

Recommendations Agreed by Cabinet/Council

COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT

Link to Scrutiny Panel A report to Cabinet on Council Tax changes

<http://www.southampton.gov.uk/modernGov/documents/s14909/Welfare%20Reforms%20-%20RPT.pdf>

Recommendation 1:

- a. A Discretionary Fund for Local Council Tax Support is established and aligned with Discretionary Housing Payments.
- b. Discretionary funding is directed at the most vulnerable.
- c. To ensure that principles of fairness are applied to the Discretionary Fund. This should include:
 - i. Development of a transparent approach for determining applications for the Fund
 - ii. An appropriate complaints process
 - iii. A fund that is operated in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Recommendation 2:

That the Cabinet gives further consideration to applying for funding from the Government's Transitional Grant scheme, in the context of the Final Grant Settlement for Southampton, taking into account the benefits and concerns highlighted by the Panel in this report. In their considerations, the Panel recommends that the decision should be in accordance with the principles of 'making work pay'.

SOCIAL FUND

Reports to Cabinet on social fund and voluntary sector proposals

<http://www.southampton.gov.uk/modernGov/documents/s15289/Appendices%201%202.pdf>

RECOMMENDATION 3:

That the amount transferred to the Council for the transition of the Social Fund for 2013/14 and 2014/15 is allocated solely for the use of developing local welfare provision.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

- i) To delegate authority to the Senior Manager, Communities, Change and Partnership, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities, the Cabinet Member for Resources and the Chair of Scrutiny Panel A, to develop and implement a sustainable and holistic mixed model approach to local welfare provision. The scheme should harness existing provision to enable residents vulnerable to financial crisis to become more self-reliant whilst building the capacity of the voluntary sector.
- ii) The local welfare scheme for Southampton should be a phased and tiered approach, co-ordinated by the city council, supported by a multi-agency, advisory group and include the following principles:
 - A mixed model of support will be established, with a combination of in-house and external provision.

- Support to be led by agency referral with mechanisms in place for direct access.
- In-kind support will be the main mechanism for help with limited cash provision in emergencies.
- Where small cash payments are provided this will usually be in the form of affordable loans.
- A contingency fund of £100k is set aside and used to respond to unpredicted gaps in provision.
- The delivery model should minimise central administration costs.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

That Cabinet, in considering the Council's budget for 2013/14 give priority, at least for the next two years whilst the Welfare Reform changes are implemented and to allow time for the economic climate to improve, to provide additional funding to increase capacity in voluntary organisations offering:

- a) Financial advice, budgeting and support
- b) Vulnerable residents, especially those on long-term benefits, opportunities to improve their chances of getting a job