customer Services) Sub-Committee	Subject: Payment of Local Taxation & Benefit Update
From: Head of Revenue Services	
Date: 4 November 2015	Ref: BC / PD

**1. Introduction**

1.1. This report provides an update on the payment performance for Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates and the administration of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Scheme as at 31 October 2015.

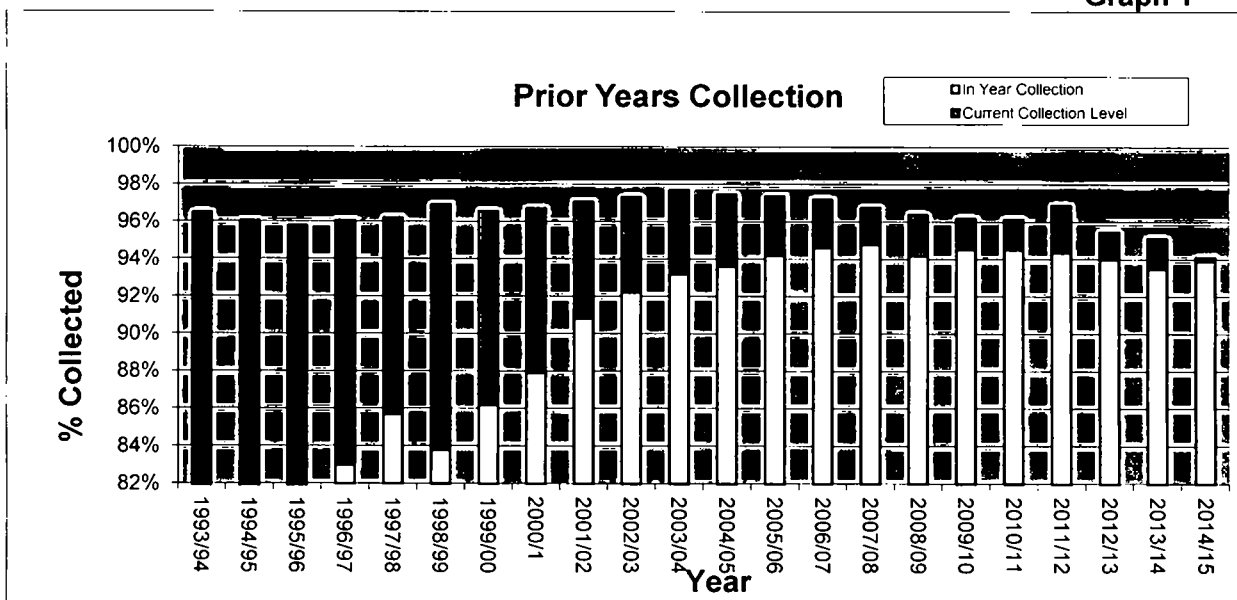
**2. Council Tax**

2.1. Details of the amount of Council Tax paid for the 2015/16 year together with comparable figures for the same period for the last financial year are shown below. This shows a performance of 64.8% at the end of October 2015 which is slightly lower than the collection level for the same period in 2014/15.

Council Tax Collection Performance			
Month	Current Year 2015/16	Previous Year 2014/15	Difference
April	10.5%	10.6%	-0.1%
May	19.3%	19.6%	-0.3%
June	28.6%	28.6%	-
July	37.7%	37.7%	-
August	46.6%	46.5%	0.1%
September	55.7%	55.8%	-0.1%
October	64.8%	65.1%	-0.3%

2.2. In regard to collection for earlier years during April 2015 to October 2015 a further £2.9m has been collected in respect of Council Tax and Water Charges. Graph 1 below shows the total percentage recovered for Council Tax for each of the prior years with 18 of the 22 previous years have now exceeded 96% payment levels, and 6 years having now achieved over 97%.

**Graph 1**



2.3. The Government introduced legislation to allow local authorities the opportunity to further address the difficulties that empty and under-used properties create within our communities. The underlying principle of the legislation is that the council tax charge can be increased once properties have been empty for 12 months. From 1 April 2014 the Council Tax has been subject to a 100% levy for those dwellings unoccupied for 12 months or more. Properties actively being marketed for sale or let are exempt from the levy. In addition to this second homes are not subject to the levy. This is the only exemption afforded by North Lanarkshire Council. As at 31 October 2015 in the current year 2015/16, 743 properties have been subject to the levy with a cumulative liability of £400,000.

### 3. Non Domestic Rates

3.1. Details of the amount of Non Domestic Rates (NDR) paid for the 2015/16 year together with comparable figures for the same period for the last financial year are shown (Table 2). This shows a performance of 63.1% collection as at 31 October 2015 which is equivalent to the position at the same stage last year.

**Table 2**

Non Domestic Rates Payment Performance			
Month	Current Year 2015/16	Previous Year 2014/15	Movement
April	1.5%	1.5%	-
May	10.0%	9.1%	0.9%
June	19.0%	18.5%	0.5%
July	26.5%	26.2%	0.3%
August	34.2%	33.4%	0.8%
September	54.7%	54.1%	0.6%
October	63.1%	63.1%	-

### 4. Benefits Update

#### 4.1. Speed of Processing Indicators

4.1.1. New Claims – This indicator shows the average number of days taken to process a new claim.

Year to Date average from April 2014 to October 2015 = 24 days.

4.1.2. Change Events – This indicator shows the average number of days taken to process change events.

Year to Date average from April 2014 to October 2015 = 9 days.

This is comparable with the Scottish Average for quarter 1 of 2015/16 is 24 days for new claims and 9 days for changes.

## 5. Council Tax Reduction Scheme

5.1. From 1 April 2013 Council Tax Benefit (CTB) was replaced with the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS). The table below shows the change in total awards by month 2012/13, the last year of CTB, to 2015/16.

Table 3

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	Change 2012/13 to 2013/14	Change 2012/13 to 2014/15	Change 2012/13 to 2015/16
Month	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
April	£25.99	£25.86	£24.85	£23.89	-£0.13	-£1.14	-£2.11
May	£25.92	£25.84	£24.95	£23.79	-£0.08	-£0.97	-£2.13
June	£26.01	£25.82	£24.90	£23.77	-£0.19	-£1.11	-£2.24
July	£26.10	£25.91	£24.93	£23.71	-£0.18	-£1.16	-£2.39
August	£26.20	£25.84	£24.97	£23.66	-£0.36	-£1.22	-£2.54
September	£26.14	£25.74	£24.90	£23.55	-£0.39	-£1.23	-£2.58
October	£26.14	£25.64	£24.81	£23.56	-£0.50	-£1.33	-£2.58
November	£26.20	£25.56	£24.74		-£0.64	-£1.46	
December	£26.21	£25.54	£24.66		-£0.67	-£1.54	
January	£26.21	£25.56	£24.51		-£0.65	-£1.70	
February	£26.28	£25.57	£24.44		-£0.71	-£1.84	
March	£26.30	£25.55	£24.44		-£0.75	-£1.86	

5.2. The award level for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme continues to be lower than in the previous years.

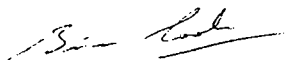
## 6. Discretionary Housing Payments

6.1 From 1 April 2014 the Scottish Government have increased the funding made available from DWP to mitigate "Bedroom Tax" reductions. In addition the DHP fund is used to support claimants affected by Benefit Cap, LHA restrictions and adhoc reasons such as financial hardship, assistance into work etc.

The projected spend for 2015/16 on the estimated total number of application for the year is £3.535m. As at 31 October 2015 £3,444,048 has been paid or committed from the fund for all successful applications received to date.

## 7. Recommendation

7.1. Members are asked to note the report.



### Head of Revenue Services

Members seeking further information on the contents of this report are asked to contact Mr. Brian Cook, Head of Revenue Services on 01698 403929