

THE HOUSING BENEFIT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides the six monthly update on performance. The compliance timetable at Appendix 4 shows the latest position to achieving all of the Housing Benefit Performance Standards (HBPS).
- 1.2 This Committee monitors progress towards achieving the HBPS on a six-monthly basis in June and December. This report explains the self assessment score in more detail, gives evidence of the score and self assessment submitted to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) annually.
- 1.3 The appendices in this report will give Members an up to date position and score against the Standards, with a copy of the latest submission to DWP and will also show, in an action plan, how the Benefit Team intends to meet all of the standards over a set period of time.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The HBPS were first launched in April 2002 as a result of a commitment given by the DWP to develop a performance framework for Housing Benefit (HB) in their response to the *Housing Green Paper* (published November 2000).
- 2.2 In April 2005 Members considered a report showing the changes to the HBPS reducing the standards from 641 different questions to 19 performance measures and 65 enablers. The new Standards would be split into just four themes instead of the previous seven. These themes are:-
 - **Claims Administration** – claims processing, quality and reducing error, and overpayments. (16 enablers & 9 performance measures)
 - **Security** – security of administration, counter-fraud activities, and sanctions. (21 enablers & 7 performance measures)
 - **User Focus** – take-up, customer service, and appeals and complaints. (12 enablers and 3 performance measures)
 - **Resource Management** – strategic management, value for money, and assurance. (16 enablers, no performance measures).
- 2.3 The new scoring methodology has been designed to give:-
 - More weight to those parts of the standards which underpin the delivery of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets for improving the speed of Housing

and Council Tax Benefit claims and reducing the level of fraud and error.

- Credit for partial achievement against the standards set for the performance measures.
- Recognition that some of the performance measures need reviewing as authorities are recording performance differently, so four of the claims administration performance measures and three of the security performance measures are not currently being scored whilst they are under review

2.4 The themes are weighted as follows:-

Theme	Weight for Enablers	Weight for Performance Measures
Claims Administration	35%	50%
Security	35%	35%
User Focus	15%	15%
Resource Management	15%	0%

2.5 The performance measures are graded between 1 and 4. The total performance measure score is also graded between 1 and 4 and is calculated from the weighted average of the individual performance measures score. Appendix 1 shows our current score against the performance measures

2.6 The overall enabler score is also graded between 1 and 4 and is calculated by finding the percentage of enablers achieved in each theme, and combining these using the weights. Appendix 2 shows our current score against the enablers

2.7 The overall score is derived by combining the total enabler score and the total performance measure score, using a matrix. Appendix 3 shows our current overall score.

2.8 The assessment formula is quite complex, but DWP is insistent that Members have an understanding of the process and how their Council is performing against the Standards they set.

3 IMPROVEMENT PLAN

3.1 Appendix 4 shows the submitted improvement plan designed to meet all of the Housing Benefit Performance Standards. It shows the date by which it is intended to be achieved and the officer(s) responsible and the amount of time that will be needed to achieve the Standard.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The Government is still placing a high emphasis on the delivery of good quality Housing Benefit Services to the Community we serve. Rochford is currently ranked as providing a “**Good Service**” to its customers.
- 4.2 Members will be aware that Officers reported to Committee in December 2005 that Rochford was currently providing an “Excellent Service”. Although our overall score has gone down because performance at the end of the year dipped in the percentage of rent allowance claims paid on time or within 7 days of decision made, Rochford has in fact achieved more of the performance measures that were outstanding as at December 2005. Therefore, we hope to be reporting in December 2006 that we are once again reporting to the DWP that we are providing an “Excellent Service”.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES** to endorse the self assessment score of 3 (Good).

Graham Woolhouse
Corporate Director (External Services)

Background Papers:-

2005 HB/CTB Performance Standards

Various DWP Directives and Statutory Instruments

For further information please contact Scott Logan on:-

Tel:- 01702 318006

E-Mail:- scott.logan@rochford.gov.uk