

Record of Decision

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support Risk Based Verification Policy

Decision Taker

Mayor on 14 September 2016

Decision

That the Risk Based Verification Policy for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support set out at Exempt Appendix 2 to the submitted report be approved.

Reason for the Decision

Implementing Risk Based Verification will reduce the necessity for customers to contact the Council through more expensive methods such as face to face, and decrease the need to produce original documents to support their claim resulting in a reduction in the number of customer contacts, lower volumes of scanning and indexing and less information requests. It will also:

- Introduce a more efficient administration process that will result in a reduction in officer time. This will allow resources to be deployed more effectively and result in a reduction in administration costs.
- Significantly reduce the claim verification process for customers, which will improve processing times.
- Support the cross-skilling of customer service advisors as the administration process is simplified for low risk cases.
- Improve customer satisfaction as on average Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support will be paid much quicker, duplication reduced and fewer avoidable calls.
- Identify potentially fraudulent cases and taking the appropriate action.

Implementation

This decision will come into force and may be implemented on Tuesday, 27 September 2016 unless the call-in procedure is triggered (as set out in the Standing Orders in relation to Overview and Scrutiny).

Information

The Council has been given the opportunity to implement Risk Based Verification into its Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support assessment processes by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

Currently when a resident applies for these benefits they must provide a substantial amount of original evidence. The same level of verification is applied to all customers, irrespective of their circumstances and this is both costly and inefficient.

Risk Based Verification assesses the information provided on the application form and allocates the case to a risk category. If someone is in a low-risk category they may only be required to submit basic identification and National Insurance Number information. This targeted approach has shown to be more effective at identifying fraud and error, whilst also reducing costs and improving the customer journey. It was anticipated that this approach could save the Council approximately £70,000 per annum.

The Mayor considered the recommendation of the Policy Development and Decision Group (Joint Operations Team) made on 14 September 2016 and his decision is set out above.

(Note: Prior to consideration of this item the press and public were formally excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the item involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).)

Alternative Options considered and rejected at the time of the decision

Alternative options were set out in the submitted report but not discussed at the meeting.

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Does the call-in procedure apply?

Yes

Declarations of interest (including details of any relevant dispensations issued by the Standards Committee)

None

Published

19 September 2016

Signed: _____
Mayor of Torbay

Date: 19 September 2016

