

**To: Audit and Governance Committee**

**Date: 28<sup>th</sup> April 2009**

**Item No:**

**Title of Report:**

**Benefit Investigation – 2008/09 outcomes**

**Money Laundering Regulation - Implications and action**

**Summary and Recommendations**

**Purpose of report:**

1. To report to Members the Benefit Investigations and Outcomes for the period 01/04/09 to 01/10/09

**Key Decision:** No

**Board member:** Councillor Bob Price

**Scrutiny Responsibility:** Value & Performance

**Ward(s) affected:** None

**Report Approved by:** Lindsay Cane, Legal & Democratic Services

**Policy Framework:** Financial stability

**Recommendation(s):** Members are asked to note the report.

1. To report to Members the Benefit Investigations and Outcomes for the period 2008/09.

The Investigation Team has several performance measures that are reported to the Department for Work and Pension on a monthly basis. There are also internal performance measures, which have remained in place, though there is no longer a requirement to complete these quarterly performance measures to the Audit Commission.

In the first 6 months of 2009/10 one Investigations Officers has left to take up the position of Crime Prevention Officer with Thames Valley Police. The vacant post has been filled and a new Investigations Officer is currently training. Also a very experienced Investigations Assistant has gone onto

maternity leave. This post has been filled and the new Investigation Assistant has gone through a period of training.

The number of cases referred to the Investigation Team does not yet include some 200 cases from the 2008 National Fraud Initiative. Oxford City Council received 1484 cases on benefit related discrepancies. Initial enquires have realised a total of £115,000 in overpaid benefits. The remaining 200 cases are cases that require in depth investigation before any outcomes can be reported.

Customer Services, Council Tax, are working through the matches in relation to Single Person Discount. Of the 1336 matches received, 931 Council Tax accounts have been reviewed and have realised £7,436 in increased revenue. Enquiries are ongoing in regard to the remaining 405 Council Tax accounts.

The performance measures reported to the Chief Executive on a monthly basis are;

- Numbers of closed investigations per 1000 case load

Numbers of completed investigations per 1000 live benefit case load for 2009/10 is set at 83.24 (900 cases).

The achieved performance for this measure to 30/09/09 is 33.85 (398 cases).

This is below the expected performance; however the average live benefit case load is higher due to the economic climate. Performance targets were set on a live benefit case load of 10,929. By 30/09/09 the live benefit case load was 11,759.

A planned program of review of all current case load is planned during Q3 to ensure this performance measure is met.

- Number of Sanction per 1000 case load.

Number of sanctions per 1000 live benefit case load is set at 6.22 (69 cases)

The achieved performance for this measure to 30/09/09 is 2.98 (35 cases).

This is very slightly below the expected performance. This measure has also been affected by the rise in numbers of live benefit case load.

The level of cases, to date, where it is most likely that sanction action will be taken indicates that the target for numbers of sanction will be met.

There is no target set in relation to the effectiveness of the investigation team regarding the level of overpayments raised. As a result of the work done by the investigation team, £357,085 in benefit overpayments have been raised during the period 01/04/09 to 30/09/09, attracting £146,718 grant subsidy to the Authority.

## **Recommendations**

Members are asked to acknowledge the performance outcomes of the Investigation Team for the period 01/04/09 to 30/09/09.

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