

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting13th March 2014

1. Title of Item/Report

Welfare Reform including update on DHP and LCTSS

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that presented an update on quarter 3 monitoring of the outcomes / impact of Welfare Reform including emerging issues.

Previous reports had detailed the introduction of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 which set out Government's intention to reform the benefits & tax credits system to provide greater incentives to work. The report provided details of the third quarters monitoring using the framework agreed by Members in July 2013.

Welfare Reform meant several changes to benefits, the introduction of which was staggered across different geographical areas over a period of time. Reforms already introduced include Personal Independence Payment (PIP) replacing Disability Living Allowance (DLA), removal of the spare room subsidy, transfer of responsibility for elements of the Social Fund to Local Authorities, Local Council Tax Support Scheme and the introduction of the Benefit Cap. Universal Credit appeared however to be delayed and despite assurances from government that the programme was still scheduled to be fully rolled out by 2017. No information had yet been seen on local roll out.

The report updated Members on the following areas:-

Parliamentary Select Committee on Welfare Reform
Staffing and Housing Benefit Administrative Grant / Discretionary
Housing Payments
Distribution of government contribution and upper limit for 2014/15
Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS)
Under-Occupation
Impact of Welfare Reform on social housing
New measures to restrict migrants' access to benefits
Council Tax Collection Performance
Social Fund / Back on Track

Benefit Cap
Welfare Reform Data Set

A full copy of the data set was attached to the report.

The data collated provided a useful benchmark to monitor changes and impact; however this was just one level of intelligence needed to inform understanding of the overall impact of the Welfare Reform legislation. Other detail contained in the report alongside anecdotal evidence and case studies identify that there were a complex set of circumstances that surrounded many aspects of welfare reform, with changes to one aspect impacting on other areas, some with an immediate impact, others taking longer to understand the impact. Due to individual circumstances, Impact leads individuals to react in different ways; this was difficult to track through a series of measures. Triangulation of intelligence surrounding welfare reform continued through the numerous working groups in operation both within the council and with partners. A review of this data set would take place post year end collection to determine usefulness and appropriateness given the changing circumstance going forward.

RESOLVED that:-

1. The contents of the report be noted;
2. The quarter 3 performance monitoring outcomes and observations be noted;
3. The update on spend against the DHP pot and emerging issues as a result of the 96 ruling be noted.

3. Reasons for the Decision

This report provides an update on the various welfare reforms, highlighting early indications of impact and areas of concern.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight on Friday, 21st March 2014

Proper Officer
17 March 2014