

Committee: Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 2016

Wards: ALL

Subject: Cumulative Impact of Welfare Reform on Vulnerable People

Lead member: Councillor Peter McCabe, Chair of the Healthier Communities and Older People overview and scrutiny panel.

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Recommendations:

- A. That the Panel comment on the reports from local organisations attending the panel
 - B. Any concerns raised during the discussion to be reported to the Council's Welfare Reform Group
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to look at the cumulative impact of welfare reform on vulnerable groups. Merton Centre for Independent Living and Faith in Action will attend the Panel to talk about the effect on the communities they support.
- 1.2. As this is a cross cutting issue, members of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel will also attend to contribute to the discussion.
- 1.3. The council has established a welfare reform group which is looking at ways to mitigate the impact of benefit changes. Feedback from the Panel discussion can reported back to this group who can provide an update at a future meeting.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. The Local Government Association produced a report commissioned by the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion entitled "The local impacts of welfare reform" which was published in 2013.
- 2.2. The report states that the welfare reform programme which began in 2010 represents the most fundamental change to the Benefit System in a generation. A list of the changes to benefits as outlined in this report is attached at Appendix A. The purpose of this session is to understand the impact at the local level and how the council and its partners can provide assistance. Reports from Faith in Action and Merton Centre for Independent Living are also attached.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

The Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel can select topics for scrutiny review and for other scrutiny work as it sees fit, taking into account views and suggestions from officers, partner organisations and the public.

Cabinet is constitutionally required to receive, consider and respond to scrutiny recommendations within two months of receiving them at a meeting.

- 3.1. Cabinet is not, however, required to agree and implement recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny. Cabinet could agree to implement some, or none, of the recommendations made in the scrutiny review final report.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. The Panel will be consulted at the meeting

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. The Panel will consider important items as they arise as part of their work programme for 2016/17

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. None relating to this covering report

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. None relating to this covering report. Scrutiny work involves consideration of the legal and statutory implications of the topic being scrutinised.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. It is a fundamental aim of the scrutiny process to ensure that there is full and equal access to the democratic process through public involvement and engaging with local partners in scrutiny reviews. Furthermore, the outcomes of reviews are intended to benefit all sections of the local community.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None relating to this covering report. Scrutiny work involves consideration of the crime and disorder implications of the topic being scrutinised.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. None relating to this covering report

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

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12 BACKGROUND PAPERS