

<b>DECISION-MAKER:</b>	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	WELFARE REFORMS INQUIRY: SOCIAL FUND INTERIM RECOMMENDATIONS
<b>DATE OF DECISION:</b>	24 JANUARY 2013
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	CHAIR OF SCRUTINY PANEL A
<b>STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY</b>	
None	

### **BRIEF SUMMARY**

At the August 2012 meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) members agreed the terms of reference for the Welfare Reforms Inquiry to be undertaken by Scrutiny Panel A. OSMC also requested that the timetable for the Inquiry included early consideration of the changes to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme and the abolition of the discretionary elements of Social Fund (Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants) in April 2013. This was to enable the Panel to influence key decisions to be made by Cabinet on these matters early in 2013.

At its meetings on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2012 and 10<sup>th</sup> January 2013, Scrutiny Panel A discussed the issue of the current use and future need of the Social Fund, the transition grant of £654,232 in 2013/14 and the indicative amount of £644,232 for 2014/15. The allocation will be in the form of a non-ringfenced grant from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to Southampton City Council for local welfare provision.

The recommendations generated at the 10<sup>th</sup> January meeting of Scrutiny Panel A are attached in Appendix 1, with a view to influence the Council's budget setting process. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee is requested to consider and agree the final recommendations relating to Social Fund to be forwarded to Cabinet for the 5<sup>th</sup> February 2013 meeting and to Council for the 13<sup>th</sup> February 2013 meeting.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

- (i) To consider and approve the final recommendations relating to Social Fund following Scrutiny Panel A's Welfare Reforms Inquiry and forward them to the Cabinet and Council for consideration and further action.

### **REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. To enable Scrutiny Panel A's work on Welfare Reforms to influence key budget decisions which will impact on the development of local welfare provision when discretionary elements of Social Fund (Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans) are abolished in April 2013.

### **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

2. None.

### **DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)**

3. At the August 2012 meeting, OSMC agreed the terms of reference for the Welfare Reforms Inquiry to be undertaken by Scrutiny Panel A. At the meeting they also requested that the timetable for the Inquiry included early consideration of the changes to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme and the abolition of the discretionary elements of Social Fund. This was to

enable the Panel to influence key decisions to be made on these matters early in 2013.

4. To date the Scrutiny Panel has held two meetings of the Welfare Reforms Inquiry at which the issue of the abolition of the discretionary elements of Social Fund (Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans) was discussed. Members were provided with extensive background information to help inform the interim findings and recommendations. These were agreed at the Panel's meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2013 and are attached as Appendix 1.
5. Background information and evidence which the Panel has considered in relation to Social Fund include:
  - An overview of the key changes within the Welfare Reforms Act (2012).
  - An overview of the Social Fund and profile of current use in the city.
  - A summary of proposed schemes in Core Cities to replace Social Fund.
  - Responses to the Welfare Reforms Inquiry 'Call for Evidence'.
  - Representatives from voluntary sector and council services providing crisis support and advice.
  - A discussion paper on the Social Fund and local welfare provision.
6. The Committee are requested to consider and approve the Welfare Reforms Inquiry: Social Fund interim recommendations and forward them to the Cabinet for consideration in advance of the budget setting meetings in February 2013.
7. The draft final recommendations and report of the Welfare Reforms Inquiry are due to be agreed by the Panel on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2013.

## **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Capital/Revenue**

8. Southampton City Council's funding for the transition of Social Fund to local welfare provision will be in the form of a non-ringfenced grant for 2 years. The allocation for 2013/14 is £654,232, and the indicative amount for 2014/15 is £644,232. Funding beyond this is subject to the next spending review.

### **Property/Other**

9. None

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:**

10. The duty to undertake overview and scrutiny is set out in Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

### **Other Legal Implications:**

11. None.

## **POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS**

12. None.

<b>AUTHOR:</b>	Name:	Dorota Goble	Tel:	023 8083 3317
	E-mail:	<a href="mailto:dorota.goble@southampton.gov.uk">dorota.goble@southampton.gov.uk</a>		

**KEY DECISION?** No

<b>WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:</b>	All
------------------------------------	-----

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Non-confidential appendices are in the Members' Rooms and can be accessed on-line**

#### **Appendices**

1.	Appendix 1: Scrutiny Panel A Draft Interim Recommendations of the Welfare Reforms Inquiry: Social Fund Appendix 2: Southampton Local Welfare Provision – A Tiered Approach
----	---

#### **Documents In Members' Rooms**

	For full background information on the Social Fund transition see the Scrutiny Panel A Report Pack 10/1/2013, Item 6 sections 4-11 and Appendix 1. <a href="http://www.southampton.gov.uk/modernGov/documents/g2568/Public%20reports%20pack%2010th-Jan-2013%2016.00%20Scrutiny%20Panel%20A.pdf?T=10">http://www.southampton.gov.uk/modernGov/documents/g2568/Public%20reports%20pack%2010th-Jan-2013%2016.00%20Scrutiny%20Panel%20A.pdf?T=10</a>
--	---

#### **Integrated Impact Assessment**

Do the implications/subject of the report require an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) to be carried out.	No
--	----

#### **Other Background Documents**

**Integrated Impact Assessment and Other Background documents available for inspection at:**

Title of Background Paper(s) Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)

	None	
--	------	--