

**TO: THE MONITORING OFFICER
(TOM CLARK, SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL)**

**RECORD OF ACTION TAKEN BY A CABINET MEMBER
UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

Subject:

Agreement of revised Benefits speed of processing performance indicator targets for 2018/19

Cabinet Member: Councillor Judy Llewellyn-Burke

Has the Cabinet Member received a report prior to making the decision?

Yes

In the case of a key decision where the Cabinet Member has received a report, please state the date a copy of the report was made available to the Chair of the relevant Scrutiny Committee and placed in the public domain:

N/A

Record of decision taken:

To amend the Benefits average speed of processing performance targets from those set out in the Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2018/19 to:

- New Housing Benefit claims 22 days
- New Council Tax Support claims 22 days
- Change of circumstances for Housing Benefit claims 9 days
- Change of circumstances for Council Tax Support claims 9 days

Date of decision: tbc

Statement of reasons for making the decision:

The 2018/19 Revenues and Benefits Service Plan was approved as part of the Budget and Corporate Plan and was developed while the service was still in transition, moving from the Census Partnership to the Council's own independent service. The Service Plan contained speed of processing targets inherited from the Partnership. The Council's new independent service places more emphasis on the accuracy of processing to get the right benefit to the right person at the right time and to protect Benefit Subsidy for the Council. This is reflected in the proposed revised targets. Realistic processing time targets for the service also take into account the likely implications of the rollout of the full service rollout of Universal Credit, which goes live in Mid Sussex in June.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

Keeping the current Service Plan targets would not reflect the priorities of the Council's new independent Revenues and Benefits service and risks retaining targets that are unrealistic.

Code of Conduct Interest of Cabinet Members? If yes, please advise on the nature and whether dispensation in place. **No.**

BENEFITS SPEED OF PROCESSING PERFORMANCE TARGETS FOR 2018/19

REPORT OF: HEAD OF CORPORATE RESOURCES
Contact Officer: Kevin Stewart, Business Unit Leader – Revenues and Benefits
Email: Kevin.Stewart@midsussex.gov.uk : 01444 477229
Wards Affected: All
Key Decision: No
Report to: Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance

Purpose of Report

1. This report requests that the Cabinet Member agrees to amend the Benefits speed of processing performance targets for 2018/19 from those included in the Service Plan. The Council has separated from the Census Partnership and the revised targets reflect the new service's greater emphasis upon accuracy of processing to protect Housing Benefit Subsidy.

Recommendations

2. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance is requested to agree the proposed revised speed of processing performance targets for the Benefits service in 2018/19 as set out in this report.
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Background

3. The Council previously delivered its Revenues and Benefits service through the Census Partnership with Horsham and Adur councils. The Partnership has now been disbanded and the Council has established its own independent service.
4. The Council's Service Plans for 2018/19 were approved as part of the Budget and Corporate Plan 218/19 Report. Plans were prepared when the Revenues and Benefits service was in a period of transition and setting up new staff structures. The approved Service Plan contained targets for speed of processing inherited from the Census Partnership, which are not now considered to be appropriate. To amend these targets requires a decision from the relevant Cabinet Member, the portfolio holder for Finance and Performance.

Proposed Performance Indicator targets for 2018/19

5. The proposed changes are set out below:

Performance Indicator	2017/18 Outturn	2018/19 Service Plan target	Revised 2018/19 Target
Average speed of processing new Housing Benefit claims	21 days	18 days	22 days
Average speed of processing Council Tax Support claims	24 days	20 days	22 days
Average speed of processing change of circumstances for Housing Benefit claims	8 days	7 days	9 days
Average speed of processing change of circumstances for Council Tax Support	10 days	10 days	9 days

claims			
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6. The proposed revised targets take into account the national average performance figures published by the Department for Work and Pensions and the new service's greater emphasis upon accuracy of processing to get the right benefit to the right person at the right time. This will reduce the risk of Benefits overpayments and the potential loss of subsidy. More realistic speed of processing targets also take account of the likely implications of the rollout of the full service of Universal Credit, which goes live in Mid Sussex on 6th June.
7. In recognition of the priorities for the new service, additional performance indicators have been adopted in 2018/19 for accuracy of payment and overpayment error. Targets for these are:
 - Accuracy in assessment – 97%
 - Local Authority overpayment error – threshold of £154,080.
8. Progress to these Revenues and Benefits performance indicators will be reported quarterly to the Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Resources and Economic Growth and to Cabinet. There will also be monthly performance reports to the Cabinet Member.
9. Once the new service is established and the Universal Credit roll out implemented the speed of processing targets will be reviewed. This will be considered as part of the process to establish the Revenues and Benefits Service Plan for 2019/20.

Policy Context

10. Service Plans and performance targets form part of the Council's performance management arrangements and the Corporate Plan.

Other Options Considered

11. Keeping the current Service Plan targets would be unrealistic and not reflect the priorities of the Council's new independent in house Revenues and Benefits service.

Financial Implications

12. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Risk Management Implications

13. Adoption of the revised performance targets will help to reduce the risk of Local Authority overpayment error and the subsequent loss of subsidy from the Department of Work and Pensions.

Equalities and Customer Services Implications

14. The Benefits service deals with often vulnerable people and the emphasis on getting the right benefit to the right person and at the right time will enhance overall customer service.

Other Material Implications

15. None.

Background Papers

16. None.