

**FRAUD INVESTIGATION ACTIVITY
(Report by Head of Customer Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Earlier this year the benefit team obtained limited funding from the DWP to examine the potential to move the recovery of housing benefit debt from the councils corporate recovery team, with the intention of looking at alternative recovery methods, to improve the current recovery rates.
- 1.2 In June 2010 the benefit team appointed an Credit Control Officer. The role of this officer is to review the current procedures and implement new and effective methods of recovery. This new role combines both debt recovery and civil court action.

2. Activity undertaken

- 2.1 To-date the post holder has dealt with £350,000 of the hardest to collect debt, cases that have either defaulted on payment or have been passed to the legal tem to enforce recovery.
- 2.2 Arrangements to recover over 60% of this 'hard to collect' debt have already been put in place, over £4,000 per month is now being received by payment arrangements. The next stage is to commence various court actions for debtors, who can be identified as wilfully, refusing to pay sums owing to the council once all other avenues have been exhausted.


3. Recommendation

that Cabinet

- (a) note the content of this report;
- (b) authorise the Director of Commerce and Technology, Head of Customer Services, Benefits Manager and Housing Benefits Credit Controller to act in the Courts to recover debt.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Social Security Administration Act 1992, as amended.
Local Government Acts 1972, as amended
Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended

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