

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

AGENDA ITEM No. 11

<b>To:</b> HOUSING & TECHNICAL SERVICES COMMITTEE	<b>Subject:</b> HB/CTB NATIONAL PERFORMANCE STANDARDS	
<b>From:</b> DIRECTOR OF HOUSING & PROPERTY SERVICES		
<b>Date:</b> 18 September 2002	<b>Ref:</b> TMCK/HMCG/JMCE	

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to obtain Committee's approval to North Lanarkshire Council's benefits section working towards adoption of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) National Performance Standards.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 In their response to the Housing Green Paper (published November 2000) the DWP committed to the development of a performance framework for housing benefit. In July 2000, the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate (BFI) committed to developing a self-assessment package to assist authorities to analyse risks in the process of benefits administration and counter fraud activity.
- 2.2 The development of the standards necessary for secure and effective delivery of Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) has used the experiences of:
- BFI staff in inspections and benefits administration;
  - policy makers and lawyers in the DWP and other departments;
  - professional bodies including the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation, Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, Chartered Institute of Housing and Institute of Internal Auditors;
  - the Audit Commission and Audit Scotland;
  - Local Authority secondees;
  - bodies representing customers and landlords (both private and social); and
  - 14 pilot authorities.

**3. What the Performance Standards cover and why**

- 3.1 The Performance Standards cover the full picture of what makes up effective and secure housing benefit delivery, rather than focusing solely on measures of speed, accuracy and security.

3.2 The standards will allow inspectors and auditors to assess whether a Local Authority (LA) provides a modern, customer-focused, efficient, effective and secure HB and CTB service which continuously seeks improvement. The key objectives for LA's, and the modules for assessing Performance Standards are:

- Strategic Management;
- Customer Services;
- Processing of claims;
- Working with landlords;
- Internal security;
- Counter-fraud; and
- Overpayments.

#### **4. Why we need to work towards these Performance Standards**

4.1 The advantages of making early use of the standards include:

- providing locally driven improvement plans that deliver results and work towards continuous improvement;
- highlighting priorities that will assist with the implementation of tax and pensioner credits; and
- self-assessments for future BFI inspections which should help simplify the inspection process as the BFI will have a guide to priority areas

#### **5. Recommendation**

5.1 Committee is asked to approve adoption of the HB/CTB National Performance Standards.

#### **6. Access to Information**

6.1 Background information is available from the department.



T McKenzie

**Director of Housing & Property Services**