

Subject:	Housing Benefit Overpayment Write Off	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	9 th July 2014
Report of:	Head of Customer Services and ICT	Portfolio Holder:	Customers, Legal and Licensing
Key Decision:	<input type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required:	No	Attached: No
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required:	No	Attached: No
Contact Officer:	Andrew Buckle	Telephone:	01706 238606
Email:	andrewbuckle@rossendalebc.gov.uk		

1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	To approve the write-off of £7,686.51 and £13,664.83 in respect of case 1 and case 2 included in Appendix A. The total amount to be written-off is £21,350.34.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to request member authority to write off 2 bad debts from the Housing Benefit Sundry Debtor account. The amounts for write off are £7,685.51 and £13,664.83, respectively and are both 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 Value for Money Services:** This priority is about the Council working collaboratively, being a provider, procurer and a commissioner of services that are efficient and that meet the needs of local people.

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 debts recommended for write off are listed in Appendix A. Due to the size of debts, members' approval is required.
- 5.2 As an alternative to bankruptcy, both case 1 and 2 of Appendix A applied and were granted Individual Voluntary Arrangements.
- 5.3 The total cost for these Housing Benefit overpayment write offs does not fall on the Rossendale fund because they have been classified as Fraud. In essence 40% of the write off has been absorbed by central government through the subsidy process.

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. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

8.1 The proposed write offs set out in this report are recommended in accordance with the Council's agreed write off policies and procedures.

8.2 All write-offs are considered with due regard on their own merit as required. This report is not proposing new services, policies, strategies, or plans (or significant changes to or reviews of them). It does not propose decisions about budget cuts or service changes/reductions. It is determined therefore, that this report is unlikely to have any adverse impacts under the Council's Equality Policy or associated equality duties, and has not been assessed for equalities impacts.

8.3 No HR implications arising from this report.

8.4 Consultation has been undertaken with the Benefits Manager (Capita on behalf of Rossendale) and the Portfolio Holder Customer Services.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 The write-offs are 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 prior to granting of the I.V.A.

No background papers