

Welfare Reforms Scrutiny Inquiry – Draft Summary of Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION	ACCEPTED BY CABINET (Y/N)	WITHIN EXISTING RESOURCES	ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES	RESOURCES SCC	DIRECTORATE / DIVISION LEAD OFFICER
Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme					
<p>RECOMMENDATION 1: Discretionary Fund: That Cabinet, as part of its decision on the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, considers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. A Discretionary Fund for Local Council Tax Scheme that is aligned to Discretionary Housing Payments. b. That the Council Tax Discretionary Fund is directed for the most vulnerable. c. The Council Tax Discretionary Fund applies the principles of fairness. This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<p>YES</p> <p>Agreed at Council on 16th January 2013.</p>	<p>A discretionary fund to deal with cases of exceptional hardship has been put in place with a fund of £200,000. It has been aligned with Discretionary Housing Payments and application is via Benefit Services.</p>			<p>Corporate Services Head of Finance and IT</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION 2: Transitional Grant That Cabinet, in making its decision on the Local Council Tax Scheme, gives further consideration to applying for funding from the Government's Transitional Grant scheme, in the context of the Final Grant Settlement for Southampton. This should take into account the benefits and concerns highlighted by Scrutiny Panel A's report on the scheme. In their considerations, the Panel recommends that the decision should be made in accordance with the principle of 'making work pay'.</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>Agreed at Council on 16th January 2013.</p>	<p>An application was made and accepted for the Government's Transitional Grant of £378,847. The take up of this grant has provided and 'buffer' and restricts any cut for people on full benefit to 8.5%. Under current arrangements in year 2 this will transfer to the default, self-funding scheme and reduces the support given to working age people on full benefit by 25%.</p>	<p>The Transitional Grant is available for 2013/4 only and required additional SCC funding of £720,000 which could rise to £1,099,000 in following years.</p> <p>Any future review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme will require a full public consultation and subject to council decision making.</p>		<p>Corporate Services Head of Finance and IT</p>

Social Fund to Local Welfare Provision

RECOMMENDATION 3: Resources

That Cabinet allocates the full un-ringfenced grant transferred to the Council for the transition of the Social Fund for 2013/14 and 2014/15 solely for the use of developing Local Welfare Provision.

YES

Agreed at Council on 13th February 2013.

The funding allocation for 2013/14 is £654,232 and the indicative amount for 2014/15 is £644,232.

Funding has been transferred from DWP. Funding beyond 2014/15 is subject to the next spending review.

Communities, Change and Partnerships

Improvement Manager

RECOMMENDATION 4: Principles and Model

That Cabinet, in relation to the development of the Local Welfare Provision, considers:

- i) To delegate authority to the Head of 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) That the Local Welfare Provision for Southampton has a phased and tiered approach, be strategically co-ordinated by the council (Communities, Change and Partnership Division), supported by a multi-agency, advisory group and includes the following principles:
 - a) A mixed model of support will be established, with a combination of in-house and external provision – where possible, provided by local anti-poverty services.
 - b) Support to be led by agency referral with mechanisms in place for direct access / self-referral.
 - c) In-kind support will be the main mechanism for help with limited cash provision in emergencies.
 - d) Any small cash payments provided this will usually be in the form of affordable

YES

Agreed at Council on 13th February 2013.

A model is proposed to provide:

- Crisis Emergency Support
- Crisis Prevention

Engagement in underway with a range of services in the city to identify changing needs to shape Local Welfare Provision.

Effective monitoring will be developed as part of the phased approach and as new products are developed.

Communities, Change and Partnerships

Improvement Manager

- loans.
- e) A contingency fund of £100k is set aside and used to respond to unpredicted gaps in provision.
- f) The delivery model should maximise funding to the frontline to support vulnerable people and minimise central administration costs.

ACCESS TO SUPPORT SERVICES: total additional cost estimated at £103,000 (detailed in Appendix 2)

<p>RECOMMENDATION 5: Access to Support Services</p> <p>All Council services and partners should work towards empowering individuals and communities that are most impacted by the Welfare Reforms, by providing the necessary tools (i.e. easily accessible information about the changes as well as access to IT).</p> <p>Access to services should also be a priority (i.e. benefit advice, money management, and advocacy support) to help develop self-reliance. People having the knowledge and skills to prepare for the reforms will limit their impact and give individuals the best chance to find how 'making work pay' best fits them. This should be achieved through encouraging behavioural change, developing targeted locality support in priority neighbourhoods, working with most impacted groups including young singles, lone parents, disabled people, BME groups, those where English is not their first language, and older people close to retirement.</p>	<p>YES</p>	<p>Advice and support to residents will continue to be provided by a range of in-house and voluntary sector services.</p> <p>Up to date Information about the welfare reforms available on the SCC website and in the Money tree Magazine.</p> <p>Opportunities to provide target support to communities of interest and priority neighbourhoods are taken up as available (community events etc).</p>	<p>A targeted programme of outreach and events is developed and implemented – focusing on groups and communities most affected.</p> <p>Big Lottery Bid – Advice Services Transition has resulted in £344,017 allocated to voluntary sector advice services.</p>	<p>A minimum of 3 outreach events for 150 residents £6000</p>	<p>Housing Services Head of Housing Services</p> <p>Communities, Change and Partnerships Improvement Manager</p>
<p>Key recommended actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the use of credit unions and money management with Registered Social Landlords. 		<p>Promotion of Credit Union and money management will continue to be included as part of the general welfare reforms communication plan.</p>	<p>Increased access to Credit Union Collection Points and products.</p>	<p>2 additional CU collection points set up.</p>	<p>Housing Services Head of Housing Services</p> <p>Communities, Change and Partnerships</p>

			£5000	Improvement Manager
		Money management courses and face to face support.	Minimum of 3 courses set up £6000	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus resources and consider locality based holistic support and advice from local service point to support those in the most deprived areas of the city. 	Explore opportunities to work with mobile and locality based services.	Develop advice outreach (i.e. libraries/ book bus/ G.P surgeries).	To work with local providers to access and outreach. £50 000	Communities, Change and Partnerships Improvement Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the option of a single point of contact for Local Welfare Provision. 	Engagement is underway with a range of services in the city to monitor and identify changing needs to shape Local Welfare Provision.			Communities, Change and Partnerships Improvement Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how to boost face to face support and advice available for disabled people who are more likely to have complex needs, potentially at key locations or centres. 	Local advice and advocacy services for disabled people are struggling to meet demand.	Support and develop existing local advice providers including mental health support services.		Communities, Change and Partnerships Improvement Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure innovative use of Discretionary Housing Payments to support disabled people to stay in their home or avoid reduced income if affected by the under-occupancy rate, where an extra room is essential. 	Monitor the impact of under-occupancy, wider reforms and charges on disabled households.	For 2013/14 the Government has supplied £527,593 for DHP.		Corporate Services Head of Finance and IT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote IT access and training opportunities at libraries, Sure Start Children's Centres, housing offices, GP surgeries concentrated on the most deprived areas. 	Use targeted communications to increase awareness of existing provision.	Increase provision and access to IT and training opportunities.	£20 000 to be used to support provision and access to IT	Communities, Change and Partnerships Improvement Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Third Age Centre and other agencies to ensure community support and advice available to older people under retirement age. 	Use target communications and promote existing support for older people affected by the welfare reforms.	Develop additional outreach services for older people. Provide tailored/ bespoke welfare reforms training for those working with older people. EOI currently being drafted for Big Lottery if the outcome		Communities, Change and Partnership Communications Manager

		of the bidding process is successful could result in up to an additional £6Million to tackle social isolation for older people.		Improvement Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with community development workers to work with community groups, community elders and churches to raise awareness of welfare reforms and signpost to support. 	Continue to map provision and raise awareness support available with workers.	Provide tailored/ bespoke welfare reforms training for community workers and representatives.	Bespoke/ tailored training sessions for 20 workers x 3 £6000	Communities, Change and Partnerships Communities Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure effective signposting and referral between advice services and specialist support groups where English is not someone's first language 	Build on and strengthen existing signposting and referral networks between advice services and other anti-poverty provision.	Develop an integrated advice portal with information and advice available in a range of languages.		Communities, Change and Partnerships Improvement Manager

MAINTAINING AN OVERVIEW OF THE REFORMS

RECOMMENDATION 6: Monitoring

YES

That a Welfare Reforms Monitoring Group involving Members, council officers and key agency representatives is established for the 2-year transition period to:

- Monitor the impacts of the Welfare Reforms.
- Work with city leaders through Southampton Connect and other key partnerships as appropriate, to minimise the long term impact of Welfare Reforms on wider issues for the city, to include a strong emphasis on health.
- Monitor the implementation of Local Welfare Provision (Recommendation 4) to ensure that the local model continues to support those in financial crisis.
- Consider and agree changes to Local Welfare Provision, including allocation of any contingency fund approved, following recommendations from agencies.
- To review the Council's approach to the Local Council Tax Support.

A strategic monitoring group is established work with city leaders to ensure the local city wide response to welfare reforms identifies and addresses emerging issues.

To be chaired by the Cabinet Member for Communities and Change with membership from sector representatives and relevant council services.

Communities, Change and Partnerships Improvement Manager

- Ensure a collaborative council-wide approach to better coordinate resources, activity and pool budgets / discretionary funds, to support those most at risk of crisis due to the Welfare Reforms.
- Ensure implementation of recommendations regarding welfare reforms and report to Cabinet and Council on progress and any emerging issues or changing need.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Prioritising the Welfare Reforms

YES

A clear plan is developed for portfolios to respond to the impact of welfare reforms.

That Cabinet,

- Identifies a clear plan to respond to the impact of the Welfare Reforms in each of their portfolios.
- Gives due consideration to the impact of the Welfare Reforms on Poverty within the Equality Impact Assessments when developing new policy and agreeing key decisions.

Equality and Safety Impact Assessments undertaken on new policies and key decisions.
Cumulative Impact Assessment (annual budget) gives due consideration to the local impact of welfare reforms.

Communities, Change and Partnerships Improvement Manager

COMMUNICATING THE REFORMS: total additional cost is estimated at £10,800 (detailed in Appendix 2)

RECOMMENDATION 8: Communication and Awareness

YES

To continue to raise awareness of the Welfare Reforms and their impacts on individuals within the city by building on the work to date with partners on 'the Welfare Reforms Communications Plan' through the 'Gateway to a Better Future' Southampton Connect Priority Project, led by Jobcentre Plus.

Communications on the changes and signposting to support should be made (where practical) through the various formats and channels that are preferred by those most likely to be impacted by the Welfare Reforms.

Communications must deliver a consistent and clear message across the city that the only way out of the benefit system is to 'make work pay', and should:

Work is undertaken to co-ordinate SCC departments and services contact, training and communications regarding welfare reforms.

Work continues with Southampton Connect to co-ordinate, plan and programme communications with key partners via 'Gateway to a better Future' and nationally with JCP and DWP communications.

Information on SCC website on Welfare Reforms is regularly updates and easy to access.

Development of a comprehensive Communications Plan for SCC and partners.

Development of range of a range of products and information.
£10000

Communities, Change and Partnerships

Communications Manager

- Aim to maximise reach to all residents impacted by the Welfare Reforms (i.e. through libraries and G.P. surgeries).
- Develop a response for people who are likely to be hardest hit, i.e. people living in priority neighbourhoods; housing estates; traditionally hard to reach groups including young singles, lone parents, disabled people, BME groups and those where English is not their first language as well as older people close to retirement. Responses should also focus on the impact on the individual/household and help those families with the most complex needs.
- Maximise support to voluntary sector organisations helping vulnerable people that will be most impacted by the reforms.

Key recommended actions:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop benefits road shows in priority neighbourhoods to signpost residents to changes, advice and support. 		<p>A programme of events and roadshows developed bring together welfare reforms advice, financial inclusion and adult learning.</p>		<p>Housing Services Head of Housing Services</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure wider publication, promotion and distribution of Moneytree both in the Council and discuss wider publication / funding with partner organisations. 		<p>An updated Moneytree Magazine is produced and is widely available.</p>		<p>Housing Services Head of Housing Services</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moneytree sections to be made available as pick and mix online information for individuals and organisations to use. 	<p>Up to date Information about the welfare reforms available on the SCC website and available by topic/subject and printer friendly.</p>			<p>Housing Services Head of Housing Services</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Welfare Reforms packs and guidance for members and council services. 	<p>Advice and Information 'concertina card' developed and distributed.</p>	<p>A bespoke package of training and support is developed for Members.</p>	<p>£800</p>	<p>Communities, Change and Partnerships Improvement Manager</p>

VOLUNTARY SECTOR CAPACITY: total additional cost is estimated at £5,000 (detailed in Appendix 2)

RECOMMENDATION 9: Voluntary Sector Capacity	YES	Work with mobile and locality based services to deliver advice and employment support (i.e. libraries/ book bus/ G.P surgeries).	Support and develop existing local advice and money management providers including mental health support services.	Communities, Change and Partnerships Improvement Manager
<p>i) That Cabinet agrees to prioritise support to help increase capacity in voluntary organisations offering:</p> <p>a) Advice and money management support services targeting those being impacted by the Welfare Reforms.</p> <p>b) Opportunities for vulnerable residents, especially those on long-term benefits, to improve their chances of getting a job.</p>		Promote volunteering opportunities to SCC staff.	Support and develop existing local employment support services.	
<p>ii) All council services work with relevant partners to maximise opportunities to help build the capacity of voluntary sector organisations offering welfare advice and support and pathways to employment. More general support for the voluntary sector could include encouraging council staff to support voluntary organisations i.e. through development of trustees and bid writing skills etc.</p>				
Key recommended actions:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure support and training on Welfare Reforms is available to all voluntary sector agencies. 			A bespoke programme of support and training and support is developed for voluntary sector agencies.	Communities, Change and Partnerships Improvement Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a scheme through colleges, JCP and SVS to get young volunteers to provide IT training to older people. 		Work with JCP and the voluntary sector to extend the current work experience scheme in Job Centres.		Communities, Change and Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold further event with the voluntary sector to consider the best way forward for the transition period for Welfare Reforms. 			Awareness event held for key partners, including voluntary sector and community representatives.	<p>£5000</p> <p>Communities, Change and Partnerships Improvement Manager</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make better use of the voluntary sector to deliver messages and cascade/signpost changes. 			Communities, Change and Partnerships Improvement Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise the spread of the Communication Plan for Welfare Reforms. 		Development of a comprehensive Communications Plan for SCC and partners.	Communities, Change and Partnerships Communications Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to consider the sufficiency of advice services in the city and identify a sustainable way forward. 		Scope the provision of services to provide an analysis of what is already in place and any gaps that currently exist (links to Universal Credit Local Support Services Framework).	Communities, Change and Partnerships Improvement Manager

PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT: total additional cost is estimated at £10,000 (detailed in Appendix 2)

<p>RECOMMENDATION 10: Pathways to Employment</p>	YES		
<p>To continue to work in partnership with organisations, businesses and the voluntary sector to increase opportunities for pathways to employment, especially for people who have been on long-term benefits and/or on lower pay. The aim should be to 'make work pay' by maintaining an emphasis on economic development opportunities and promoting local job opportunities, skills development and encouraging employers to signpost advice to lower paid workers on in-work benefits, alongside maximising our own council based opportunities through developing local jobs and apprenticeships.</p>			
<p>Key recommended actions:</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop local jobs and apprenticeships through the robust application of section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy. 		Ongoing.	Communities, Change and Partnerships
			Head of Skills, Regeneration and

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote opportunities for jobs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage SME and self-employment through developing small contract opportunities at the council e.g. Housing maintenance. Continue to develop increased job opportunities in the Green Economy. Hold an employment conference to raise awareness of employment opportunities / jobs growth areas. Review options to support the development of affordable childcare. 	Ongoing.	£10000	Partnerships Communities, Change and Partnerships Head of Skills, Regeneration and Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support businesses and voluntary sectors to work together through Building Bridges Forum. Ensure projects encouraging economic growth e.g. City Deal and Getting the Economy Started make connections to the impacts of the Welfare Reforms to maximise opportunities where need is greatest. Support is needed to encourage gender specific engagement. 	Ongoing.	Continue to ensure links between economic development, employment opportunities and	Children's Services and Learning Senior manager Early Year's Head of Skills, Regeneration and Partnerships Communities, Change and Partnerships Head of Skills, Regeneration and Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop the council's community leader to promote jobs at a living wage. 	Development of a Southampton Fairness Commission and local Living Wage campaign.	£10,000 has been set aside to take this forward.	Communities, Change and Partnerships Head of Skills, Regeneration and Partnerships Communities, Change and Partnerships Improvement Manager

JOINING UP COUNCIL POLICIES

RECOMMENDATION 11: Joining up Council Policies YES

To review relevant council policies to ensure they support the most vulnerable people of working age and most impacted by the Welfare Reforms, to become more self-

reliant in dealing with money management and debt, encourage behavioural change, and maximise opportunities that support people improving their skills and employability.

Key recommended actions:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate a holistic council-wide response and strategic approach to the impacts of the Welfare Reforms. 	<p>See Recommendation 6: Monitoring.</p>		<p>Communities, Change and Partnerships Improvement Manager</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure Housing and Social Care services work together to avoid increasing costs and service bottlenecks. 	<p>See Recommendation 6: Monitoring.</p>		<p>Communities, Change and Partnerships Improvement Manager</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review housing and planning policies including payment of rent in arrears and housing allocations to ensure they reflect changing needs linked to Welfare Reforms. 	<p>Identify resource to undertake review.</p>		<p>Housing Services Head of Housing Services</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review debt recovery policy across the council to support people struggling due to Welfare Reforms, to maximise the use of mediation, signpost people to money management and minimise the need for additional court costs. 	<p>Identify resource to undertake review.</p>		<p>Communities, Change and Partnerships Improvement Manager</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider innovative use of discretionary payments to help disabled people living in adapted properties to stay in their homes. 	<p>Monitor the impact of under-occupancy, wider reforms and charges on Disabled households.</p>		<p>Housing Services Head of Housing Services</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in partnership with registered social landlords to support IT literacy and managing finances. 	<p>Use targeted communications to increase awareness of existing provision.</p>	<p>Increase provision and access to IT and training opportunities.</p>	<p>Housing Services Head of Housing Services</p>
		<p>Increased access to Credit Union Collection Points and products, money management courses and face to face support.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure awareness of benefits changes and impacts on residents is disseminated to all levels of the council, including signposting to advice for lower paid workers. 	<p>Promote range of information and tools currently available (i.e. Moneytree, online benefit calculators etc).</p>	<p>Development of a comprehensive Communications Plan for SCC and partners.</p>	<p>Communities, Change and Partnership Communications</p>

Manager