



**Fit for the Future**

**Fundamental Service Review – Revenues &  
Benefits**

**Invitation to Quote (ITQ)**

**Consultants' Brief**

**12 February 2019**

**Deadline for submission – noon, 4 March 2019**

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## The Client

1. The client for this work is:

Lichfield District Council  
District Council House  
Frog Lane  
Lichfield  
Staffordshire  
WS13 6ZD

## Main Contacts

2. All enquiries relating to this project should be directed via email to:

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Telephone:	07500 883171

3. The Lead Officer for the Council is Mrs Pat Leybourne, Head of Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits.

## Deadline for receipt of proposals

4. The deadline for submission of quotes to carry out this work is by email to the above email address by noon on 4 March 2019.

## Introduction

### An introduction to Lichfield District

5. Lichfield District is located in Staffordshire and borders the city of Birmingham. It has two main urban settlements – the cathedral city of Lichfield and the town of Burntwood – and a number of villages. It has an approximate population of 103,500 in 45,000 households broadly divided between each of the 2 urban areas and the rural areas.
6. It has a relatively affluent population although there are pockets of deprivation. The population is generally educated, digitally enabled albeit ageing.
7. More detail on the socio-economic characteristics of the district can be found in **Appendix A**.

## Lichfield District Council

8. Lichfield District Council is responsible for the usual functions of a district/borough council operating in a two tier shire county.
9. The Council has net revenue expenditure of c£12m and employs approximately 308 staff. It does not hold any housing stock and it has outsourced the management of its theatre and leisure centres to leisure and cultural trusts. It operates its waste service in-house in partnership with Tamworth Borough Council. Further information about the Council is contained in **Appendix B**.
10. The Council's 2016-20 Strategic Plan has four strategic ambitions:
  - a. to enable a vibrant and prosperous economy
  - b. to provide clean, green and welcoming places to live
  - c. to foster healthy and safe communities, and
  - d. to be a Council that is fit for the future.
11. The council is organised into 2 directorates – Place & Community and Transformation & Resources - and then divided into 9 separate services, including **Customer Services, Revenues, & Benefits**.

## The Fit for the Future Programme

12. The Council is delivering its Fit for the Future programme, which is a comprehensive, corporate, cross-departmental transformation programme with the following objectives:
  - To embed a culture of change and continuous improvement within the organisation so that it is better placed to play its future role
  - To support the delivery of the outcomes described within the Strategic Plan 2016-20 and prepare for the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan
  - To improve the customer experience of dealing with the Council whether that be digitally or through more traditional contact routes
  - To move the Council towards becoming a more self-sufficient and sustainable organisation
  - To nurture and support the Council's ambition to be more commercial in everything that it does
13. The programme is based upon three separate pillars:
  - **Becoming a better, more corporate Council** - To encourage a greater sense of one Council, this pillar will deliver improvements to the way in which the Council approaches its corporate challenges, including the way it recruits and retains talent, manages and exploits its assets, approaches its commissioning and procurement, and manages its overheads
  - **Delivering better and more cost-efficient services** – to ensure that the Council delivers services that are cost-effective, valued by the customer, digital by default, and contribute to the delivery of the Strategic Plan
  - **Becoming a more commercial and innovative Council** – to nurture a culture which is more dynamic, is financially and commercially savvy, and for this culture to be exhibited in specific work packages including: the implementation of the Property Investment Strategy; the way in which we set fees and charges; the establishment of Local Authority housing and trading companies; the implementation and exploitation digital opportunities.

14. The Fit for the Future programme will comprise a series of Fast Reviews and Fundamental Reviews. Fast Reviews are assessing our working practices and making recommendations as to how work processes can be streamlined, digitised and made more efficient with a view to reducing costs and improving the customer experience.
15. Fundamental Reviews of specific services are intended to be more in-depth with the prospect of more radical recommendations for action. Fundamental Reviews will be led by the relevant Director / Head of Service, **with support provided by consultants**, and will ask why we do what we do, what customers we have and what they need, assess the options for delivery and recommend actions to improve, in order to reduce costs and to increase income.
16. This brief seeks proposals from suitably skilled and experienced consultants for a Fundamental Review of the council's Revenues and Benefits Service.

## Revenues & Benefits

### Background to the service

17. The service supports the strategic plan in the following ways:
  - Vibrant and prosperous economy - We collect business rates and ensure that any reductions to the rates, by way of reliefs and exemptions are applied. We support the Lichfield Business Improvement District (BID) by collecting their income
  - Clean, green and welcoming places to live - We provide housing benefit and council tax support to citizens who are on a low income to support them living in their homes
  - A council that is fit for the future - Our customer service team, Lichfield Connects, supports all the services across the Council providing telephony, customer relationship management systems and face-to-face services. Our Revenues team ensure that all debts to the Council are subject to our recovery processes, including the prompt billing and collection of council tax and business rates
18. However, we also face significant financial challenges and know that there is more that we can do to improve the customer experience in dealing with the Council.
19. The service consists of three teams:
  - **Customer services** – deal with front-line enquiries both by phone and face-to-face. Unless an issue is particularly complex, they will answer the majority of customer enquiries. The team includes specialist advisors who deal with the majority of revenues and benefits calls.

The Connects team has a staff of 5.8 FTE.
  - **Revenues** - the service collects council tax, non-domestic rates, business improvement district (BID) levy, and the council's sundry debts. The team is divided further into 2 distinct teams – billing and recovery. There are 9 FTE.
  - **Benefits** – the administration of claims for housing benefits (a limited cohort of customers since the introduction of Universal Credit), for discretionary housing support, and for local council tax support.

There are 6.8 FTE. A small team of specialist advisors for revenues and benefits sit in customer services.

The team's 2018/19 Service Plan is attached at **Appendix C** and its current organisational chart is attached at **Appendix D**.

20. The revenues and benefits service is a statutory service.

21. The customers for the Revenues service are:

- 45,462 domestic properties paying council tax
- 3,059 businesses paying business rates
- 560 businesses paying a BID levy
- The finance team – the service needs to provide accurate, timely financial data regularly.

22. The customers for the Benefits service are:

- Approximately 3,521 HB claimants and 5,132 CTR applicants
- Housing – supporting processes to prevent homelessness
- Landlords portal - 60 out of 100 have signed up

23. The Council works in partnership with other Council's across Staffordshire regarding their council tax reduction scheme and discount fraud scheme.

### **Performance**

24. In 2017/18 the council collected 98.86% of council tax due in that year and 98.96% of business rates due in that year.

25. New build properties are bought into the valuation list of date of completion rather than date of occupation, ensuring the maximum income from council tax for the property.

26. The council's processing times for claims and changes in circumstances for benefit claims is 18.8 days and 4.95 days respectively; this compares well to the average processing time for a housing benefit claim of 23 days and for a change of circumstance of 7 days, as per data published by DWP for April to June 2018.

### **Key Systems**

27. Key systems and outsourced services are provided by:

- Northgate Public Services provide the revenues and benefits software
- Civica document management system for storing data and workflow
- Jadu provides the customer portal to be used to provide access to Northgate and customer accounts
- Oracle financials (hosted by Solihull Council)
- Bristow and Sutor / Equita – enforcement agents

28. Northgate Public Services provides the revenues and benefits processing systems, including a landlord's portal and digital forms that integrate into the back-office system. The contract for the forms is due to end on 30 September 2019 but may be extended as the contract for the revenues and benefits software ends on 31 March 2020. Civica provides a Document Management System.
29. Digitisation of these services through channel shift and self-service online has started but is very much work-in-progress. Benefits claims are now all undertaken online whether with Connects support or by the customer independently. Approximately 62% of claims / change notifications etc. are completed without any support from Connects.
30. To date, 1381 customers with live accounts have registered for ebilling of council tax / business rate bills. 275 customers have signed up for notifications for housing benefit and council tax support. Since May 2018, when online forms were introduced, 6,514 forms have been submitted.
31. It is expected that there will be an initial marketing campaign to promote this opportunity later in the spring. An overview of the functions that can be undertaken online are summarised in the attached **Appendix D**.
32. The budget of the entire service area is as follows:

<b>Budget Costs</b>	<b>Budget 2018/19 £'000</b>	<b>Budget 2019/20 £'000</b>	<b>Budget 2020/21 £'000</b>
Employees	1,274	1,314	1,330
Premises	0	0	0
Transport	22	22	22
Supplies & Services	264	271	278
Third Party Payments	0	0	0
Transfer Payments (HB payments)	19,970	19,970	19,970
Central Support	1,682	1,712	1,679
Capital Charges	4	4	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>23,216</b>	<b>23,293</b>	<b>23,279</b>
External Income (HB payments)	(20,805)	(20,785)	(20,765)
Recharges to Other Services	(1,318)	(1,354)	(1,347)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>(22,122)</b>	<b>(22,139)</b>	<b>(22,111)</b>
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>1,094</b>	<b>1,155</b>	<b>1,168</b>
<b>Net Direct Expenditure</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>836</b>

33. Further details are contained in the Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2018/19, attached as **Appendix 3**.

## The Project

34. Lichfield District Council is seeking proposals from suitably qualified organisations to help inform the future approach of the Council towards delivering better and more cost-efficient services.
35. The council is keen to understand more clearly why we do what we do, the experience and expectation of our customers, and whether we could achieve our required outcomes in a more cost effective and customer friendly manner.
36. Specifically, the Council is keen to understand the current performance of the service, in terms of operational and financial performance compared with similar councils that operate using a similar or alternative operating models. In consequence, we expect there to be a clear and reasoned recommendation as to the most advantageous operating model for the service in the future.
37. We would expect consultants to consider and advise on whether there is any potential or appetite from neighbouring councils to work more closely to provide this service.
38. In particular, the Council will be seeking insight to the following questions:
  1. *How does the current operational and financial performance of the service compare when measured against similar sized councils using a similar delivery model?*
  2. *How does the current operational and financial performance of the service compare when measured against similar sized councils operating using alternative delivery models?*
  3. *What are the main explanations for any differences between the council's existing performance and the benchmarking findings?*
  4. *Based on an assessment of options, what is the optimal delivery model for the council?*
  5. *What are the key steps and timescales in adopting the optimal delivery model?*
  6. *What are the estimated financial implications, if any, in adopting the recommended delivery model, which may be remaining in house and improving, both in terms of one-off costs and ongoing revenue implications?*
  7. *What is the likely impact on the customer experience of the recommended delivery model?*

## Project Requirements

39. It is expected that the project will include a range of methods of collating and analysing data to assess the current service and compare it to data across other comparable organisations, and to use this to provide a report that addresses the specific questions above and provide a clear recommendation on the future direction for the service.



40. Alternative service delivery model options to be considered may include:

- In-house and improve but bearing in mind that there will be a requirement to undertake a procurement for suitable revenues and benefits software
- Shared service with neighbouring or other council, or contracting with another council, either as the client or contractor
- Outsource to a non-public sector organisation (although the reasons why some councils have reverted back to an in house service need to be highlighted)
- Establish and operate through Local Authority Trading Company or staff mutual

41. It is expected that the project will conclude with a report and presentation to Cabinet which includes an appraisal of the options, and a reasoned recommendation which has been costed and key milestones identified.

## Budget

42. A maximum sum of £15,000 inclusive of all fees and expenses and any procurement framework fees, but net of VAT has been allocated to complete this work.

## Personnel

43. The Council would expect all personnel employed on the project to be appropriately skilled and qualified commensurate with the level of work to be apportioned to them. It is expected that CVs of key team members will be provided.

## Reporting Arrangements

44. Whilst the project is in progress, the Consultant will report regularly to the Review's Project Board, chaired by the Head of Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits.

45. It is expected that the final report and recommendations will be presented to the Board, shared with the Council's Strategic (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee and finally to Cabinet for decision.

## Project Milestones and Timeframe

46. It is anticipated that the work should take no longer than **four months**, beginning with an initial meeting that will provide clarity on scope, activity and key milestones (project initiation meeting).

47. The expected key milestones and deadlines for this work are:

<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Due date</b>
Kick start meeting on or around	1 April
Detailed project plan agreed	5 April
Progress meeting – initial indications, any issues	26 April
Progress meeting – first draft report of findings and recommendations	24 May
Progress meeting – final report and presentation of findings and recommendations	31 May
Presentation of report and emerging recommendations to O&S Committee	24 June
Presentation of final report and recommendations to Cabinet	9 July

## Submitting Proposals

48. A proposal should be provided comprising your **detailed approach/method** for delivering the work, an **outline project plan** with indicative timescales and resource allocations including costs, together with a **fee quote** broken down into individual consultant days and rates.
49. The following company information is required to assist us in the proposal selection process:
- Name of the organisation making the tender
  - Main address for correspondence
  - Address of registered office (if different from above)
  - Name and position of person applying on behalf of the organisation
  - Telephone and e-mail of main contact
50. The Council will expect that the successful contractor will have a Professional Indemnity Insurance policy to a value of at least £2million. A copy of the policy certificate should be included in your proposal.
51. The following questions should be addressed in your proposal:
1. What is your approach and methodology for delivering the review?
  2. What similar commissions have you previously undertaken? Please provide confirmation of the team you plan to use (including any external resources to your company) detailing particular skills, relevant experience and qualifications together with short CVs for up to three key members of the team including lead consultant and project manager.
  3. What is your proposed programme to meet timescales for the key stages of the review, indicating any key dependencies or risks to delivery?
  4. What is the full fee proposal for the commission and what are the fee rates for each member of the team including hourly rates and time to be spent on the commission by each member of the team?
  5. Please provide the names and contract details of three referees from other councils for whom you have undertaken similar work.

## Evaluation Criteria

52. It is anticipated that the Council will evaluate proposals using the following criteria:

- Quality and realism of the proposed methodology
- A coherent project plan with cost breakdown by stage
- Previous experience of similar projects with district or borough councils
- Total cost for project

53. The Council will also be checking the following:

- references
- cost per consultant day
- insurance cover
- financial security and sustainability of the organisation

## Scoring

54. Each proposal will be evaluated against the following criteria and scored / weighted on the following basis:

Criteria	%
Approach and Realism of the Proposed Methodology	20%
A coherent project plan with cost breakdown	35%
Previous experience of similar projects with district or borough councils	35%
Total cost for project	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

55. Each criteria, except for cost, will be marked on a scale of 1-5 as follows:

- 1 = does not meet the requirements of the brief
- 2 = meets some of the requirements
- 3 = Meets most of the requirements
- 4 = Meets all of the requirements
- 5 = Exceeds the requirements

56. The total cost will be evaluated using the following methodology:

Lowest quoted price will be awarded 5 marks.

Other quoted prices will be awarded marks in direct inverse proportion to the lowest quoted price.

So a price twice as expensive will receive 2.5 marks.

## Tender Timetable

57. The proposed timetable for appointing a consultant to undertake this review is as follows, although actual timings may vary:

Activity	Estimated date
Issue Invitation To Quote (ITQ)	12 Feb
Proposal/Quote submission deadline	4 March
Proposals evaluated and project board meeting	11 March
Interviews of shortlist of no more than 3	20 March
Consultant appointed	22 March
Contract agreed and kickstart meeting on or around	1 April

## Appendices

No.	Title
A	Lichfield Locality Profile September 2018
B	Strategic Plan
C	Customer Services Revenues & Benefits Service Plan 2018/19
D	Current Organisational Chart
E	Customer Access Systems Maps
F	Services available digitally

## Appendix A

See Lichfield Locality Profile September 2018

## Appendix B

See Lichfield District Council's Strategic Plan

# Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits

## Service plan 2018-19

### Our service

Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits are 3 teams, all serving the public directly.

The service supports the **strategic plan** in the following ways

- Vibrant and prosperous economy. We collect business rates and ensure that any reductions to the rates, by way of reliefs and exemptions are applied. We support the Lichfield Business Improvement District (BID) by collecting their income.
- Clean, green and welcoming places to live. We provide housing benefit and council tax support to citizens who are on a low income to support them living in their homes.
- A council that is fit for the future. Our customer service team – Lichfield Connects, support all the services across the council providing a telephony and face to face services. We ensure that all debts to the council are subject to our recovery processes; including the prompt billing and collection of council tax and business rates.

### Lichfield Connects

Lichfield Connects Customer Service Team are a 'shop window' of the District Council. The main purpose of the service is to deliver excellent customer service to the satisfaction of both external and internal customers. We follow the council's customer promise. We aim to protect and enhance the reputation of the organisation as a whole.

The team interact with customers by phone, face to face and in writing, providing a meet and greet reception service receiving visitors for the council, Police and Staffordshire Social Care and Health.

The Team is mainly made up of three teams:-

- **Specialist advisors** - are primarily the first point of contact for revenues and benefit customers. They are also responsible for scanning and indexing incoming post. More recently following a service review they are processing more transactions for council tax customers at first point of contact rather than passing customer to back office staff this has shown a reduction in the number of calls into the contact centre allowing more time to spend helping our more vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community .
- **Generic advisors** - are the first point of contact for Joint waste (including the new garden waste charging service), Street Scene, Environmental health (including taxi Licences), Planning and general enquiries. They are also responsible for delivering services on behalf of Staffordshire Social Care and Health.
- **Reception and Post** – this team meet and greet customers visiting the organisation they also signpost customers to other organisations e.g. police, tourism, libraries, food banks, CAB and the housing homeless team are just a small number, they also deal with incoming and outgoing post.





## Customer Service – Our Pledge

- We promise to deal with requests for service or enquiries as much as possible at the first point of contact including making referrals to other organisations where necessary.
- We promise a service which is clear, unambiguous, using plain English.
- We are customer-centred, involving and listening to customers in a warm, friendly and empathetic manner.
- We aim to provide equality of service and equal levels of satisfaction across our diverse communities we serve.
- When things go wrong we aim to recover the service rapidly, and put things in place to avoid impacting on our customer service.
- We are a team who are capable of adapting to changing needs to both external and internal customers.
- We use a variety of communication mechanisms which are tailored to the needs of our customers.
- We ensure our staff are appropriately trained and skilled to be able to provide sound and reliable advice to customers and to deal with their needs promptly and effectively.

The service is impacted upon by:

- The number of telephone and face to face customer contacts. In 2017/18 127,172 telephone calls were handled and 21,464 face to face enquiries were dealt with.
- Poor service delivery e.g. missing bins, outstanding work within back office teams will inevitably increase the number of contacts – that could be calls or face to face visits .
- Initiatives developed by departments within the council that provoke customer contact.
- External factors – Welfare reform, changes in legislation.

## In the year ahead

We will:

- Improve our services to customers with the introduction of a single customer account enabling them to create an account to see the services they use, providing the facility to do online transactions.
- Support teams across the council with the implementation of online transactions.
- We will continue to explore and develop new ways of working to improve efficiency and enhance the service we provide, particularly by taking advantage of new technology.
- We will continue to train our staff so they are able to embrace new ways of working and are able to deliver an enhanced service to our customers “going that extra mile”.
- Continue to manage the performance of the team.
- Empower our staff so that they stay motivated, feel valued and trusted to deliver excellent customer service.

## Revenues

The Revenues Team deal with the billing of council tax and business rates and the collection of all outstanding debts to the council across all services. Council tax and business rates are statutory services administered in accordance with legislation and supported by council policy where required. The processes and procedures from billing to collection are largely within the council’s jurisdiction.

Council tax and business rates are key income streams into the council of around £5.5 million and 13.5 million respectively and collection rates for 2016/17 (in year) were 98.8% for council tax and 97.5% for business rates.

The team also collect the income for the Business Improvement District and have achieved a collection rate of 99.2% in 2016/17. (Billing year runs from 1 October to 30 September)

Within revenues is the corporate recovery team who recover all debts owed to the council where the customer has failed to pay following a reminder. All debts are subject to the debt recovery policy and the team use all methods of recovery available.

Invoices for services other than council tax and business rates, are raised by the department responsible for providing the goods and services. In February 2018 the corporate recovery team took full responsibility for the collection of all unpaid invoices.

### Key Activities

- Liabilities for council tax and business rates will be calculated correctly and the bill issued in a timely manner.
- Any debt not paid will be pursued in a firm and fair manner, using all options available to secure payment.
- We will support customers who have financial difficulties and unable to pay by making a suitable payment plan and signposting them to external assistance.
- We will work with customers to prevent additional costs being added to their account by way of court fees and enforcement agent fees.
- We will adhere to legislation and local policies.
- Deal with our customers and all incoming work in accordance with our corporate standards.
- Support the council's services by maximising collection of income.
- Complete in an accurate and timely manner key government returns.

The service is impacted by:

- The numbers of domestic dwellings and businesses. As more houses are built, the workload will increase.
- The numbers of customers: to managing their accounts online, reporting changes in occupancy and households and accessing information.
- Changes to legislation and case law which sets new precedents.
- The impact that changes in the delivery of services and a more commercialised council will have on the increase or decrease of invoices raised.

### In the year ahead

We will

- Implement on line forms to enable customers to self-serve, via the customer account.
- Introduce e-billing.
- Maintain high collection rates for council, business rates and BIDs.
- Review processes and procedures and write process notes.
- Manage the performance of the teams.
- Be part of a county initiative to review discounts and exemptions.
- Procure a new debtors system.
- Promote direct debit and review payment dates.
- Maximise new homes by reviewing empty properties and promptly issuing completion notices on new build properties.
- Empower our staff so that they can make confident decisions, stay motivated, feel valued and trusted to deliver excellent customer service.
- Review the Discretionary NDR relief policy.

## Benefits

The Benefit Assessment Team administer all claims for housing benefit (HB) and applications for council tax reduction (CTR), and changes in circumstances ensuring correct entitlements. This is a statutory service provided by the council but whilst HB is administered via legislation, CTR is a local scheme.

Housing Benefit payments are subsidised by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and in 2016/17 this resulted in a claim of £18.7m. Our decisions have an effect on the money we claim back in subsidy and we are penalised where our actions, or inactions, lead to overpayments.

In 2017/18 we received funding of £118k from the DWP for discretionary housing payments. (DHP) We used this money to help people who receive HB or the housing costs element of Universal Credit who are experiencing financial difficulties and need further help with their rent.

Our focus is to ensure people receive an excellent customer service and applications are dealt with in a timely manner. Our decisions make a difference for the most vulnerable people in our society. Where we are able to, we always aim to maximise entitlement which helps to reduce poverty in the community, ensuring people have the right help to pay their rent and council tax.

The team work very closely with Lichfield Connects and provide advice and guidance on the more technical matters.

In 2017/18 we launched 4 online benefit forms which mean our customers can now interact with us online, offering a better customer experience and facility for people to self-serve in the comfort of their own home.

Staffordshire County Council commissioned the local authority to carry out financial assessments for the provision of care and this is carried out by officers within the benefits team. SCC have given notice to take this service in August 2018.

### Key activities

- Process claims for housing benefit and applications for council tax support, ensuring accuracy and timely payments.
- Prioritise changes in circumstances to keep Local Authority errors at a minimum.
- Promoting the take up of DHPs.
- Ensure that the revenues and benefits system parameters are correct to ensure correct calculation of entitlement.
- Regular subsidy checking including estimates and final claims.
- Apply our discretion fairly and in accordance with policy guidance from the DWP.
- Review processes and procedures and write process notes.

The service is impacted upon by

- Welfare reform and other changes in legislation.
- Employment – a reduction will result in more claims/applications.

### In the year ahead

We will

- Implement the facility to e-mail benefit notifications.
- Process claims and applications within the performance target.
- Maximise take-up and encourage people to claim the benefits they are legally entitled.

- Award discretionary housing payments where people meet our criteria for help.
- Publicise and promote our online forms and encourage customers to wherever possible to self-serve.
- All Social Care financial assessments will be processed within the parameters set by SCC achieving the targets set by them.
- Work with Staffordshire County Council to facilitate the transfer of the fairer charging service.
- We will support our customers, giving clear explanations of the calculations made.
- Implement all changes in legislation and changes in the Welfare Reform Bill.
- Empower our staff so that they can make confident decisions, stay motivated, feel valued and trusted to deliver excellent customer service.

**In addition to all of the above we will commence a review of the service to inform the future procurement of the revenues and benefits software. This review will cut across all of the teams within the service**

## Our customers

### Lichfield Connects

As a front line service we deliver customer service to our residents and businesses (external customers) in support of the following services (internal customers):

- Joint Waste Services (Lichfield & Tamworth)
- Revenues (council tax and business rates)
- Council Tax Recovery
- Benefits
- Environmental Health (Pollution and Food Safety, Taxi Licensing)
- Housing (homelessness and advice)
- Street cleansing
- Grounds maintenance
- Car parking
- Planning
- Elections

### Stakeholders / Partners

- Providing access through Severn Trent Water Authority's portal for customers who wish to view district water/sewer maps.
- The team provides support for vulnerable adults who are unable to take care of their individual financial arrangements in partnership with Adult Social Care and Health and Staffordshire County Council. Individuals come into the offices daily/weekly for their personal allowance, holiday or funds for personal items.
- The Team also liaise with Social/Support workers if an appointees' health and wellbeing look to be deteriorating, so that action can be taken to ensure they are being cared for.
- The Team assist residents with blue badge on-line applications, some of our residents have no access to computers or family member who can assist them with the application process, the team will guide them through the process and input where necessary.
- The Team assist people who are in need of a crisis loan be liaising with Staffordshire County Council.

For other services eg waste, environmental health and street scene we use a customer relationship management system (CRM) which passes information through to back office systems without the need for manual intervention which is more efficient, cost effective and a much better service for the customer.

## **Revenues**

Our customers are

- 44,950 domestic properties paying council tax.
- 3,030 businesses paying business rates.
- 560 businesses paying a BID levy.
- The finance team – providing information for budget setting.

Our Stakeholders / Partners are

- Northgate Public Services provide the revenues and benefits software.
- Civica document management system for storing data and workflow.
- Oracle financials/Solihull.
- Bristow and Sutor – enforcement agents.
- Equita - enforcement agents.
- Department for Work and Pensions.
- Citizens Advice Bureau and other debt advisory agencies.
- Staffordshire County Council.
- Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local government.

## **Benefits**

Our customers are

- Approximately 3900 HB claimants and 5100 CTR applicants.
- 377 referrals for fairer charging assessments.
- 467 referrals for fairer charging re-assessments.
- Housing – supporting processes to prevent homelessness.
- Landlords portal - 60 out of 100 have signed up.

Our stakeholders / partners

- Northgate Public Services provide the revenues and benefits software.
- Civica document management system for storing data and workflow.
- Oracle financials/Solihull.
- Staffordshire County Council – Fairer charging services.
- Department for Work and Pensions.
- Job Centre Plus.

## Our action plan 2018/19

Objectives				Corporate priority
Summary of activity	To be done by	Responsibility	Teams required to support/deliver this action	Outcomes
Review the customer promise	December 2018	Customer Services Manager/Corporate Services	Communications	Improved customer service
Continue to support services to deliver the digital aspirations of the organisation by reviewing processes and building forms within the new CRM light	March 2019	Customer Service Manager/Systems Administrator	Communications/identified services (F4F)	Digital transformation/Improved customer/service efficiency/reduction in contacts made by phone/face to face
Decommission Lagan CRM	March 2019	Customer Service Manager/System Administrator	Regulatory Services/Street Scene Communications/	Current services are transferred from Lagan to Jadu XFP/CXM
Carry out PDR's	June 2018	Head of Service Customer Service Manager/Senior CSA/Income Manager/Assessment Manager	Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits teams	PDR's completed within time
Embed performance management	June 2018	Head of Service Customer Service Manager/Senior CSA/Income Manager/Assessment Manager	Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits teams	Improved performance and customer service

Complete the revenues and benefits service review	December 2018	Head of Service, Income Manager and Assessment Manager	IT HR	Improved processes for customer and efficiency savings
Review the structure	October 2018	Head of Service	HR	Ensure structure is appropriate Customer experience make sure the structure is fit for purpose following the introduction of the forms
Complete the implementation of the online revenues and benefit forms allowing customers to self serve	May 2018	Income Manager and Assessment Manager	IT	Implement the online forms Improved customer service – efficiency gain with integration of forms to back office systems
Replace the sundry debtor system	September 2018	Head of Service, Income Manager	IT Head of Finance	Replace current system that is being de-supported from June 2018 (but will still exist)
Direct debit campaign	October 2018	Income Manager	Communications	Improved collection rate and cash flow
Review of discount and exemptions	October 2018	Head of Service Income Manager	IT	Reduction in fraud and the application of penalties
Implement 2 week transitional Housing Benefit period for claims migrating to Universal Credit. Move temporary homeless accommodations claims back into Housing Benefit.	April 2018	Assessment Manager	Assessment team	Help people in the transition from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit.
Support the Fairer Charging team transferring to county (TUPE)	August 2018	Head of Service, Assessment Manager	SCC HR	Successful transfer of team to SCC

Automate Universal Credit forms in ATLAS	June 2018	Assessment Manager	Northgate System Manager	Efficiency gain with integration of forms to back office systems
Use DWP funding to reduce Fraud & Error (VEP)	March 2019	Assessment Manager	Assessment team	Reduce Fraud & Error
Review of the service to inform the future procurement of the revenues and benefits software	June 2018	Head of Service	IT	Prior to procuring a revenues and benefits system, and to ensure the best way of delivering the revenues and benefits service, explore outsourcing or sharing the service. The current revenues and benefits contract runs until March 2020
General Data Protection Regulation	May 2018	Head of Service, Customer Service Manager	Democratic and Legal Service/Communications/Services	Ensure we are ready to comply with the GDPR in all areas where customers information is stored
Review the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy	July 2018	Head of Service	Finance Economic Development	Ensure policy is fit for purpose to support/encourage businesses in Lichfield and promote economic growth

*Please note, this section will be considered by Leadership Team to ensure the organisation is prioritising the best activities and there is adequate resource to deliver the activities listed. You may be asked to provide further detail on projects in advance or during Leadership Team review.*



## Corporate KPIs

We have a number of corporate key performance indicators

<b>Performance indicator</b>	<b>Target for 2018/19</b>
Number of face to face enquiries for revenues and benefits service	Reduce visits by 10%
Average waiting (minutes) to deal with face to face enquiries for the revenues and benefits service	8 minutes
Percentage of phone calls not answered by the Connects team	5%
Processing time for new Housing Benefit claims/ and Council Tax Reduction applications	18 days/20 days
Processing time for changes in circumstances for Housing Benefit claims and LCTS applications	8 days
Council Tax collection rate (in year)	98.5%
Non Domestic Rate collection rate (in year)	98.5%

## KPIs and performance measures

In addition to corporate performance measures recorded on Pentana the additional performance measures are monitored

KPI (key performance indicator)	Description	Source	How often do you collect it?	Target
Outstanding work processes	Volume of work in progress and date of oldest piece of work	Document management system	Monthly	Oldest piece of work (within our control) to be no older than 1 month
Staff performance (Customer Services)	We monitor the quality of service provided by members of the team by:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual call coaching</li> <li>• Checking length of time calls are taking</li> <li>• How long team members are unavailable to take calls</li> </ul>	Telephony call recording system Cisco contact centre telephony system	1-2-1 are carried out twice yearly	Consistency and Quality of contact centre staff
No of contacts	We monitor the number of contacts both face to face and by telephone	Cisco contact centre telephony system Counter call system	Monthly	No target set (this will be dependent on the success of the digital strategy)
No of Abandoned Calls	We monitor the number of calls abandoned by customers – We know that customers are likely to abandon a call if they are hearing messages recorded on the telephony system advising service specific messages	Cisco contact centre telephony system Counter call system	Monthly	No target set
Average length of waiting time	We monitor how long people are waiting to be seen/answered	Cisco contact centre telephony system Counter call system	Monthly	30 seconds for calls 8 mins face to face

## Our finances

Whilst the service is generally not one that is an income generator in itself, income is collected by the revenues team on behalf of the council and other precept authorities, and the team strive to maintain the excellent collection rates already achieved but also to improve them wherever possible.

Court costs are designated as an income in the budget that contribute towards the cost of the service, although they can only cover what has reasonably been incurred – they are not a source of income that can be increased for the benefit of the council.

Central government provide an administration grant for the purpose of administering housing benefit and local council tax support but this does not fully cover the cost of the service.

Benefit payments are covered by government subsidy with the exception of some penalty areas where claimants are overpaid or placed in bed and breakfast accommodation. If overpayments are collected in full, the authority will keep the 40% subsidy paid. This is a challenging area of debt recovery from those who are already on low incomes, however, every attempt is made to recover the debt albeit that arrangements are over a long period of time. It is not anticipated that any additional budgetary pressure will be experienced in this area.

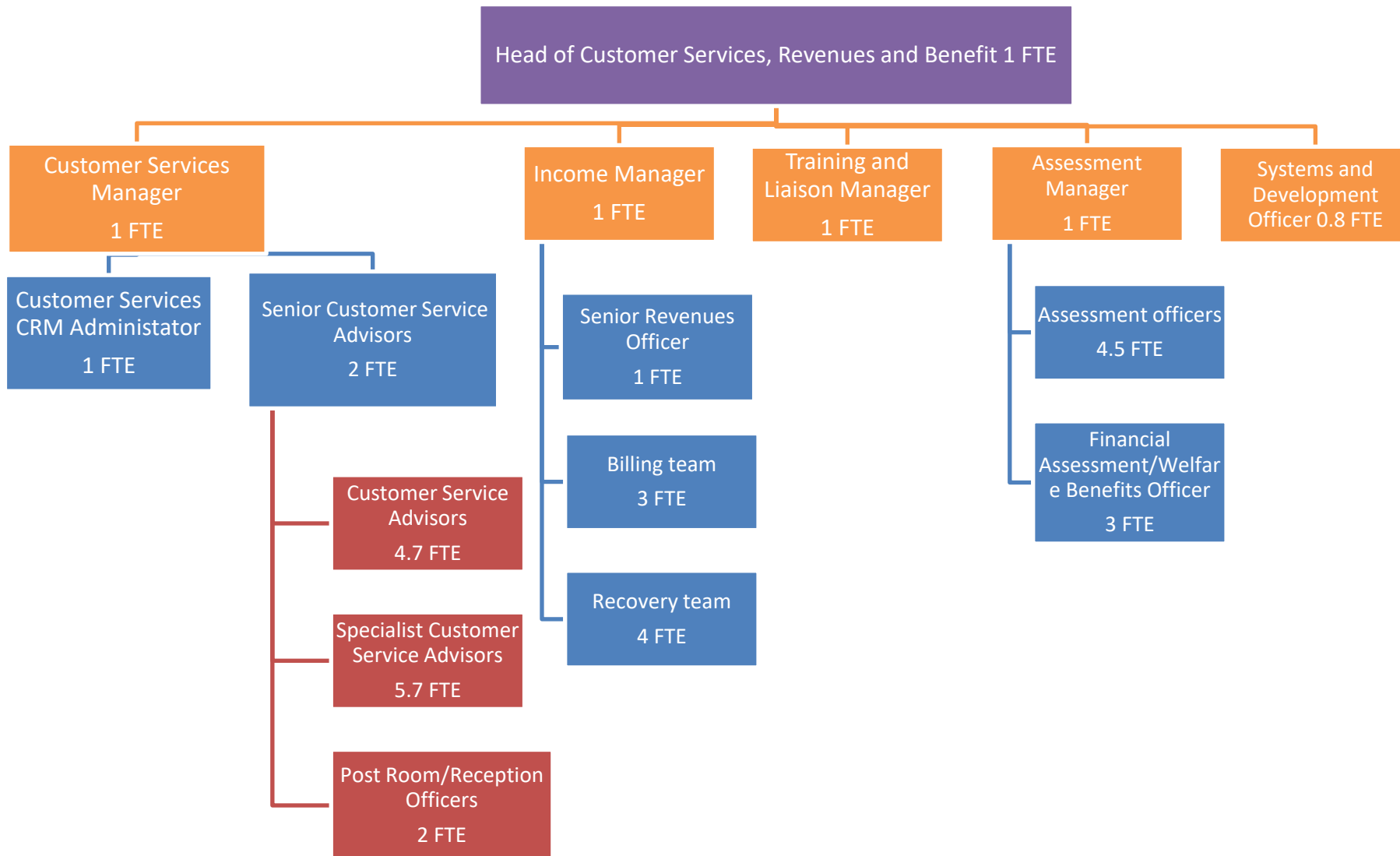
The cost of Lichfield Connects is underwritten by the services that use them.

The budgets have been set based on the current cost of the service but with the outcomes of the service review, in particular the introduction of the Northgate forms and the changes to the structure, efficiency and some minor cash savings, for example on printing and postage will be made. The government gives the local authority new burdens funding that has been used to fund improvements.

The main effect on budgets are due to legislative changes; the numbers of domestic and non-domestic dwellings increasing and an increased demand in Lichfield Connects from other services within the council.

Overall it is not anticipated that there will be any additional budgetary pressures on the service in the next year with the exception of the audit of the benefit subsidy, which is carried out by external auditors.

<b>Budget Costs</b>	<b>Original 2017/18 £'000</b>	<b>Revised 2017/18 £'000</b>	<b>Budget 2018/19 £'000</b>	<b>Budget 2019/20 £'000</b>	<b>Budget 2020/21 £'000</b>
Employees	1,256	1,290	1,274	1,314	1,330
Premises	0	0	0	0	0
Transport	23	20	22	22	22
Supplies & Services	284	349	264	271	278
Third Party Payments	0	0	0	0	0
Transfer Payments	19,970	20,197	19,970	19,970	19,970
Central Support	1,431	1,351	1,682	1,712	1,679
Capital Charges	5	5	4	4	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>22,969</b>	<b>23,211</b>	<b>23,216</b>	<b>23,293</b>	<b>23,279</b>
External Income	(20,832)	(21,133)	(20,805)	(20,785)	(20,765)
Recharges to Other Services	(1,052)	(1,035)	(1,318)	(1,354)	(1,347)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>(21,884)</b>	<b>(22,168)</b>	<b>(22,122)</b>	<b>(22,139)</b>	<b>(22,111)</b>
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>1,085</b>	<b>1,043</b>	<b>1,094</b>	<b>1,155</b>	<b>1,168</b>
<b>Net Direct Expenditure</b>	<b>702</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>836</b>



## The team structure

The structure is predicated around the volume of work and review of processes.

SCC are taking the Fairer Charging/Welfare Benefits Service back in August 2018.

The Training and Liaison Manager role has been deleted from the structure and a new Senior Assessment role (mirroring the role in the Revenues team) will be created.

Other changes being monitored are the uptake of:

- the single customer account
- the revenues and benefits forms
- universal credit

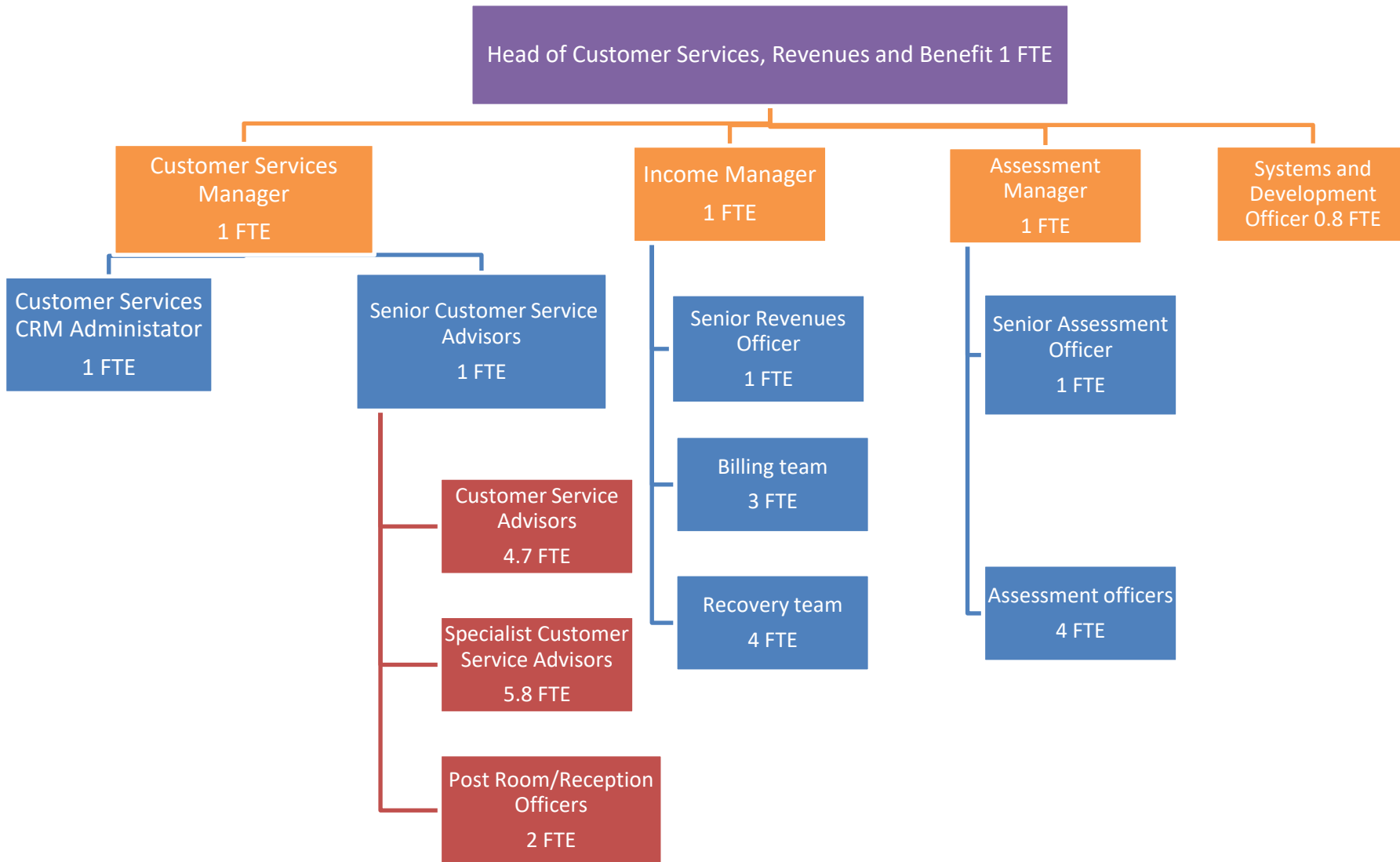
## About the risks facing our team

The key risks that may impact on the service are as follows:

Risk	Description	Risk type	Owner	Risk response			
				Impact	Likelihood	Score	Risk response
Adverse impact on workload caused by legislative changes	Revenues and Benefits are both subject to changes in legislation that can impact on resources	Financial Reputational	Service Manager	3	1	3	Tolerate
Adverse impact on workload caused by increase in properties	Increase in new builds within domestic and commercial sector	Financial Reputational	Service Manager	3	4	12	Tolerate but may have to use the services of temporary staff
Failure of IT systems	Processing of revenues and benefits work is entirely dependent on IT systems Telephony and CRM system Payment system	Financial Reputational	Head of Service/Head of Corporate Services	4	1	5	Robust business continuity plan
High volume of successful rating valuation appeals and the impact of a high court decision reinstating single rating for contiguous hereditaments	2017 revaluation, the introduction of Check, Challenge and Appeal and a significant decision in the Supreme court can impact on the revenue received by way of business rates	Financial Reputation	Head of Service/Head of Finance and Procurement	4	2	6	Tolerate
Increase in cost of bills	As the numbers of changes in circumstances increase, there will be a knock on effect on the council tax payments, which will generate further bills	Financial Reputational	Head of Service/Income Manager	2	2	4	Tolerate
Increase in work as a consequence of welfare reform	Whilst HB claims may reduce, the migration to UC may result in both an increase in new claims for CTS and a higher number of changes in circumstances	Financial Reputational	Assessment Manager	2	2	4	Tolerate. Use temporary staff if necessary

Website failure	The website is key to the delivery of the service	Financial Reputational	Communica- tions	4	1	5	Robust business continuity plan
Failure to move services from Lagan CRM before contract closure	Customer Services will not have a system for recording customer interactions /raising services for back office teams	Customer expectations/int ernal services unable to redesign services in time	Customer Service Manager	3	1	4	Tolerate
Adverse effect on the service at the end of the revenues and benefits software contract	If the service is transferred or the supplier changed, resources will be required to facilitate and this will affect the throughput of the work.	Financial Reputational	Head of Service	4	2	8	Business continuity and employ-ment of additional resources.



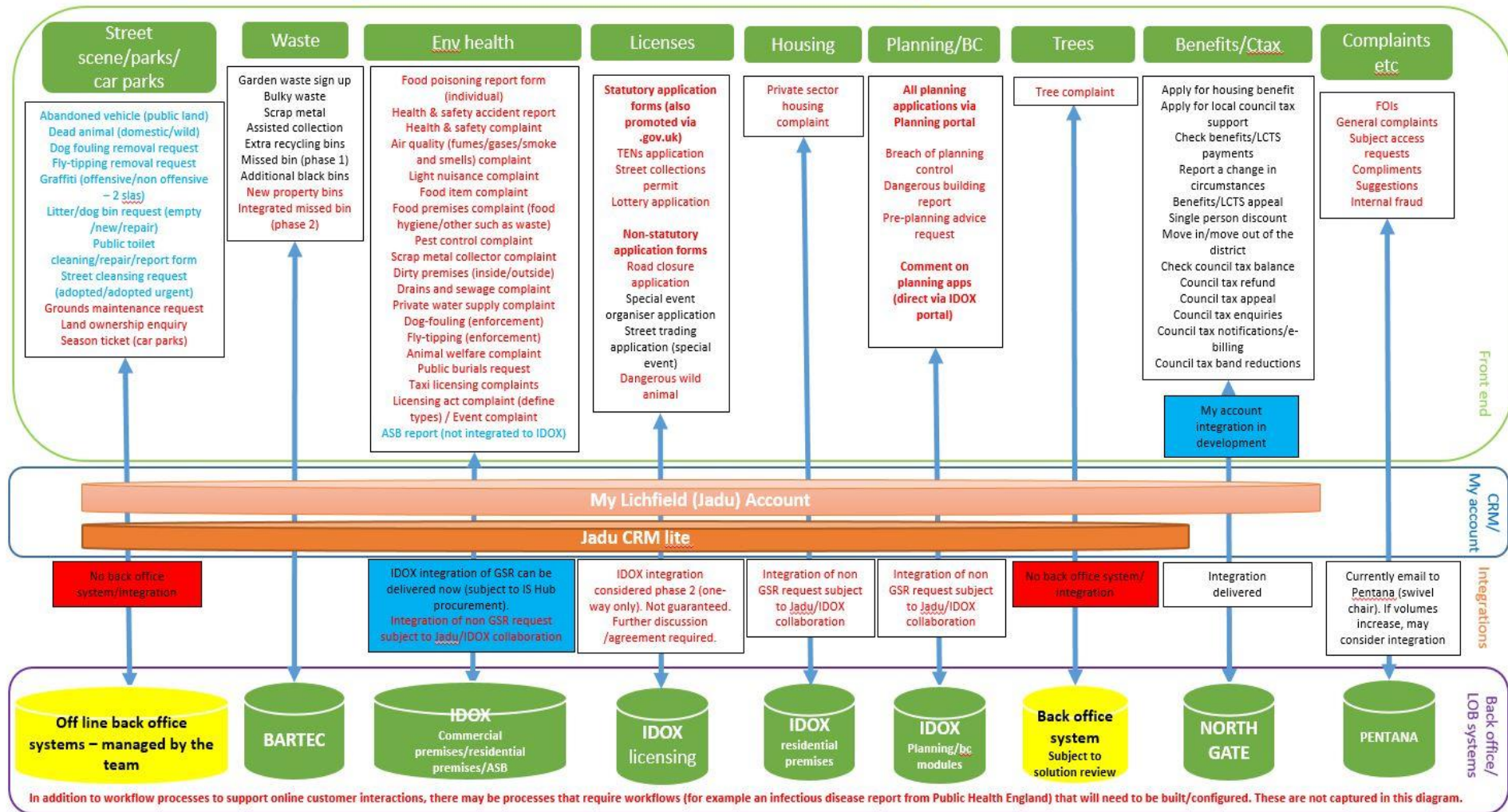


# Appendix E

Key:  
Delivered / Underway / To be developed

## What systems support resident requests

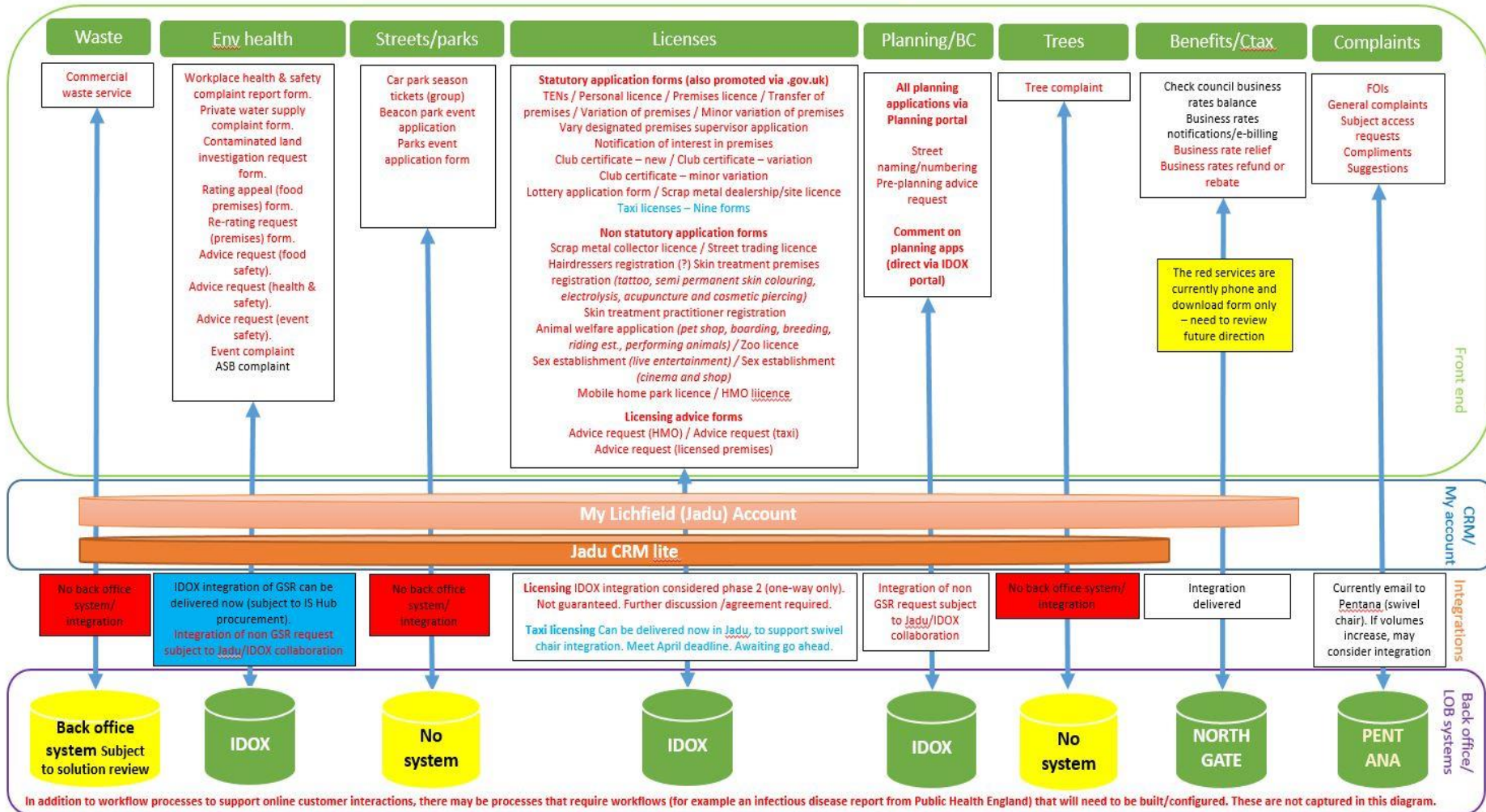
Resident customer access systems map February 2019



Key:  
Delivered / Underway / To be developed

## What systems support business requests

**Business customer access systems map** February 2019



# Appendix F

£ Pay for it

✓ Apply for it

✍ Report it

🗣 Voice it

🏠 Do it digital

## Do it digital

Please use our digital services below to request a wide range of services. We are adding new digital services on a regular basis as we know it's the easiest way for you to do business with us - at a time and place that suits you best!

### Bins

[Check your bin day](#)

[Report a missed bin](#)

[Sign up for a garden waste bin 2019](#)

[Order a replacement bin \(lost, broken or stolen\)](#)

[Order an extra blue bin for free](#)

[Request an assisted collection - if you struggle to get your bins to the kerbside](#)

[Request a medical, large family or nappy bin](#)

### Landlords

[Sign up to our landlords portal to see housing benefit payment information](#)

### Other waste services

[Book a bulky waste collection](#)

[Book a scrap metal collection \(including white goods\)](#)

### Council tax

[Set up your council tax account and view your bill online](#)

[Pay by direct debit](#)

[Apply for a single person discount](#)

[Tell us you have moved](#)

[Set up e-billing](#)

### Street reports (coming soon)

Report fly tipping

Report an abandoned vehicle

Report fly tipping

Report a street cleansing/maintenance issue

Report dog fouling

Report a problem with a litter/dog waste bin

### Housing benefit & local council tax support

[Apply for housing benefit and/or council tax support](#)

[Access your decision letters online](#)

[Report a change in circumstances](#)

[Report a change of address](#)

### Community reports (coming soon)

Report an issue in a public toilet

Report an anti-social behaviour issue

### Business rates

[Set up your business rates account](#)

[Update your business rates details](#)

[Set up e-billing](#)