

<b>Subject:</b>	Report of the Welfare Reforms Task and Finish Group	<b>Status:</b>	For Publication
<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	<b>Date:</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> June 2013
<b>Report of:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny	<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Customers, Legal and Licensing
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input type="checkbox"/>	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Equality Impact Assessment:</b>	Required:	No	Attached: No
<b>Biodiversity Impact Assessment</b>	Required:	No	Attached: No
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1.	<b>RECOMMENDATION(S)</b>
1.1	That Cabinet consider the recommendations of the Welfare Reforms Task and Finish Group.
1.2	That Cabinet, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Customers, Legal and Licensing and relevant Officers, provide a written response to the recommendations within two months of considering the report indicating what action is proposed.

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 To ask Cabinet to consider the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group.

## 3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:

- **Responsive Value for Money Services:** This priority is about the Council working collaboratively, being a provider, procurer and a commissioner of services that are efficient and that meet the needs of local people.

## 4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Members need to note the requirement to formally respond to recommendations of overview and scrutiny committees within a two month period as set out in the Council's Constitution and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

## 5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

5.1 As part of the Overview and Scrutiny Workplan for 2012/13, a suggestion was made by the Chief Executive that Overview and Scrutiny look at the impact to the Council on the changes to the Welfare Reforms. A sub-group of Scrutiny Members agreed that this issue should be taken forward and a Task and Finish Group was established and met four times between December 2012 and April 2013. This piece of work is Phase 1 of the reforms and due to timescales a further report (Phase 2) will be presented to Cabinet later in the year.

5.2 A number of witnesses were invited to provide the Task Group with relevant information to help inform the recommendations. These included the following:

- Officers from the Service Assurance Team
- Welfare Officer from Green Vale Homes
- Officers from Regeneration, Health and Housing

5.3 The final report was agreed by the Task and Finish Group in April and is attached as **Appendix A.**

5.4 Once the Cabinet has provided a written response to the recommendations this will be presented to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee for further discussion.

**COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:**

**6. SECTION 151 OFFICER**

6.1 It is assumed that all recommendations are contained within existing budget resources.

**7. MONITORING OFFICER**

7.1 No legal comments.

**8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT**

8.1 The Welfare Reform Act (2012) brings a significant policy changes to the welfare benefit system nationally, implemented locally. The aim of the Act is to establish a simpler and fairer system, whilst creating effective incentives to assist and enable more people into work. It is likely that those of working age experiencing a reduction in various benefits support could be impacted on, particularly those vulnerable groups/individuals. Those of pension credit age are not affected by these policy changes.

Implications locally include:

Impact on vulnerable groups affected by welfare changes

Impact on Council tax collection service

Increased demand for other services as a result, such as but not limited to, housing, debt or budget advice, financial / hardship support.

Consultation in relation to the new Council tax support scheme has previously been undertaken, and consultation with has/is being undertaken with those households affected by under occupation (bedroom tax).

**9. CONCLUSION**

9.1 That Cabinet considers the recommendation of the Task and Finish Group.

No background papers