

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

FROM: Head of Customer Services

REPORT NUMBER **F206**

TO: **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
(STEWARDSHIP) COMMITTEE**

DATE OF MEETING **20 March 2007**

BENEFITS SERVICE PERFORMANCE – 1 JANUARY 2007 - 31 MARCH 2007

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report covers the performance of the Benefit Service for the period 1 January 2007 to 31 March 2007. Performance at 31 March has been forecast by projecting existing performance levels throughout March. Any variation in the assumptions made will be reported at the meeting.
- 1.2 Appendix A provides monthly snapshots of the performance of the Benefit Service over the course of year.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the performance of the Benefit Service during the period 1 January 2007 to 31 March 2007 be noted.

The Committee is able to resolve this matter.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 Capacity and the ability of the organisation to maintain appropriate levels of service is the strategic risk to be considered in relation to this report. The performance of the Benefits Service is meeting the expectations of external and internal stakeholders and resources are being managed effectively. The probability of any problem occurring is low and well below the tolerance level. Consequently there are no risk issues to address.

5. KEY INFORMATION

- 5.1 **Performance:** The performance of the Council's Benefit Service is monitored by the Department of Work and Pensions on a quarterly basis, using 6 key performance measures from the Claims Administration theme of the Performance Standards using a grading system ranging from 1 to 4. Grade 4 = Excellent, 3 = Good, 2 = Fair and 1 = Poor.

5.2 Anticipated outcomes at 31 March 2007 for those six key performance measures are as follows: -

PM1 – Average number of days to process a new claim = 21 days - Grade 4 – Excellent

The average time to process new claims has been running at between 16 and 20 days during this quarter. If that level of performance remains consistent through March, performance for the year as an average will be 21 days. This is one day short of the 20 day target set within the 2006/07 Corporate Plan. Although, in isolation, that is a disappointment current performance is in effect the baseline for 2007/08. At 18 days it is well below that figure, and already part way towards the 2007/08 Corporate Plan target of 14 days.

PM2 – Percentage of new claims outstanding over 50 days - 0% - Grade 4 – Excellent

There are no claims outstanding for more than 50 days at the end of the quarter.

PM3 – Percentage of new claims decided within 14 days of receiving all information - 93% - Grade 4 – Excellent

Overall performance for the year should come in at 93%, which is comfortably above the Grade 4 threshold of 90%.

PM4 – Percentage of rent allowance claims paid on time or within seven days of the decision being made - 91% - Grade 4 – Excellent

Improvement of the third quarters performance has been maintained and overall performance for the year should come in at 91%. That will move this particular performance indicator from Grade 3 to Grade 4 – excellent, for the first time.

PM5 – Average number of days to process change of circumstances - 10 days -Grade 3 – Good

Performance in this quarter is running at around 6 days, which has improved overall performance from 11 to 10 days. As with new claims this outcome will fall short of the 2006/07 Corporate Plan target of 8 days. However the current level of performance already better the 2007/08 target set within the 2006/07 corporate Plan. From April 2007 new DWP prescribed performance indicators aimed to focus local authority resource on reducing levels of benefit overpayment and increasing counter fraud activity come into force. This will place more emphasis on identifying and reacting to changes in individual claimants circumstances and may increase the volume of changes in circumstances handled during the course of the year. Consequently no variation to the target is proposed until the full impact of the new performance indicator has been established. Maintaining performance at 6 days, which is 3 days below the 9 day standard, will achieve a score of 4 and a rating of Excellent.

PM6 – Percentage of accurate decisions - 99.20% - Grade 4 – Excellent

Performance against this indicator has not caused any concern throughout the year.

5.3 **BVPI 80 Benefits Service Satisfaction Survey**

This performance indicator requires 2 separate surveys to be undertaken for those customer's using the service between 1 June and 31 July 2006, and 1 November and 31 December 2006. Each survey has to achieve a return of 60%, at which point the results must be submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government for weighting, before any analysis of the outcomes can be undertaken. The 60% target for the second survey was not achieved until 2 March. The data is now being cleansed and will be submitted for weighting shortly. The outcome will be reported to the next meeting of the Committee on 5 June 2007. That meeting will also be considering the next stages in developing the Benefits Service. Consequently if any action is required to resolve customer satisfaction issues, it will naturally link to that activity.

6. **APPENDIX**

Appendix A - Benefit Service - Performance 1 April 2006 - 31 March 2007

7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS REFERRED TO:**

None.

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