

Revenues & Benefits, CSC Fraud & Compliance Service Plan 2024-25

Link to the full draft [Revenues & Benefits, CSC and Fraud & Compliance Team Service Plan](#)

2.1	<p>Service Objectives 2024-25</p> <p>Service level priorities we will deliver in 2024/25 which support the Council Plan Priorities; Better homes & communities, A greener East Devon, A resilient economy and quality services.</p>
2.1.1	<p><u>Priority 2 & 4 Sustainable Environment & Quality Services - Digital /Customer Access</u></p> <p>Telephony:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replacement of the call centre telephony system – see key project plan (on Strata Business plan & Comms, Transformation team). <p>Online Services (via Gov Services) system including automation to reduce the amount of paper bills issued, reduce postage costs and staff efficiencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self Service / e-billing for Council Tax and Business Rates - To market and promote once live. • Replace the existing council tax move in / move out changes form to create greater efficiencies including automation. • Replace all the council tax discount/exemption review forms with an online intelligent form to streamline process with the aim of greater automation into the back office system and reduced postage/printing costs • Updating the existing Council Tax Reduction Form (phase 2) to become more intelligent by automatically calculating entitlement to achieve reductions in manual processing. • Remaining Housing Benefit forms to be made available in Gov Services with integrations into back-office system. • Apply for Business Rates Discretionary Rate Relief. • Moving all emails (via CSC) onto gov service contact us form.
2.1.2	<p><u>Priority 3 & 4 Resilient Economy & Quality Services</u></p> <p><u>Implement legislative changes in Business Rates and Council Tax:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to Council Tax Second Home charges (April 2025) • Change to Council Tax Empty Home charges (April 2024) (also linked to priority 4) • Business Rates Improvement Relief (April 2024)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Rates Heat Network Relief (April 2024) • Business Rates Extension to Retail, Hospitality & Leisure Scheme (April 2024) • Business Rates Changes to rating multipliers (April 2024)
2.1.3	<p>Priority 4 Quality Services</p> <p><u>Fraud and Compliance</u> work plan to identify and generate £250K additional income through the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single person discount* • Small Business Rates Review • RV Finder • Empty Homes review to maximise New Homes Bonus <p>Fraud and Compliance Policies/Strategies to be updated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tax Penalty and Prosecution Policy • Fraud and Compliance Strategy
2.1.4	<p>Priority 4 – Quality Services</p> <p><u>11). Procurement of Enforcement Agent Contract</u></p> <p>Working in partnership with 3 other Devon authorities to pool resources & provide value for money in the procurement of new Enforcement Agent contract:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out to tender in December 2023 until late January 2024 • Evaluation of tender/Contract awarded – by mid March 23 • Setting up new contracts, systems, transitioning cases from existing Enforcement Agents to new contracted Agents. • Measuring performance.
2.1.5	<p>Priority 1 – Supported and Engaged Communities</p> <p><u>12) Bring Empty Homes Back into Use</u></p> <p>(included in Housing’s and Environmental Health’s Service Plan)</p> <p>As at 2 October 23 there were 312 (properties that have been empty for more than 6 months and a key priority of the council is to bring empty homes back into use and reduce the turnaround time on voids.</p> <p>Private Sector</p> <p>To work with Private Sector housing on long term empty properties (more than 2 years) to bring back into use. Where there is also non-payment we will work collaboratively to use appropriate enforcement measures to take action. As of 2 October 2023, there were 57 properties which have been empty for more than 2 years.</p>

	<p>Support the team in developing an Empty Homes Strategy.</p> <p>Housing stock</p> <p>To support the Housing team with data on voids to help bring back into use.</p> <p>Aim is to reduce the number of empty properties by bringing back into use.</p>
2.1.6	<p><u>Priority 3 Resilient Economy - Poverty Action Plan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and implement an SLA and funding arrangements for Money Advice to include how these are delivered to ensure they are meeting the Council’s priorities in helping to alleviate poverty. • Working with VCSE (Devon Communities Together) and other independent voluntary groups to explore and understand rural poverty and possible need for how we can better support rural communities. • Money and Pension Service – Assess and sign up to MAPS to provide a further source of financial support for residents. (This would be something new for EDDC) • Introduce and promote the Vulnerability Debt Toolkit across services responsible for the collection of monies owed by residents, to ensure that vulnerable customers who can’t or are struggling to pay receive the appropriate support. • To review and evaluate the Economic Vulnerability Fund pilot project running from January to March 2024; assess and report on the learning outcomes in order to consider whether there is scope to scale up this project. The aims of this pilot project is to proactively work with residents experiencing vulnerabilities who are already identified as requiring support to improve the quality of their homes, whilst addressing fuel poverty and helping to build financial resilience.
2.1.7	<p>Priority 3 and 4 Resilient Economy and Quality Services</p> <p><u>Benefits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement legislative changes in relation to specified accommodation. This work will need to be scoped up once national standards guidance has been issued (due no later than June 24). Likely to involve Environmental Health/Planning & possibly Housing (homeless) over the new licensing regime and the potential impact on HB including Subsidy. • Take up campaign for pensionable age residents to ensure that they are aware of the benefits available to them. <p>Carry out in depth monitoring/analysis of Council Tax arrears so that these can be assessed on whether changes are needed to our CTR scheme so that it remains fit for purpose. Any proposed changes will need to be modelled, consulted on and approved by Members before 11 March 2025.</p>
2.1.8	<p>Priority 4 Quality Services</p>

	<u>Partnership working</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to explore opportunities for partnership working and better alignment of service provision with Exeter City Council initially focussing on Revenues in order to drive efficiencies and better value for money.
2.1.9	Priority 4 Quality Services 22. <u>Data Governance – compliance with DWP’s MOU</u> Carry out tasks as shown in key project to ensure compliance with MOU. See key project below.

2.2	Key projects in 2024-25
2.2.1	Replacement of Council Telephony system (Call Centre Technology). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strata’s aim is to install before end of year 2024. (For info Skype for Business End life: October 2025) The replacement technology will be led by Strata and will mean less licenses. This will mean that there will be potentially less call groups within the Council as more calls will be channelled through the corporate call centre. Depending on the extent of this will impact the scale of this project.
2.2.2	<u>Data Governance</u> Following notification from Department Work & Pension national audits are due to start from 2024 to ensure full compliance with the MOU.