

# LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

<b>Meeting:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<b>Date:</b>	25 November 2003
<b>Subject:</b>	Housing Benefit Review Scope
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	Carol Cutler, Director of Business Services
<b>Status:</b>	Public
<b>Ward:</b>	N/A
<b>Enclosures:</b>	Appendix 1 - Review Scoping

## 1. **Summary**

- 1.1 This report sets out the Review Scope for the Housing Benefit Review.

## 2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 **That the Review Scope be approved.**

## 3. **Consultation with Ward Councillors**

- 3.1 N/A

## 4. **Policy Context (including Relevant Previous Decisions)**

- 4.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee 23<sup>rd</sup> September Minute 102

## 5. **Relevance to Corporate Priorities**

- 5.1 Supports the Council's Corporate Priorities of strengthening Harrow's local communities and improving the quality of health and social care in Harrow.

## 6. **Consultation**

- 6.1 None

## 7. **Finance Observations**

- 7.1 None

## 8. **Legal Observations**

8.1 None

9. **Conclusion**

9.1 Members are asked to consider and approve the Scoping document for the Review of the Housing Benefit Department of the London Borough of Harrow.

10. **Background Papers**

10.1 None

11. **Author**

11.1 Laura Shewfelt, Scrutiny Officer  
Tel. 020 8420 9203

**SCRUTINY REVIEW SCOPING**

1	<b>SUBJECT</b>	Review of the performance and change management processes within the Housing Benefit Department of the London Borough of Harrow.
2	<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
3	<b>REVIEW GROUP</b>	Lead Member – Cllr Mark Ingram  Councillors Osborn, Blann, Marie-Louise Nolan and Thammaiah
4	<b><u>AIMS/ OBJECTIVES</u></b>	To (1) Examine the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate’s report on Housing Benefits and officer responses thereto. (2a) Examine the HB action plan, and to monitor the achievement of the objectives of that plan, in particular, the backlog of housing benefit claims. (2b) Understand how the context, action points and outcomes of this action plan differ from the action plan drawn up in 2000. (3) Consider the implementation of the action plan in the context of the new “System for Managing Projects” with a view to discovering the strengths and weaknesses of this system.
	<b>MEASURES OF SUCCESS</b>	The reporting of suitable conclusions relating to: (1) whether the BFI report accurately reflected the performance of Harrow’s HB department. (2) whether, at a strategic level, the proposed responses to the BFI report suitably address the departmental priorities of the Council, and in particular whether it sets suitable targets for the reduction in claim processing times. (3) the differences between the 2000 action plan for the reduction in processing times and the current action plan, together with any general lessons. (4) the implementation of the “System for Managing Projects”.
6	<b>SCOPE</b>	1. the performance of the Housing Benefit Department, as evidenced by officers and external assessment 2. the HB departmental plans to improve performance, in the context of earlier plans. 3. whether the improvement plan follows the new “System for Managing Projects”.
7	<b>SERVICE PRIORITIES (Corporate/Dept)</b>	Support the Council’s priorities of strengthening Harrow’s local communities and improving the quality of health and social care in Harrow.
8	<b>REVIEW SPONSOR</b>	Carol Cutler, Director of Business Services
9	<b>ACCOUNTABLE MANAGERS</b>	Michael Carney, Interim HB Manager, David Ashmore, Deputy HB Manager

10	<b>SUPPORT OFFICER</b>	Laura Shewfelt
11	<b>EXTERNAL INPUT</b>	None.
12	<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<p>Desktop research and analysis of BFI report and action plan. Other external or internal reports already in existence.</p> <p>Workshop / briefings from relevant officers on BFI report, history to the current and November 2000 crisis, consultants report and BFI action plan.</p>
13	<b>ASSUMPTIONS/ CONSTRAINTS</b>	<p>Assumptions: 1. Officers undertake desktop research and facilitate the review process.</p> <p>Constraints: Member and Officer resources.</p>
14	<b>TIMESCALE</b>	November 2003
15	<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Lead Member/Scrutiny Officer