

## Housing and Council Tax Benefit Service – Quarterly Performance

### RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 That the Commission consider the performance of the Housing and Council Tax Benefit service as at 8 November 2004 and forward any comments to the cabinet.
- 1.2 That regular performance reports continue to be produced to review progress of the service.

### SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members of the Commission have requested to receive regular performance reports including comparisons with other unitary authorities. This report identifies progress made since the last report to the Community Regeneration Commission on 12 July 2004.
- 2.2 Appendix 2 shows that outstanding workload has reduced slightly since 21 June 2004 – the performance figures shown in our last report of 12 July 2004.
- 2.3 We are confident that outstanding workload will continue to reduce and performance will continue to improve following eight new benefits processing staff completing their training in October 2004 who are now being integrated into their processing teams. A further eight new staff started their training on 8 November 2004 and will be fully trained by February 2005.
- 2.4 Our Service Improvement Strategy that was agreed by the cabinet on 3 December 2002 is to make continuous improvements to the Revenues and Benefits service to a level where we compare with the best performing unitary and metropolitan authorities. In order to achieve this we have set challenging targets and our aim is to be performing within national standards by 2005/06.
- 2.5 The graph at appendix 3 shows that we are processing all new claims received on average 5 days quicker than last year and we are confident that we will reach our 46 days target for 2004/05 by 31 March 2005. Our aim is to improve our performance to the 36 days national standard in 2005/06.

- 2.6 Further benefits performance indicators are shown in the table at appendix 4. For processing change of circumstances claims, we are actually four days ahead of our annual target for 2004/05 and now processing changes on average at 9 calendar days which is at national standard.
- 2.7 In line with the Commission's request, a table comparing our performance with 21 other unitary and metropolitan authorities is shown at appendix 5 for three of the key housing benefit indicators. The table shows comparisons at 30 June 2004 and we are positioned:
- (i) 13th for processing new claims
  - (ii) 5th for processing changes of circumstances and
  - (iii) 10th for % of new claims processed within 14 days of receiving all information

## 2.8 Improvements in Customer Service

Since our last report on 12 July 2004, we have also made further improvements in our service to benefits customers ...

- Joint working arrangements with The Pensions Service went live on 2 August 2004. We now do joint visits to pensioners living in the city and deal with both housing benefit and state pension type enquiries at the same time. The joint working arrangements are working very well.
- Since our benefit outreach service became operational in all area housing offices in April 2004, we have received over 1,600 customer enquiries. Feedback from our customers and Derby Homes has been excellent.
- Results from our benefits take up campaign in March 2004, where publicity was included with all non benefit council tax bills, shows that an extra 122 are now qualifying for benefit of nearly £2,000 a week.
- The council tax enquiry counter has been merged with the housing benefits enquiry counter and the location is now much more convenient for customers. A 'greeter system' has also been introduced where customers are now met personally before taking their seat in the queue – feedback from customers has been excellent.
- A member of staff from Job Centre Plus is to join our customer enquiry counter service in the Council House on a surgery basis for half a day a week from 22 November 2004. This will operate on a pilot basis to provide a more holistic benefit service to our customers.
- From 22 November 2004 two members of staff from our benefits processing team are to work from home on a pilot basis. Should the pilot prove to be successful, we will be looking to roll out this new way of working for our staff in a structured and controlled way to alleviate some of the accommodation pressures we face in the Council House.

<b>For more information contact:</b>	Don McLure Tel: 01332 255284 email: don.mclure@derby.gov.uk
<b>Background papers:</b>	None
<b>List of appendices:</b>	Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Analysis of Benefits Workload at 4 November 2004 Appendix 3 – BV78a Average Number of Calendar Days Taken to Process New Claims – Monthly Cumulative Totals Appendix 4 – Performance - Statutory Performance Indicators Appendix 5 – Derby's Performance Compared with other Authorities

<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>
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**Financial**

1. None arising from this report.

**Legal**

2. The Council has a statutory duty to provide a Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Service under the provisions of the Social Security Act 1986.

**Personnel**

3. None arising from this report.

**Equalities impact**

4. Our benefits take up strategy is aimed at encouraging all low income households to apply for council tax and housing and benefit with specific targeting of pensioners, low earners and black and minority ethnic communities.

**Corporate Objectives and Priorities for Change**

5. The Council's Corporate Plan 2004/07 recognises the importance of a high quality and performing Benefits Service in its priority of 'Respond to people's needs appropriately, on time and first time, by developing a customer focused culture, using new technology and investing in our buildings to provide modern working environments for service delivery and employees'. This report identifies progress we are making in the Benefits Service to help achieve this aim.



## Appendix 2

### Analysis of Benefits Workload Position at 8 November 2004

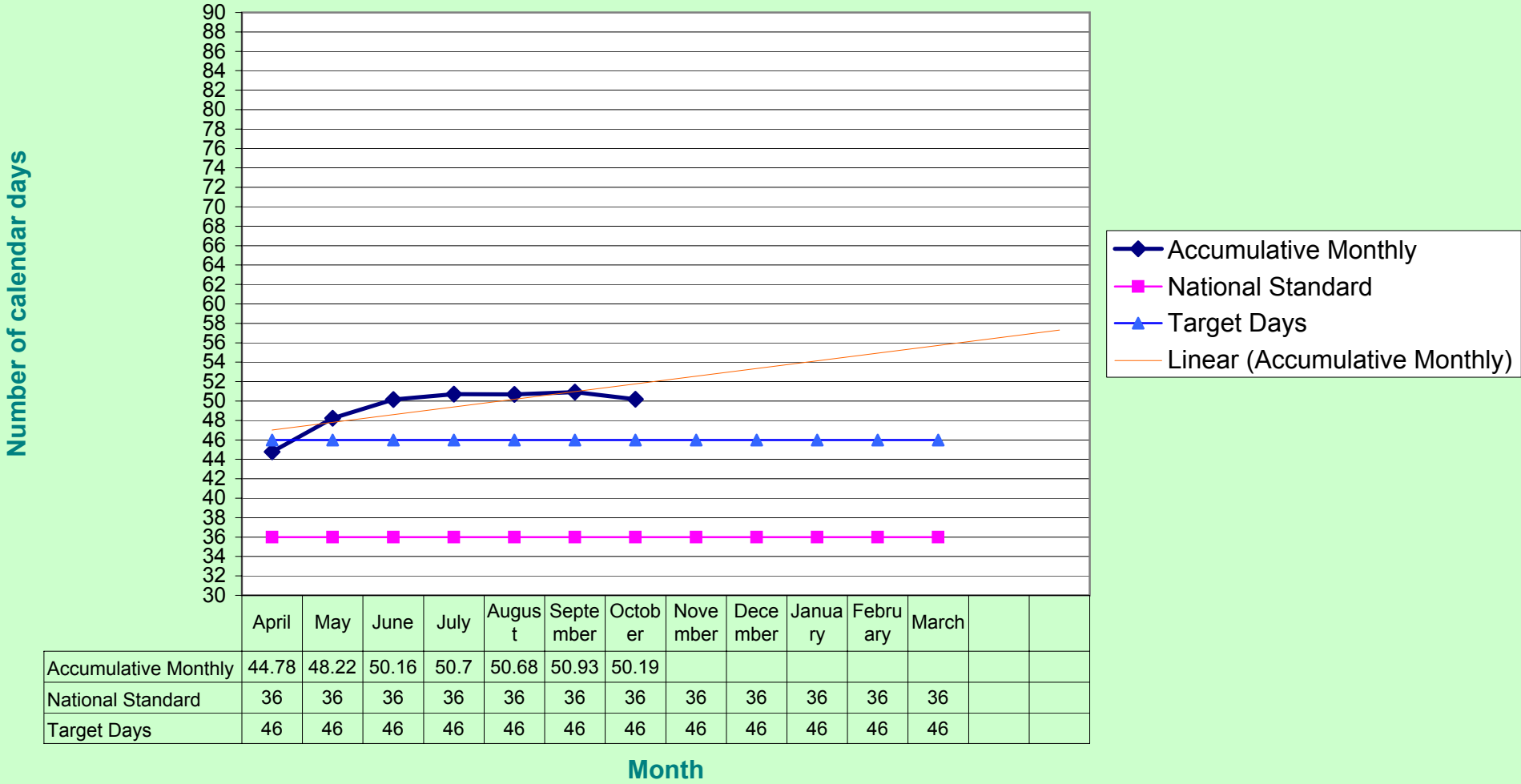
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
	Position at 21 June 04 (including claims awaiting to be processed and pending)	Comparable position at 08-Nov	Awaiting to be processed at 08-Nov	Pended awaiting more information 08-Nov	Average weekly claims received (year to date)	Number of weeks work outstanding 08-Nov	Number of weeks work outstanding excluding work pending awaiting further information 08-Nov
<b>New Claims</b>	1932	1616	878	738	305	5 weeks	3 weeks
<b>High Risk Reviews</b>	277	554	69	485	104	5 weeks	up to date
<b>Sub total of claims</b>	<hr/> 2209	2486	<hr/> 947	<hr/> 1223	<hr/> 409		
<b>Change of Circumstances</b>	336	261	48	213	307	up to date	up to date
<b>Cancellations</b>	113	106	38	68	356	up to date	up to date
<b>TOTAL</b>	<hr/> <b>2658</b>	<b>2537</b>	<hr/> <b>1033</b>	<hr/> <b>1504</b>	<hr/> <b>1072</b>	<b>2.5 weeks</b>	<b>1 week</b>

#### Note

Pended claims are those where we have begun to process the claims but we are awaiting more information from the customer before we can process.

# BV78a Average (Calendar) Days Taken to Process New Claims - Monthly Cumulative Totals

Appendix 3



## Housing Benefits Service – Performance Management – Statutory Performance Indicators

Indicator	2002/03 Actual	2003/04 Actual	2004/05 Target	2004/05 Q1	2004/05 Q2	Comment
BVPI 78a – average number of days to process a new claim	79	55	46	50	51	Improved performance in 04/05. Priority to be given in 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of financial year to meet annual target
BVPI 78b – average number of days to process a change of circumstances claim	21	14	13	11	9	Improved performance in 04/05. Performing at 9 days is at national standard
BVPI 79a – accuracy of outputs	94%	96.4	97.5%	96%	94.4%	Slightly below target but quality checking procedures now much more robust and confident that accuracy will improve in 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of financial year
% claims cleared within 14 days of receiving all the information	64%	74%	91%	73%	75%	Target unlikely to be met but slight improvement when compared to last year

## Appendix 5

IPF Nearest Neighbours	% of new claims decided within 14 days						
	2001/2002 Annual	2002/2003 Annual	2003/2004 Annual	2004/2005			
				Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Bolton		61	69		66		
Bradford		90	90		76		
Coventry		48	56		64		
Darlington		79	79		85		
<b>Derby</b>		60	74		73		
Dudley		67	83		90		
Kirklees		40	82	No data			
Leeds		49	64		43		
Oldham		72	77		73		
Peterborough		73	72		70		
Plymouth		53	76		76		
Rochdale		86	83		79		
Rotherham		81	82		96		
Sandwell		44	49		67		
Stockton-on-Tees		84	78		64		
Stoke-on-Trent		2	No data	No data			
Tameside		91	87		87		
Telford & Wrekin		81	88		87		
Wakefield		47	45		60		
Walsall		91	75		56		
Wolverhampton		80	75		84		

Appendix 5

IPF Nearest Neighbours	Speed of Processing: Average time for processing changes of						
	2001/2002 Annual	2002/2003 Annual	2003/2004 Annual	2004/2005 Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Bolton	25	24	25		20		
Bradford	46	12	11		16		
Coventry	67	48	16		13		
Darlington	11	8	8		8		
<b>Derby</b>	27	21	14		11		
Dudley	21	18	16		13		
Kirklees	27*	29	11	No data			
Leeds	12	21	No data		32		
Oldham	14	13	11		14		
Peterborough	15	12	15		14		
Plymouth	28	39	30		44		
Rochdale	12	11	7		14		
Rotherham	7	7	7		4		
Sandwell	80*	19	24		18		
Stockton-on-Tees	11	10	13		12		
Stoke-on-Trent	41	41	No data	No data			
Tameside	8	9	8		11		
Telford & Wrekin	16	11	8		8		
Wakefield	28	36	37		21		
Walsall	9	14	12		18		
Wolverhampton	12	8	9		10		

Key:

\* = This data has been marked as qualified by the Auditors

## Derby's Performance Compared with other Metropolitan and Unitary Authorities

IPF Nearest Neighbours	Speed of Processing: Average time for processing new claims						
	2001/2002 Annual	2002/2003 Annual	2003/2004 Annual	2004/2005 Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Bolton	53	45	42	44			
Bradford	53*	36	37	47			
Coventry	76*	75	59	55			
Darlington	53	44	35	36			
<b>Derby</b>	79	79	55	50			
Dudley	45	34	28	23			
Kirklees	106	135	60	No data			
Leeds	31*	41	34	108			
Oldham	35	36	35	39			
Peterborough	48	40	43	42			
Plymouth	81*	66	50	49			
Rochdale	39	33	26	34			
Rotherham	33	31	31	30			
Sandwell	60	87	80	61			
Stockton-on-Tees	73	49	53	76			
Stoke-on-Trent	71	65	No data	No data			
Tameside	22	23	27	25			
Telford & Wrekin	60	59	33	35			
Wakefield	59	69	82	50			
Walsall	36	38	46	63			
Wolverhampton	42	34	42	36			

Key:

\* = This data has been marked as qualified by the Auditors