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| DECISION-MAKER: | OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE | | |
| SUBJECT: | SCRUTINY PANEL A: WELFARE REFORMS INQUIRY – DRAFT FINAL REPORT | | |
| DATE OF DECISION: | 11 APRIL 2013 | | |
| REPORT OF: | CHAIR OF SCRUTINY PANEL A | | |
| <u>CONTACT DETAILS</u> | | | |
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

None

BRIEF SUMMARY

From October 2012 to March 2013 Scrutiny Panel A undertook an inquiry into Welfare Reforms. The Scrutiny Inquiry report contains 11 recommendations. Attached as Appendices 1 and 2 are the draft final recommendations of the Welfare Reforms Inquiry and the draft final report for approval and referral to the Executive.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) To consider and approve the draft recommendations and report of the Welfare Reforms Inquiry, attached as Appendices 1 and 2, and forward them to the Executive for consideration and further action.
- (ii) To delegate authority to the Chair of the Committee to approve any minor amendments arising from considerations raised at the Committee's meeting on 11th April 2013.

REASON FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In accordance with the Council's constitution, this Committee must approve the final report of a Scrutiny Inquiry and refer it to the Executive for consideration and further action.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

2. None.

DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

3. On 16th August 2012 Overview Scrutiny and Management Committee agreed the indicative terms of reference for an Inquiry into the Welfare Reforms. The focus of the Inquiry has been to understand the changes and impacts of the reforms, to clarify the need for communication and consider any policy and decision making responses needed.
4. The Inquiry was undertaken by Scrutiny Panel A with information presented to 6 meetings from October 2012 to March 2013.

5. The Panel submitted two interim reports for the Council to consider recommendations in relation to the 2013/14 budget process. The first report was considered by Council on 16 January 2013 and included 2 recommendations which were approved relating to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The second report presented to Council on 13 February 2013 incorporated 3 recommendations regarding the change of Social Fund to Local Welfare Provision within the Council's budget setting meeting. These recommendations were also approved.
6. The final report contains 11 recommendations in total, summarised in Appendix 1, which if implemented will help to support vulnerable people in financial crisis. They should also lead to greater self reliance and encourage people to move from benefits into employment.
7. The 11 recommendations are grouped under the following key headings:
 - Budget setting 2013/14
 - Communication
 - Access to services
 - Maintaining an overview of the reforms
 - Communicating the reforms
 - Voluntary sector capacity
 - Pathways to employment
8. A draft final report of the Welfare Reforms Inquiry is attached as Appendix 2. This Committee needs to consider whether the report adequately responds to the Inquiry objectives outlined in the Terms of Reference shown within the attached report.
9. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee procedure rules within the constitution require that within two months of the date that this committee approves a final inquiry report, the Executive will consider the report and submit its findings to either this Committee or to Council. If this Committee is therefore minded to accept the final version of the report, then the document will be forwarded to the Executive for further action.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital/Revenue

10. A number of the recommendations within the appended report could be progressed by re-focussing council officer and partner's time and existing work programmes. Some recommendations may require additional funding in order to progress.
11. Resources were included in the budget for 2013/14 to deliver recommendations 1-5 in the report.

Property/Other

12. None.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

13. The duty to undertake overview and scrutiny is set out in Part 1A Section 9 of the Local Government Act 2000.

Other Legal Implications:

14. None

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

15. The proposals contained within the appended report are in accordance with the Council's Policy Framework.

KEY DECISION? No

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| WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED: | None directly as a result of this report |
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SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices

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| 1. | Draft Recommendations – Welfare Reforms Inquiry |
| 2. | Draft Final Report – Welfare Reforms Inquiry |

Documents In Members' Rooms

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| 1. | None |
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Equality Impact Assessment

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| Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to be carried out. | No |
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Other Background Documents Equality 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) |
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| 1. | None | |
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