



AUDIT COMMITTEE

21 December 2011

Subject Heading:	Housing Benefit Fraud Overpayment Report
CMT Lead:	Cynthia Griffin, Director of Culture & Community
Report Author and contact details:	Chris Henry, Council Tax & Benefits Manager
Policy context:	To advise the Committee of the position in relation to fraudulent housing benefit Overpayments for the year 2010/11.
Financial summary:	There is no financial impact to be considered from this report.

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Ensuring a clean, safe and green borough	<input type="checkbox"/>
Championing education and learning for all	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing economic, social and cultural activity in thriving towns and villages	<input type="checkbox"/>
Valuing and enhancing the lives of our residents	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Delivering high customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

SUMMARY

This report provides the Committee with a record of fraudulent housing benefit overpayments outstanding at 31 March 2011.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That members note the contents of this report.

REPORT DETAIL

Introduction

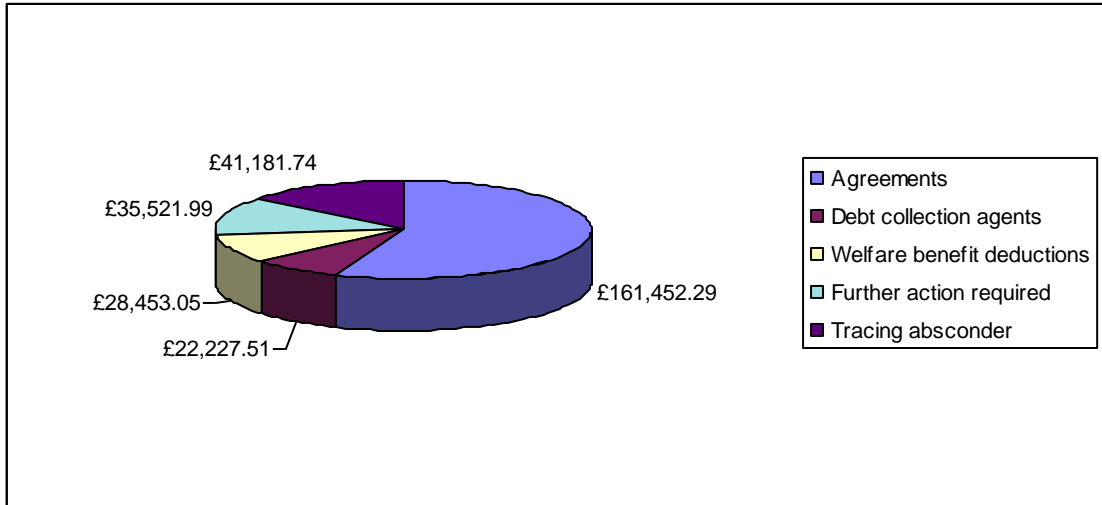
- 1.1 At its meeting on 22 September 2011, Audit Committee expressed an interest in the position of fraudulent overpayment collection. This report provides a statement of fraudulent overpayments outstanding for the financial year 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011.
- 1.2 The Housing Benefit Overpayment Section within Customer Services comprises 2.5 FTE Overpayment Officers located within Council Tax & Benefits Service and the Contact Centre. They are responsible for the collection of all types of housing benefit overpayments. Approval has been given for an additional 1 FTE Overpayment Officer that will be a self-funding post.

Fraudulent Overpayment Collection

- 2.1 Fraudulent overpayments are produced throughout the year following a successful prosecution, administration penalty or caution being applied to a claimant.
- 2.2 The total value of fraudulent overpayments raised in 2010/11 was £480,763.75. As at 31 March 2011 £288,836.58 remained outstanding this related to 63 cases.
- 2.3 The table below reflects the fraudulent overpayment position at 31 March 2011 and the recovery stage at that time.
- 2.4

Recovery Stage of Fraudulent Overpayment	Balance at 31.03.2011
Agreements	£161,452..29
With debt collection agents	£22,227.51
Welfare benefit deductions	£28,453.05
Further action required	£35,521.99
Absconder being traced	£41,181.74
Total	£288,836.58

2.5 The information in Table 2.4 above is shown in pie chart form below.



IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

Fraud will often lead to financial loss to the authority. By maintaining robust collection arrangements and a clear strategy in this area, the risk of such losses will be reduced. There are however, no financial implications or risks arising directly from this report.

Legal implications and risks:

The collection of housing benefit overpayments is governed by statute and this report reflects the position in terms of the balance outstanding. There are no legal implications from noting the contents of this Report.

Human Resources implications and risks:

There are no human resource implications arising directly from this report.

Equalities implications and risks:

There are none arising directly from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None