

Stratford-on Avon District Council

Benefit Service: Summary of current performance

Overall, we found that Stratford-on-Avon District Council's HB/CTB service is currently providing a **Fair** performance. The council's performance demonstrates a number of strengths. These include:

- a Revenues Service Plan containing targets based on Best Value performance indicators and links to corporate plans and objectives
- performance is regularly reported to staff, senior managers and Members
- a Performance Management and Development Scheme with annual staff appraisal and job descriptions with links to team, service and corporate objectives
- an effective complaints procedure
- new technology introduced into Area Offices to facilitate provisional benefits assessments and establish potential eligibility
- Verification Framework compliant since November 1999
- undertaking management checking in line with Audit Commission guidelines
- recruitment guidance includes effective arrangements for vetting new employees
- declarations of interest are obtained annually from Members and staff
- the full range of sanctions are used to deter fraudsters
- wide range of methods used to recover debts including county court judgements and use of external agents.

However there are some areas where Stratford-on-Avon District Council needs to develop further to fully meet the BFI and Department for Work and Pensions' (the Department's) Performance Standards framework. These include:

- processing new claims and changes of circumstances more promptly and improving the overall level of processing accuracy
- improving the effectiveness of operational planning with specific reference to:
 - resources required to implement changes taking account of peaks and troughs in resource availability and workload fluctuations
 - ensuring plans are communicated to and recognise the impact on stakeholders
- developing an effective Business Continuity Plan

- developing comprehensive documented delivery procedures and guidance and ensure they are kept up to date and are understood by both practitioners and managers
- setting customer service targets for personal callers and ensuring all customer service targets are met by effective monitoring of performance
- developing a written strategy to promote benefit take-up and to address potential under-claiming
- developing effective guidance and arrangements for the secure opening of post
- prioritising the recovery of fraud overpayments.

How BFI's current performance assessment informs the Audit Commission's overall assessment is described [here](#).