

Housing and Community Select Committee
Update to Executive Scrutiny Committee – 17 December 2013

Update on Progress (including issues/problems/successes)

Review of Welfare Reform and Financial Inclusion

The review will examine the early impact of the welfare changes introduced in April 2013 on the Council and partner agencies, and identify where policies will need to be reviewed in response. The review will also consider the wider aspects of financial inclusion, looking at a range of factors such as food banks, illegal money lending, and credit unions. There will be close links with the review of Child Poverty.

On 17 October the Committee focussed on housing issues. Representatives from Endeavour Housing and Tristar Homes, and SBC Housing Options were in attendance. Discussion focussed on the impact of the under-occupation charge, housing allocations, and general support to tenants.

In advance of the meeting the Committee were provided with the results of a survey of all the Registered Providers of housing in the Borough. This has provided the Committee with an overview of the impact of welfare reform across the sector, and what support is being provided to tenants.

On 5 December the Committee met with Job Centre Plus, in order to better understand the Claimant's Commitment, the impact of the sanctions regime, use of hardship funds and signposting to other services, and support for vulnerable clients.

The meeting also considered the update on the operation of the Discretionary Housing Payments scheme, and the Q2 Welfare Monitoring Report.

In the new year it is proposed that the Committee focuses on financial inclusion and a review of the support currently available to people in a crisis (eg. Back on Track). Members undertaking the Child Poverty review will be invited to attend.