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| <p>CABINET MEETING – 8 APRIL 2009</p> <p>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I</p> | |
| <p>Title of Report:</p> <p>Comprehensive Performance Assessment – Benefits Service Assessment – Auditors Judgement 2008</p> | |
| <p>Author(s):</p> <p>City Treasurer</p> | |
| <p>Purpose of Report:</p> <p>To advise Cabinet of the outcome of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment – Benefits Service Assessment – Auditors Judgement 2008</p> | |
| <p>Description of Decision:</p> <p>Cabinet is requested to note the outcome of the Auditors Comprehensive Performance Assessment – Benefits Service Assessment – Auditors Judgement 2008</p> | |
| <p>Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework? *Yes</p> | |
| <p>If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework</p> | |
| <p>Suggested reason(s) for Decision:</p> <p>To make Cabinet aware of the performance of the Council in relation to the Benefits Service Assessment for 2008 as independently assessed by the Audit Commission</p> | |
| <p>Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:</p> <p>None recommended</p> | |
| <p>Is this a “Key Decision” as defined in the Constitution? No</p> <p>Is it included in the Forward Plan? No</p> | <p>Relevant Review Committee:</p> <p>Policy and Co-ordination</p> |

CABINET – 8 APRIL 2009

COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT – BENEFITS SERVICE ASSESSMENT – AUDITORS JUDGEMENT 2008

Report of the City Treasurer

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise Cabinet of the outcome of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment – Benefits Service Assessment – Auditors Judgement 2008.

2. Description of Decision

- 2.1 Cabinet is requested to note the outcome of the Auditors Comprehensive Performance Assessment – Benefits Service Assessment – Auditors Judgement 2008.

3. Background to Benefits Service Assessment

- 3.1 The current Comprehensive Performance Assessment – Benefits Service Assessment evaluates how well Councils manage their Benefits Service. The performance measures cover the following three themes:

- Claims Administration
- Security
- User Focus.

- 3.2 The Audit Commission judges each theme across the following scale:

- 1 Inadequate performance – below minimum requirements
- 2 Adequate performance – only at minimum requirements
- 3 Performing well – consistently above minimum requirements
- 4 Performing strongly – well above minimum requirements

- 3.3 In January 2008, the Audit Commission introduced “CPA The Harder Test”. Previously, CPA assessments were based upon measuring the enabler score, which consisted of demonstrating best practice compliance with 65 input measures, such as the quality of the claim form, and also the performance measure score, which consisted of 19 performance measure outputs, such as the speed of processing new claims. A change was made in 2008 to judge performance only on 13 of the most testing performance measure outputs and none of the enabler scores, making a 4 out of 4 score rating more difficult to achieve in those Authorities where inputs were rated as excellent but performance, in absolute terms, was not as good.

4. Summary Findings

4.1 A copy of the report received from the Audit Commission is attached for consideration.

4.2 The report findings are summarised below.

Overall Score

4.3 The Council has retained its 4 out of 4 score and its performance over the previous years can be demonstrated as:

| 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |

4.4 The following table summarises the scores achieved in each Area of the performance measures where 1 = Inadequate Performance, 2 = Adequate Performance, 3 = Performing Well, 4 = Performing Strongly:

| Area | Performance Measure | 2008 |
|-----------------------|---|------|
| Claims Administration | PM1 – Average speed of processing new claims | 4 |
| | PM2 - % of new claims outstanding over 50 days | 4 |
| | PM3 - % of new claims decided within 14 days of receiving all information | 4 |
| | PM4 - % of rent allowance claims paid on time or within 7 days of decision being made | 3 |
| | PM5 – Average speed of processing for change of circumstances | 3 |
| | PM6 – % of cases for which the calculation of the amount of benefit due is correct | 4 |
| Security | PM10 – Achievement of target in the number of reductions in benefit entitlement | 4 |
| | PM11 - % of data matches resolved within two months | 4 |
| | PM16 – number of successful sanctions per 1000 caseload (6 months) | 4 |
| | PM16 – number of successful sanctions per 1000 caseload (12 months) | 4 |
| User Focus | PM17 - % of applications for reconsiderations actioned and notified within 4 weeks | 3 |
| | PM18 - % of appeals submitted to the tribunals service in 4 weeks | 4 |
| | PM19 - % of appeals submitted to the tribunals service (inc. those in PM18) in 3 months | 4 |

5. Benefits Service Assessment

5.1 From 2009 the auditor's assessment of the Benefits Service will be based on key lines of enquiry and National Indicators and Local Indicators performance.

5.2 The key lines of enquiry will deliver two judgements:

- How good is the service?
- What prospects are there for improvement?

Within these judgements are a series of themed questions, with subsets of questions. The themed questions are:

- What has the service aimed to achieve?
- Is the service meeting the needs of the community and/or user?
- Is the service delivering value for money?
- What is the service track record in delivering improvements?
- How well does the service manage performance?
- Does the service have the capacity to improve?

5.3 The National Indicators are:

| | |
|--------|--|
| NI 180 | The changes in Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit entitlements within the year |
| NI 181 | The time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events |

5.4 The Local Performance Indicators are:

| | |
|----------|--|
| 76b | Housing Benefit and Council Tax Securing – Number of Investigators |
| 76c | Housing Benefit and Council Tax Security – Number of Investigations |
| 76d | Housing Benefit and Council Tax Security – Number of Prosecutions and Sanctions |
| 78a | Average time for processing new claims (Housing and Council Tax Benefit) |
| 78b | Speed of processing – change in circumstances for Housing and Council Tax benefit claims |
| 79a | Accuracy of processing Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit claims |
| 79b(i) | Percentage of recoverable overpayments recovered (deemed recoverable) (HB) |
| 79b(ii) | Percentage of recoverable overpayments recovered (debt outstanding) (HB) |
| 79b(iii) | Percentage of recoverable overpayments recovered (overpayment debt) (HB) |

5.5 An exercise is currently underway to gather evidence and progress actions to ensure the key line of enquiry standards are met for 2009. In addition, the National and Local Performance Indicators are being monitored and reported and scrutinised on a monthly basis.

6. Suggested reason(s) for Decision:

6.1 To advise Cabinet of the performance of the Council in relation to its Benefits Service Assessment 2008 as independently assessed by the Audit Commission.

7. Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected

7.1 None recommended.

Background Papers

None