

STRATEGIC POLICY OBJECTIVES

These policy objectives bridge the gap between the Statement of Intent and the current position of the service. They are reflected in the Statement of Intent and will, over time, help to meet the full range of the DWP Performance Standards.

This will be achieved by: -

- Widely promoting the Statement of Intent to stakeholders and not just to the benefits service current customers but also it's potential customers.
- Using the Housing Benefit Performance Standards Framework self-assessment to identify areas for service improvement.
- By using the Performance Standards as a toolkit in the Revenues Services Best Value Review in preparation for the Council's CPA.
- By developing a Service Improvement Plan, which is updated and reviewed annually as part of the Council's service planning process.

Where a step change in improvement is required, the approach will be visible to our customers demonstrating a commitment to achieving these strategic policy objectives.

This will be done by: -

- Publicising the improvements made to the service
- Using performance targets to measure our success
- Directing resources efficiently to where they are most needed

In meeting these objectives, the benefits service will be mindful of the need to obtain value for money and maximise efficiency savings. By learning from the Performance Standards we will: -

- Develop best practice
- Maximise income
- Bid for funds to make improvements to service delivery
- Maximise the use of Information Technology

In setting these objectives, due regard has been given for the need to minimise backlogs. This will be achieved by: -

- Using Information technology to regularly report work progress
- Identifying early signs of backlogs and re-directing resources to maintain an acceptable standard of service
- Ensuring that staff operate within a performance management culture and receive regular updates on how the service is performing

Policy objective 1	Full adoption of the DWP Performance Standards
<p>New policies and procedures will be developed with the aim of eventually meeting all the modules contained in the Performance Standards covering: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Strategic management b) Customer services c) Processing of claims d) Working with landlords e) Internal security f) Counter fraud g) Overpayments 	
Policy objective 2	Ensuring that all customers are able to access the benefits service quickly and easily.
<p>Customer accessibility is one of the key priorities in the Council's Quality of Life Plan. This important area is currently being looked at as part the Best Value Review of Revenues Services. Areas of weakness will be included in the BV Review Service Improvement plan.</p>	
Policy objective 3	Processing claims speedily and accurately.
<p>The accuracy of processing claims has been identified as a weakness, which needs improving. This will be achieved by: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Ensuring that staff are trained, motivated and resourced to carry out their duties effectively b) Making the best use of Information Technology to improve performance <p>In order to minimise backlogs, the current high performance in speed of processing must continue</p>	
Policy objective 4	Maximising benefit take-up
<p>This will play a key part in the Council's priority of providing low cost housing. Regular take-up publicity will promote the benefits service and tackle poverty and social inclusion.</p>	

Policy objective 5	Efficient and effective performance management
<p>Regular and at least monthly performance monitoring against standards will be undertaken. Performance will be reported to: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Members through Scrutiny 2 Committee every quarterb) The Council Leader and Chief Executive through the DWP every quarterc) Partners through the monthly policy and performance newsletterd) Corporate Management Team every quartere) Director of Resources and Revenues Services section every month <p>Performance will be discussed at staff annual and interim appraisals. Senior staff will actively encourage benefit and other staff to seek ways of improving the level of service being provided. Also, our customers and stakeholders will be informed of performance against the expected levels of service delivery.</p>	