

<b>DECISION-MAKER:</b>	<b>SCRUTINY PANEL A</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	THE WELFARE REFORMS INQUIRY MEETING 6: RECOMMENDATIONS
<b>DATE OF DECISION:</b>	7 MARCH 2013
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	SENIOR MANAGER, CUSTOMER AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT
<b>STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY</b>	
None	

### **BRIEF SUMMARY**

The final meeting of the Scrutiny Panel A's Welfare Reforms Inquiry will consider the key findings and emerging recommendations of the inquiry.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- (i) The Panel is recommended to consider the key findings and emerging recommendations shown in Appendix 1 and 2 and agree any amendments, deletions or additional recommendations.

### **REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. To enable the Panel to formulate and agree recommendations and key findings at the end of the inquiry process to formulate the final report to be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (OSMC).

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

2. Over the previous 5 evidence gathering meetings, the Panel has heard from a wide range of organisations and Southampton City Council departments.
3. Those providing evidence include representatives from
  - Centre for Social Justice
  - The Department for Work and Pensions / Jobcentre Plus
  - Local advice services (No Limits, Southampton Advice and Representation Centre, Swaythling Frontline)
  - Anti-poverty service providers (Southampton City Mission, SCRATCH)
  - Housing providers (Radian)
  - Employment and support services (SAFE, Wheatsheaf Trust)
  - Community representatives (Plus You Limited, community workers, IBEX and Southampton Voluntary Services)
  - Southampton City Council services including Benefit Services, Homelessness, Housing Income Team, Families Matter, Supporting People, Adult Learning, Research and Information, Communications.
  - Organisations and the public were invited to respond to consultations on the Welfare Reforms 'Call for Evidence' and the Council Tax proposed changes.
4. During the inquiry, two reports were submitted to OSMC to put forward interim recommendations on Council Tax Support and Social Fund Transition. The interim recommendations shown in Appendix 1 were

considered and agreed by Cabinet and Council to enable the Panel's findings to influence democratic decisions and budget setting.

5. The key findings and emerging recommendations attached in Appendix 2 have been developed following evidence from witnesses to the Panel and background research. They have also taken into account feedback given through the Welfare Reforms 'Call to Evidence' and public consultation responses to the Council Tax changes.
6. The evidence provided by witnesses reflects the unprecedented impact of the Welfare Reforms. Appendix 3 outlines the key changes and people impacted by the reforms.
7. Key issues identified by the Panel are:
  - The cumulative impact of the Welfare Reforms will most impact on the most vulnerable residents living in the most deprived areas of the city
  - There is limited awareness and understanding amongst people affected and the organisations supporting them. This is because it is not possible to predict the impacts of the changes before they come into effect
  - A strong voluntary sector in the city offers a good solution to building capacity and support but they need resources to manage demand
  - Good, consistent communications, signposting, advice and support are essential to support those in need
  - The key message is that the only solution is to increase income by getting into work, or increasing hours of work
  - The economic climate and Welfare Reform changes will mean that people will struggle financially and will need crisis support
  - Crisis support must be sustainable and lead to independence
  - Excellent partnership working exists to support employment and is working to build local economy and drive resilience
  - Building confidence and skills in the unemployed takes time but is essential to ensure people are job ready
  - Need local economy and jobs growth to help people get into work and increase income
  - Much of the collaboration work to date has been through good will. A coordinated and dedicated resource is needed to sustain momentum
  - Although financial and welfare support is crucial, the impact of Welfare Reforms is much wider and likely to affect people's health, relationships, stress, coping, family network, links to 'grey'/informal economy
  - Lack of preventative and crisis support is likely to lead to increased high cost intervention in future
  - Future life chances of children will be affected by child poverty of today.
8. Members are asked to consider the key findings and emerging recommendations, and agree if they wish to make any amendments or add any new recommendations within the scope of the inquiry. In addition, Members are asked to consider the papers and minutes from previous Panel A meetings.

9. Once the emerging recommendations are agreed these will be used to form the final report for the Welfare Reforms Inquiry by the Chair of Panel A, and representatives from each political party in the Panel. The Panel agreed that they will feedback their comments on the final report electronically.
10. The final report will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny management Committee on 11 April 2013 and Cabinet on 16 April 2013.
11. Following presentation to Cabinet the lead Cabinet Member will have two months to respond to the final recommendations, following consultation with service providers and external partners. The report will be added to the Council Forward Plan for Cabinet consideration by 18 June 2013.

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

11. None

#### **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

##### **Capital/Revenue**

12. The recommendations have been drawn together considering the existing budget constraints and reductions in public spending.

##### **Property/Other**

13. Not applicable

#### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

14. 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:**

15. None

#### **POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS**

16. None

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## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

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

### **Appendices**

1.	Scrutiny Panel Interim Recommendations agreed by Cabinet
2.	Scrutiny Panel A Key Findings and Emerging Recommendations
3.	Key Impacts of the Welfare Reforms
4.	Map of Mosaic groups most likely to be impacted by Welfare Reforms
5.	Map of locations for Money Tree communication posters

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

	Report to Cabinet on Council Tax changes <a href="http://www.southampton.gov.uk/modernGov/documents/s14909/Welfare%20Reforms%20-%20RPT.pdf">http://www.southampton.gov.uk/modernGov/documents/s14909/Welfare%20Reforms%20-%20RPT.pdf</a>
	Report to Cabinet on budget proposals <a href="http://www.southampton.gov.uk/modernGov/documents/s15288/SPA%20Social%20Fund%20OSMC%20covering%20report%20V3.pdf">http://www.southampton.gov.uk/modernGov/documents/s15288/SPA%20Social%20Fund%20OSMC%20covering%20report%20V3.pdf</a> <a href="http://www.southampton.gov.uk/modernGov/documents/s15289/Appendices%201%202.pdf">http://www.southampton.gov.uk/modernGov/documents/s15289/Appendices%201%202.pdf</a>