

**Meeting of:- : Cabinet**

**On:- 25<sup>th</sup> September 2006**

**Agenda Item No.:-**

**Topic:-** Write off of unrecoverable Housing Benefit debts & future fraud section activity levels

**Type of Report:-** For recommendation to Council Non-Key Decision

**Executive Summary:-**

To update members on the measures taken to prevent fraudulent Housing & Council Tax Benefit claims and to determine the future resource levels for the Housing & Council Tax Benefit Fraud Section.

**Background**

Cabinet received a report in June 2006 requesting the write-off of a Benefit overpayment of £15,158, which had occurred as a result of the claimant failing to disclose a private pension since 1999.

This had been discovered in 2004 as a result of positive investigations. The overpayment was being recovered by weekly deductions from his ongoing benefit entitlement, when he died.

There were no funds in the deceased's estate, hence the need for the write off.

Members requested details of the measures that are in place to prevent such fraudulent actions.

A detailed report on the work of the Benefit Fraud section has been recently considered by the Audit Panel which is attached at Appendix A for information. However, the report also identifies that the subsidy we receive, from central government will reduce from next year by £72,665 and therefore consideration has been given to future resource levels (Recommendations from the Audit Panel will be circulated at the meeting.)

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**Options.** To accept the recommendations of the Audit Panel or to recommend alternative options

**Risks** None identified

**Recommendation** Members agree the recommendations of the Audit Panel

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**Background Papers:-** confidential report to Cabinet 19/6/2006. Housing Benefit Overpayment Guide (para. 4.122 & 4.123) BDC Constitution part 4 13.5

**Financial Implications:-** Dependant on the option agreed

**Equalities Implications:-** None

**Legal Implications:-** None

**For further details please contact:-** - Linda Jennings, Benefits Recovery Manager Ext. 2902