

THE HOUSING BENEFIT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides the latest six monthly update on performance. The compliance timetable at Appendix 4 shows the latest scoring against 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 and 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 give Members an up to date position and score against the Standards, with a copy of the latest submission to DWP and 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 2006 the DWP amended the scoring for claims administration and security themes and have made it more difficult to achieve an “excellent” score. Unfortunately, this was inevitable as Local Authorities such as Rochford were reaching this “excellent score” and so DWP have raised the threshold so that we now have to process claims even more efficiently to receive a score of 4 for the claims administration theme. As an example, prior to April if we processed new benefit claims in less than 36 days Rochford would receive a score of 4; this has changed to claims having to be processed in less than 30 days to receive the same score of 4.
- 2.3 The Standards are split into four themes:-
 - **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).

2.4 The scoring methodology is designed to give:-

- More weight to those parts of the standards which underpin the delivery of the 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

2.5 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%

2.6 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

2.7 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

2.8 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.

2.9 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, 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. Rochford is currently ranked as providing a “**Good Service**” to its customers.
- 4.2 Members will be aware that Officers reported to this committee in June 2006 that they hoped to be on target for providing a ranking of “Excellent Service” by December, and even though our performance continues to improve, because of the changes that DWP have made to the scoring it may now take another 6 months to meet that target.

5 RECOMMENDATION

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

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Background Papers:-

2005 HB/CTB Performance Standards

Various DWP Directives and Statutory Instruments

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