



Committee and Date

Audit Committee

16 June 2011

10.00 am

Item

15

Public

BENEFIT FRAUD TEAM - PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

Responsible Officer Steph Jackson

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1. Summary

- 1.1 The Council's benefit fraud team investigates overpayments in respect of Housing and Council Tax Benefits (HB/CTB) alongside overpayments of other Welfare Benefits. This report provides Members with performance monitoring information on the activities of the team for the year to 31 March 2011.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That members accept the position as set out in the report.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

3.1 Risk Management

The Council provides Housing Benefit by virtue of a scheme under Section 123 of the Contributions and Benefits Act and administers in accordance with the Social Security Administration Act 1992.

3.2 Human Rights

The regulations are compatible with the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998.

3.3 Equalities

EINAs are undertaken by the DWP to ensure equality in accessing Welfare Benefits.

3.4 Community and other Consultation

Consultations are undertaken when changes to practice are proposed.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 The overpayments identified by the Fraud Team totalled £314,210 in 2009/10. In the financial year 2010/11 £593,130 were identified.

4.2 The Council receives 40 per cent in subsidy payments through Central Government for any monies identified as overpayments, in addition to the overpayment recovered.

5. Background

5.1 The Council has over 25,000 Housing and Council Tax Benefit (HB/CTB) claimants, paying out in excess of £80 million per year.

5.2 The legislation relating to the payment of HB/CTB is complex, so it is important that the service ensures that individuals report their changes in circumstances promptly. Failure to report either with or without intent can lead to large overpayments of benefit.

5.3 The team receive referrals from both members of the public and staff.

5.4 During the year 2009/10 the Benefit Fraud Team were migrating investigation data onto a merged database for Shropshire.

6. Performance

6.1 Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Overpayments identified by the Fraud Team

	2009/10	2010/11
Housing Benefit Overpayments	£240,980	£455,640
Council Tax Benefit Overpayments	£73,230	£137,490
Totals	£314,210	£593,130

6.2 Actions taken by the Fraud Team

	2009/10	2010/11 (6 months up to 30 Sept)
Cautions	34	112
Admin Penalties	14	46
Prosecutions	15	35

6.3 The total overpaid welfare benefits calculated within this period were £694,430.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The Fraud Service continues to improve its value for money and is preparing to increase its targeted interventions.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

N/A

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Keith Barrow, Leader of the Council (Brian Williams, Chairman of Audit Committee)

Local Member

N/A

Appendices

N/A