

Revenues and Benefits Service Customer Charter

Who we are and what we do?

The Revenues and Benefits Service is part of Finance and Corporate Support and operates from Bridgegate House, Irvine. The key roles of the service are:

To provide every household and business in North Ayrshire with an accurate and timely bill for council tax and non-domestic rates and to send an invoice to any person who has received goods or services from the council.

The billing, collection and recovery from around 65,000 domestic council tax properties, around 5000 non-domestic properties, and other debts due to the council.

To provide every housing benefit and council tax reduction scheme claimant, in North Ayrshire, with an efficient and effective service.

To process new claims and changes of circumstance quickly, award the right amount of benefit/reduction and prevent fraud and error from entering the benefits system.

The income received from council tax and non-domestic rates is used to deliver vital council services to all residents in North Ayrshire such as education, roads and lighting, cleansing and social services.

There are around 20,000 benefit claimants. Housing Benefit, Local Housing Allowance or Council Tax Reduction is awarded to help claimants meet the cost of their rent charges or council tax

Revenues and Benefits Mission Statement

“A modern, progressive & responsive service that delivers best in class customer service and underpins the Council’s vision through the maximisation of income”.

We provide advice, information and assistance to, taxpayers, businesses and benefit claimants in the following main areas: -

Council Tax

- When to pay and methods of payment
- Exemptions
- 25% single person discounts
- Status discounts
- Change of address

Non Domestic Rates

- When to pay and methods of payment
- Small Business Bonus Scheme
- Sports Club relief
- Charitable relief & Disabled relief

- Rural relief
- Empty property relief
- Disabled persons relief
- Payment arrangements & managing debt
- Recovery procedures & enforcement
- Transitional relief
- Payment arrangements & managing debt
- Recovery procedures & enforcement

Other debts due to the Council

- When to pay and methods of payment
- Payment arrangements & managing debt
- Recovery procedures & enforcement

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction

- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Reduction
- Local Housing Allowance
- Other welfare benefits
- Working age claimants
- Pensioner claimants
- How to claim
- Supporting evidence to provide
- Reporting change of circumstance
- Discretionary Housing Payments
- Housing Benefit overpayments
- Appealing against a decision
- Benefit fraud

Scottish Welfare Fund

- Community Care Grants
- Crisis Loans

The levels of service you can expect when dealing with North Ayrshire Council's Revenues and Benefits Service are: -

Customer Care

We will:

- Be friendly, welcoming, polite, respectful, helpful and treat you sensitively;
- Wear or display name badges where appropriate so you can recognise us;
- Carry and show identity cards when we visit people at home or visit business premises;

- Provide an efficient and effective service from the first point of contact; through to conclusion;
- Observe your privacy and confidentiality where appropriate;
- Respond to your needs in order to access our services;
- Monitor, evaluate and publish our performance; and
- Ask for your views on our service.

Telephone Calls

We will:

- Answer 90% of calls on the first attempt
- Always give our name when we answer your call
- Try and resolve your query while you are on the phone & close 80% of calls at the first point of contact
- Call you back if the query is more complicated. We will provide you with a timescale for a call back and we will ensure that we meet that timescale.
- Call you back within 24 hours if you leave a message.
- Only transfer calls if it is necessary; and
- Transfer calls immediately and correctly. We will tell you who you are being transferred to and tell the person taking the call who you are and why you are calling.

Written Correspondence, Fax and Email

We will:

- Provide a response to general correspondence within 10 working days. In cases where there is going to be a delay, we will provide an interim reply explaining the position and when you can expect a full response.
- Send you an application form you have asked for within three working days.

Personal Callers

We will:

- Aim to speak to you within 15 minutes of arriving, however, at peak periods this maybe longer
- Where possible, try to arrange the most suitable dates and time, for a personal appointment that is convenient for you
- Provide, if required, private facilities for your appointment and ensure that our accommodation is accessible, clean and safe
- Leave a calling card when we visit you at home and you are not in

Confidentiality

We will:

- Provide private interview facilities for use on request
- Keep your personal information secure, both on computer and in paper files and comply with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Complaints

If you are not satisfied with our service the quickest way to have the matter dealt with is to discuss it with the member of staff you are dealing with. You can also complain by:

- Telephone
- In writing
- By submitting an online complaint – visit the Complaints and Feedback section on the council's website at www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk

We have a **two-stage complaints procedure**. We will always try to deal with your complaint quickly, but if it is clear that the matter will need a detailed investigation, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress.

Stage 1: Frontline Resolution

We will always try to resolve your complaint quickly, within **five working days** if we can.

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can ask us to consider your complaint at Stage 2.

Stage 2: Investigation

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at Stage 1. We also look at some complaints immediately at this stage, if it is clear that they are complex or need detailed investigation.

We will acknowledge your complaint within **three working days** and will give you our decision as soon as possible. This will be after no more than **20 working days** unless there is clearly a good reason for needing more time.

We aim to resolve complaints quickly. This could mean an on-the-spot apology, explanation if something has clearly gone wrong and immediate action to resolve the problem.

Performance Standards

The Revenues and Benefits Service aims to provide the following standards of performance:

We will:

- Set targets each year to increase the in-year collection levels for council tax, non-domestic rates and sundry debt.

- Detail the cost of collection of council tax.
- Set targets each year to reduce the average number of days to process new claims and changes of circumstance.
- Respond to or amend a customer's council tax account depending on the notification received either from written correspondence, fax or email, face to face enquiries and telephone calls.
- These targets are as follows:

Type of Notification	Number of working days taken to amend account
Council Tax	
Change of Address – Owner Occupier	10
Change of Address – Private Tenant	10
Change of Address – Council Tenant	5
Single person or status discount	10
Exemption	10
General Enquiry	10
Urgent Mail	5
Deceased Notification	5
Benefits	
New Claim - Housing Benefit	20.7
Change of circumstances - Housing Benefit	9.3
New claim - Council Tax Reduction	22
Change of circumstances - Council Tax Reduction	6