

## **HOUSING BENEFITS SUBSIDY AUDIT – UPDATE**

### **1 Purpose**

- 1.1 The Audit Committee requested at their January 2017 meeting to be provided with additional information on the Housing Benefit Subsidy audit for 2015/16.

### **2 Recommendations/for decision**

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| 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the report and current position |
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### **3 Supporting information**

- 3.1 Following the Housing Benefit Subsidy Audit, we have received confirmation from DWP that we had been qualified for the period 2015/16 and that £377,000 was due to be repaid from the Subsidy grant.
- 3.2 Upon receipt of the DWP's initial letter in January, we carried out a review to see if we had any mitigating circumstances to put forward, unfortunately we were unable to find any.
- 3.3 When the Housing Benefit audit was finalised in November 2016, we adopted the following processes, to prevent further loss of HB subsidy:
- The introduction of a robust checking regime to include training needs analysis, this has already been tested and provided good results.
  - Performance management has been enhanced.
  - We have 100% checked the Self Employed assessments that have been carried out since April 2016, this was the main error that was identified in the Audit.
  - An ongoing process is now in place for each Self Employed assessment carried out to be checked by a Team Leader before putting into payment.
  - We have carried out a review of the procedure manuals and have updated them where required, this is on-going.
  - Additional training has commenced and workshops organised on the main complex subjects.
  - We now have an external Subsidy Expert working on our 2016/17 claim to ensure that we complete the claim and workbooks correctly.
  - Resources will be reviewed weekly in the meetings that all Team Leaders attend.
  - 8 Customer Relationship staff have been trained by an external trainer in Housing Benefits assessments, so that resilience is provided when we have an influx of work.
  - Management responsibility has now been resolved, 2 Team Leaders along with an experienced member of staff and the current Group Manager are working together, to keep the controls in place, weekly meetings set up to review practises.
- 3.4 We are confident that the significant subsidy loss that occurred for 2015/16 will not be repeated in 2016/17.

3.5 Our current LA error position is:

Lower Threshold £206,809

Upper Threshold £232,660

Total LA Error Overpayments to date £132,772

3.6 There has been significant turnover within the team during the Commercial AVDC restructure. The lessons learned from the review of internal control processes have been captured as part of the consultation process and considered as part of the new structure for the Customer Relationship team. We will ensure effective handover and training for any new staff who may move into the area.

Contact Officer

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Background Documents

None