

AC10. AUDIT OF HOUSING BENEFIT – RISK ASSESSMENT REPORT

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services presenting Audit Scotland's report on its risk assessment audit of housing benefit.

A risk assessment of housing benefit arrangements had been carried out in February 2014. Of the 5 risks which had been identified 1 remained outstanding (the development and implementation of a benefit specific overpayment policy.) In regard to the latter, Audit Scotland had acknowledged the significance performance improvement in this area.

As part of the follow-up work Audit Scotland had identified a further four risks:-

- having staff contingency arrangements in place to manage the potential loss of temporary staff to other areas of the council or externally;
- ensuring the performance against all aspects of the benefit service, such as accuracy of payments and the percentage of overpayments recovered against all debt outstanding, is routinely and regularly reported to staff, senior managers and members;
- increasing automation levels within the DWP's Automated Transfer to Local Authority Systems (ATLAS) to reduce the manual processing of changes; and
- collating and analysing management checks in respect of all its activities to provide the council with a holistic view of errors found and to help identify areas for learning and development of staff and the service.

The report acknowledged that the Council had made a positive contribution to the delivery of the benefit service.

Members praised the work and commitment of staff in delivering the benefits service and commented on the successes in meeting the targets set out in the improvement plan. The Chief Executive, in response to concerns expressed by members, recognised the impact of budget cuts on staff and the knock on effect on mental and physical well-being.

Decision

The committee agreed to note the report.