

## **BENEFIT CORPORATE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT AND BENEFIT CHANGES APRIL 2007**

**Report By: Head of Benefit and Exchequer Services**

### **Wards Affected**

County-wide.

### **Purpose**

To advise Members on the Benefit Fraud Inspectorates Corporate Performance Assessment report and the Benefit Intervention changes.

### **Financial Implications**

None identified.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT the 2006 Benefit Corporate Performance Assessment rating and the Benefit changes effective from April 2007 be noted.**

### **Benefits CPA**

1. The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate report for the 2006 Corporate Performance Assessment was released at the end of November. This assessment was based on performance figures for 2005/6 and these figures reflect the adverse impact on benefit processing times following the implementation of new software in March 2005.
2. In the previous Corporate Performance assessment in 2005 the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate accepted that the 2005 performance figures were not representative of the Council's overall performance and applied exceptional circumstances, which resulted in a 'Good' categorisation for benefits at that time.
3. Whilst the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate report for the 2006 Corporate Performance Assessment acknowledges that the Benefit service has made significant improvements in performance since their 2005 assessment, the inspectors felt unable to reflect this in the scoring process, hence they reduced the Corporate Performance Assessment rating from 'Good' to 'Fair'. The improved performance has continued in 2006/7 with figures for the year to date of 32 days for new claims and 17 days for changes, compared to average figures for 2005/6 of 52 days for claims and 42 days for changes.
4. This overall improvement, coupled with the better intervention (case review) results reported to a previous meeting of this Committee, means the Benefit Service is now on target to return to the 'Good' categorisation for Corporate Performance Assessment in 2007 and provides a sound basis for us to achieve our aim of an 'Excellent' rating for Benefits by 2008.

## Benefit Changes

5. The planned benefit changes from April 2007 remove the requirement to complete a set number of interventions each year and instead set a target for the overall number of benefit changes processed that result in a reduction or termination in benefit.
6. The 2007/8 target for Herefordshire is 9,840 changes and we are analysing the number of changes completed in the current year that have produced a reduction in benefit to see how this compares to the target. In addition, an action plan is being formulated to deal with implementing this new requirement.

## Risk Management

The Council has in place a Statement of Internal Control Assurance framework and part of this process involves actions arising from the Council's Annual Audit and Inspection letter and associated reports. Lack of action by the Council could adversely affect the score for the Use of Resources.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report from the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate – CPA 2006  
Benefit Circular A/20 – Changes to Interventions