

<b>Subject:</b>	Housing Benefit Overpayment Write Off	<b>Status:</b>	For Publication
<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date:</b>	29 <sup>st</sup> June 2011
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Customer Services & ICT	<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Customer Services & ICT
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Community Impact Assessment:</b>	Required:	No	Attached: No
<b>Biodiversity Impact Assessment</b>	Required:	No	Attached: No
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1.	<b>RECOMMENDATION(S)</b>
1.1	To approve the write off of £15,215.29 in relation to irrecoverable Housing Benefit overpayment.

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to request member authority to write off a bad debt from the Housing Benefit Sundry Debtor account which is above the delegated limited of £5000.

## 3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:

- **Responsive and value for money local services** – responding to and meeting the different needs of customers and improving the cost effectiveness of services.

## 4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no specific risk issues for members to consider arising from this report.

## 5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

5.1 The sum of £15,215.29 is regarded as irrecoverable in respect of Housing Benefit overpayment and is recommended for write off. All accounts with a bad debt to be written off have been checked thoroughly. The person involved has died and as such the debt cannot be recovered.

5.2 A record of all bad debts written off is maintained in the event that there is an opportunity for future collections.

5.3 The cost for this Housing Benefit overpayment write off does not fall on the Rossendale fund directly because it has been classified as local authority error. This occurred when there was a misinterpretation of information in relation to the claim and has been discussed with the service provider with a view to preventing a re-occurrence. In essence the write off has been absorbed by central government through the subsidy process. From a resource perspective there is no financial impact on Rossendale.

## **COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:**

### **6. SECTION 151 OFFICER**

6.1 The Council accounts for Housing Benefit overpayments on a cash basis, i.e. though we raise debtor invoices the Council does not account for the income until the invoice is paid. On this basis though the debt is formally written off there is no immediate impact on the Council's published reserves position.

### **7. MONITORING OFFICER**

7.1 There are no Legal implications.

### **8. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND POLICY (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)**

8.1 There are no HR implications.

### **9. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT**

9.1 Benefits Manager (Capita on behalf of Rossendale).

9.2 Portfolio Holder Customer Services.

### **10. CONCLUSION**

10.1 The write-off is within the provisions available and recommendation to write off is made within the grounds of prudence and best practice. All recovery methods have been attempted and fully exhausted.