



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 30TH SEPTEMBER 2014

SUBJECT: WELFARE REFORM - UPDATE ON THE ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT RESIDENTS

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members on the progress of the activities that the Authority has put in place to support residents in adjusting to the changes introduced by the Welfare Reform.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The changes in benefits introduced by the UK Government via the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and Local Government Finance Act 2012 have been seen as a priority by CCBC.
- 2.2 A Programme Board of senior officers and a steering group of officers from key service areas was established in July 2012 to oversee projects that would prepare the Authority and its residents for the changes.
- 2.3 This report is providing information on the relevant activities to-date.
- 2.4 All projects and activities have ensured and continue to ensure that the residents and our authority staff are prepared for the changes introduced by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Local Government Finance Act 2012.
- 2.5 New support services, described in the report, have been introduced and are being monitored to ensure that residents, particularly the more vulnerable ones, have access to the advice and support needed in order to adjust to the changes.
- 2.5.1 In particular the identification and referral mechanisms to support social housing and private housing tenants with multiple debt, that was introduced as part of the Universal Credit Local Authority Led Pilot, has highlighted the need for even closer partnership working to ensure effective support is provided. The officers involved will provide a presentation on the outcomes and the level of partnership working involved.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 This report provides an update on some of the Authority support activities directly linked to CCBC Corporate Priorities, Improvement Objectives and the Caerphilly Delivers – Single Integrated Plan in relation to tackling poverty and improving standards of living.

4. THE REPORT

4.1 This report follows up on previous ones to this committee on the same subject, and in particular the one presented on 4th March 2014 that provided background and information around the main work-streams included in this programme of work, namely:

- Welfare Reform Act and Council Tax Reduction Scheme Awareness
- Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme
- Under-occupation (removal of spare room subsidy)
- Other benefits changes (Benefit Cap, Personal Independence Payment, Discretionary Assistance Fund)
- Universal Credit Local Authority Led Pilot
- Local Support Services Framework
- Gwent Money Advice Service Project

4.2 The present report, as well as providing an update on those projects (paragraphs 4.3), will focus on particular support activities that are showcasing the partnership approach in tackling the impact of the welfare reform for our residents (paragraphs 4.4 to 4.9 included). The partnership working specifically supporting residents with debt will also be illustrated in the relevant presentation at the scrutiny meeting.

WORK-STREAMS UPDATE

4.3 In the paragraphs below a high-level update is provided for each of the work-streams included in the programme.

4.3.1 The activities to ensure **awareness** of the changes and their impact both with partners and in the community that started in July 2012 have continued as part of the authority's day-to-day front-line service activity and with special events, such as the LSB standing conference on 13/06/2014. Specific training for staff is organised regularly and includes topics such as awareness of the Illegal Money Lending Unit activities (tackling loan sharks in the area), how to support residents in applying for a Discretionary Assistance Fund and awareness on other Welsh Government anti-poverty programmes such as Families First, Communities First and Supporting People.

4.3.2 On 5th June 2014 the Welsh Government announced that the current national arrangements for the **Council Tax Reduction Scheme**, which Caerphilly Council have adopted, will continue for at least two more years. This will give some much needed stability for CCBC residents.

4.3.3 In relation to the **under-occupation (or Removal of Spare Room Subsidy)**, the Tenancy Support Officers (TSOs) have completed home visits to all council tenants affected by the reduction in benefits and provided wide ranging support (the support is further described in the paragraphs 4.5.2 below and in the presentation that will follow). The officers are now undertaking repeat visits and are visiting other tenants identified as in need of support, e.g. because they are in rent arrears or through referral from other services.

4.3.4 Since April 2013, when the change was introduced, there has been a slight reduction in the numbers of tenants affected by under-occupancy – from 2,834 tenants (of which 2,181 were Caerphilly Homes Tenants and 653 were Housing Associations tenants) to 2,527 tenants (2,025 Caerphilly Homes tenants and 502 Housing Associations tenants) in April 2014.

4.3.5 Our local authority is one of ten areas across the UK providing information for a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) assessment on the impact of this change in benefits. An interim report, based on the early findings, has been published on the DWP website and it is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/removal-of-the-spare-room-subsidy-interim-evaluation-report>. A further review is expected to be undertaken at the end of September and the final report expected to be published by DWP in 2015.

- 4.3.6 The Wales Audit Office Improvement Study mentioned in our previous report to this committee, commissioned by Welsh Government on the impact of welfare reform specifically in housing, has not yet been published.
- 4.3.7 Caerphilly provided evidence to the UK Governments Work and Pensions Committee report entitled Support for Housing Costs in the Reformed Welfare System. The report was published on 2nd April 2014 and provides recommendations from evidence provided on how the impacts of the reform could be mitigated. The evidence provided by Caerphilly is referred to in the section on mitigating the effects of the social sector size criteria. The report can be found on the Work and Pension Committee website on the following link - <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmworpen/720/720.pdf>
- 4.3.8 With regards to **other benefit changes**, support for the limited number of tenants affected by the benefit cap is being provided as part of the Tenancy Support Officers' activities. There has been no further update on when existing Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claimants in Caerphilly will be migrated to the new Personal Independence Payment (PIP). However initial reviews of Supporting People providers' clients on Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and DLA have shown significant declines in benefit, it is known that many appeals have been successful and Supporting People and Disability CANDO are both initiating projects to assist people with the appeal process. Frontline staff have received awareness sessions on the new Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF). During the first quarter of this financial year Caerphilly had a 69% success rate with DAF applications, the highest success rate in Wales.
- 4.3.9 Following submission to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) of our final evaluation report of the **Universal Credit Local Authority Led Pilot** in February 2014, publication of the final DWP composite document around the learning from all 12 pilots has now been scheduled for October 2014.
- 4.3.10 In respect of the **Local Support Service Framework**, Blaenau Gwent Council and Carmarthenshire Council have been selected in Wales as two of nine pilot areas to robustly trial elements of the framework. The trials commenced on 1st September and are to last for 12 months. To build on the work already carried out, Caerphilly will continue liaising with DWP and will remain involved in the learning via regular meetings with the newly appointed DWP Universal Credit Local Support Service Lead Officer and relevant partners.
- 4.3.11 Funded by the Welsh Government, the **Gwent Money Advice Service Project** has 3 main aims: (a) to map the money advice services currently available across Gwent, look at need for these services and produce a gap analysis; (b) develop a signposting tool for professionals to offer informed information; (c) raise awareness of the benefits of financial inclusion with frontline staff across the Gwent Local Service Boards. The dedicated staff, governed by a project board group with representation from all five local authorities from the Gwent area, has established a baseline of current money advice services and are undertaking detailed research. A questionnaire for frontline staff has recently been piloted in 3 services of CCBC and roll out of this will be proceed during the next stage of the project. This will identify training requirements across the 5 Local Service Boards' partners and form a base for a suitable training package. The development of a responsive website as a signposting tool to provide staff with detailed accurate information on national, regional and county money advice support services has recently been agreed and will be developed over the coming months.

SUPPORT ACTIVITIES FOR RESIDENTS AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- 4.4 Since July 2012 a cross-departmental steering group, directed by a senior management Programme Board, has come together to ensure that our residents are supported in adjusting to the changes introduced by Welfare Reform, by revising existing services and introducing new ones as required. The Group works with key partners such as Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) and JobCentre Plus (JCP) as described in the paragraphs below.

4.5 Support provided to Residents in Council Housing

4.5.1 Caerphilly Homes offer a range of support and assistance to residents. We have embedded financial inclusion initiatives within our core service delivery including provision of money and debt advice, in partnership with CAB, signposting to key agencies, the water assist scheme and ensuring maximisation of tenants income. The following key support mechanisms are provided.

4.5.2 The **Tenancy Support Officers** (TSO), a specific role created in October 2012, visit tenants in their homes and carry out needs assessments. The officers have so far visited and engaged with 3026 tenants (October 2012 to July 2014). They provide immediate support through advice and make referrals to partner agencies where appropriate. A breakdown of the referral, customer satisfaction and a detail of savings generated and additional benefits entitlement identified is provided in *Table 1*, *Table 2* and *Table 3* further below. The advice and support is provided on a range of issues including:

- **HOUSING:** the TSOs discuss the impacts of the benefits changes and choices available to the tenants providing them with the relevant support. Tenants who wish to move to a smaller property, for example, are helped to register with Homeswapper or apply for a housing transfer.
- **FINANCE:** the TSOs complete an income and expenditure assessment to identify if the tenants might be eligible for a discretionary housing payment (DHP). From April 2013 to the end of July 2014, the TSOs have assisted 979 council tenants to claim DHP with a positive outcome in 87% (849) of the applications. The completion of the income expenditure assessment in some cases is instrumental in identifying savings a tenant may be able to achieve by making some small changes in the handling of some expenses. In other cases, where debt is highlighted, the tenants are offered an appointment with a specialist Citizen Advice Bureau debt advisor. The Officers have also supported numerous tenants to access additional welfare benefits where appropriate.

Tab. 1 – Council tenants breakdown of referral for support 2013-2014

Agency the tenants were referred to	No. of Council Tenants Referred
Referral for energy advice (customers of Swalec referred to Swalec Smart Service, customers of other providers referred to Groundwork)	1,366
Referral to employment support (JCP/Bridges into Work)	302
Registration to Homeswapper website	451
Referral to CAB for debt support	381
Issued with Foodbank vouchers (in some instances with home delivery of the parcels)	124

4.5.3 As explained in the previous paragraphs the Tenancy Support Officers are currently re-visiting tenants and at the same time are carrying out a satisfaction survey in relation to their initial visit. The tenants are asked to score their satisfaction of the visit and service received on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). The current result is shown in *Table 2* below.

Tab.2 – Tenants visited by TSOs Satisfaction Survey

Agency Tenant was referred to	No. who responded	Percentage scoring 3 or above
Welsh Water (for water assist)	56	91%
Welsh Water (for water meter)	25	84%
Energy Advice	69	81%
Citizens Advice Bureau	39	84%
Overall satisfaction with visit by the TSO	96	98%

- 4.5.4 All Rents officers provide basic **welfare benefits advice** which aims to ensure that entitlement to benefits is identified for our tenants, contributing to sustaining their tenancy. Two officers are specialised welfare benefits advisors and are able to assist tenants in making claims for Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Employment Support Allowance (ESA) etc. The Rents department also works in partnership with Disability CANDO and Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) in supporting our tenants. The savings and additional benefits generated for our tenants as a result of the team work in 2013/2014 are highlighted in *Table 2* below.

Tab. 3 –Savings/additional benefits for tenants via Caerphilly Homes support/advice 2013-2014

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2013/2014
Water Assist	£13,433	£13,433	£20,163	£91,283	£138,312
Water Meter	£11,500	£15,100	£9,200	£4,700	£40,500
Additional benefits entitlement identified(*)	£61,765	£70,168	£112,428	£35,537	£279,898
total	£86,698	£98,7001	£141,791	£131,520	£458,710

Note to Tab. 3

(*) includes welfare benefits, housing benefits and council tax reduction

- 4.5.5 At the signing up of the tenancy, **new tenants** are offered advice and support to ensure their tenancy will be sustained. The advice and assistance is on financial matters, particularly where tenants may have experienced difficulty with rent payments in the past. A “financial health assessment” is completed which includes an assessment of welfare benefits, possible financial savings and assistance is also provided to complete the online Housing Benefits application (e-Claim) if appropriate. From April 2014 to the end of August 2014, 350 tenants were interviewed and provided with assistance at sign-up.
- 4.5.6 Our **floating support officers** are specially trained to provide help and advice to older people in their homes. The floating support is a flexible support service that helps tenants manage their affairs and live as independently as possible.
- 4.5.7 The **Tenant Liaison Officers (TLOs)** are the primary interface between the tenant and workforce/contractor for the council Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) programme; providing support and advocacy for tenants before, during and after WHQS works. Alongside supporting tenants through the upheaval of having physical improvements carried out in their homes, TLOs take a holistic approach to assisting tenants by identifying any additional needs they may have and making referrals to appropriate departments/agencies. TLOs work in partnership with a number of other departments/agencies, such as Tenancy Support Officers, Communities First, Social Services, etc to ensure a broad range of tenants’ needs can be met effectively. The team also includes a specialist TLO/Occupational Therapist who undertakes individual assessments with tenants and identifies adaptations or aids necessary to ensure homes meet the specific needs of individual households, e.g. designing improvements to meet the needs of visually impaired tenants.

4.6 Support provided to Residents in other Social Housing

- 4.6.1 In partnership with United Welsh Housing Association, Caerphilly council has developed a new building providing short term supported accommodation for homeless family units. Every family unit housed at Ty'r Fesen is allocated a Support Worker, who works with the family to achieve agreed targets. For example, families who need support with budgeting and how to cook could be provided with sessions on cooking healthy food on a budget; other families with particular health needs could be supported to register with the local Doctors/Dentist or, in more complex cases, they could be supported to address mental health, alcohol or drug related issues. A joint needs assessment and support plan is developed, which identifies the unmet needs a service user has, which require additional intervention to enable them to sustain their home and to live more independently. The support available to the family at the facility includes debt/budgeting advice, welfare benefits advice, digital skills training, health care service, cooking and health eating, advocacy, household led food Co-Op, free gym and swimming session at the local leisure centre, CV writing, and events offering help to get back into work.
- 4.6.2 The Housing Associations providing social housing across the borough also employ officers that provide their tenants with a similar level of support to that which council tenants receive.
- 4.6.3 Housing Association officers also sit on a Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) working group to ensure that the procedure in place for the award of DHP is consistent across the sectors.
- 4.6.4 Work is also on-going to launch a Common Housing Register and Common Allocation policy for those seeking affordable housing within our County Borough. This will provide a more consistent approach to housing allocations. Consultation with local people and organisations on the draft policy is currently being undertaken.
- 4.6.5 In July 2013, Housing Strategy bid for Social Housing Grant funding made available by Welsh Government to facilitate the development of smaller units of accommodation. Housing Strategy worked with the Seren Group and United Welsh Housing Association and successfully secured £1,583,095. This funding was allocated to the following developments
- A development in Tynywern Terrace, Trethomas is currently on site and will deliver 22 units of 1 and 2 bedroom accommodations. The Social Housing Grant allocated for this development is £1,173,000 and the homes will be managed by United Welsh Housing Association
 - A development near Waun Borfa Road is in the process of being handed over and will deliver 6, 2 bed 4 person homes. The Social Housing Grant allocated for this development was £410,095 and the homes will be managed by the Seren Group.

There are two further tranches of funding being made available by Welsh Government and guidance on the bidding criteria is due shortly.

4.7 Support provided to Resident in Private Sector Housing

- 4.7.1 The local authority has a statutory requirement to provide accommodation for priority groups who are homeless, however there is a significant proportion of homeless or those at risk of becoming homeless that currently fall outside of the statutory provision. Caerphilly is actively supporting those to enable them to secure accommodation and move forward with their lives. Support is provided to access private sector rented properties with the various barriers and financial requirements preventing a resident taking on a private tenancy being addressed. A financial assessment of the tenant's circumstances is carried out and a payback agreement put in place. Where required and agreed with the tenant a Credit Union account maybe opened to encourage saving/budgeting and a direct payment for rent to the landlord is set up with the council paying the £5 monthly fee, if required, for the first 6 months. This was initially set up as part of a pilot with the Wales Cooperative Centre to prepare for the introduction of Universal Credit. The pilot work with the Wales Cooperative Centre also recognised that

residents in the private sector had little advice and access to support to maintain their tenancies. In response to this a new initiative has been introduced whereby a support worker through the Supporting People programme is allocated to the tenant to assist with other issues that may impact on maintaining the tenancy. The Landlord is also supported with setting up the tenancy and the associated financial barriers (first month's rent, bond, guarantor etc.) are tackled.

4.7.2 With the implementation of the **Housing (Wales) Bill** early in 2015 the training of landlords and agents in the private rented sector will become a formal requirement. At the same time the Local Authority's homelessness team will be able to discharge its statutory re-housing duty into the private rented sector. In the past 2 years there has been a Wales wide move towards social lettings opportunities whereby private landlords who do not wish to go through the necessary training and licensing requirements 'hand over' their properties to social landlords to let them on their behalf. There is a report being considered at this (30th September 2014) Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee proposing the development of such a social letting agency

4.8 **Support to all residents**

4.8.1 Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) is a temporary payment towards rent that each local authority can pay to residents who are already in receipt of housing benefit but need more help with their housing costs over and above their benefit award. Like any other council, Caerphilly has been given a fixed amount by the Department for Work and Pensions to fund these payments which for the current year (2014/2015) is £382,715. Criteria are used to allocate these payments. An unforeseen influx of new claims has put a strain on this year's fund and it has become apparent that the allocation is not adequate for 2014/15 if criteria set at the start of the financial year are consistently applied. Therefore the current award criteria will be reviewed in time for the new financial year allocation to ensure there is no overspend moving forward.

4.8.2 Our Libraries, in partnership with other organisations and council services, provide a venue for events and training sessions aimed at improving the employment prospects of our residents and improve skills useful in everyday life such as computer/digital skills. For example **Bridges into Work**, a project for economically inactive and unemployed people in South Wales funded by the European Social Fund, has been holding events in Caerphilly, Bargoed and Risca libraries to offer free job advice and access to a range of courses to improve access to employment. These sessions were attended by about 700 residents.

4.8.3 Since their inception **Get Caerphilly Online**, which is a partnership between initiatives supported by the Welsh Government Communities 2.0 programme, Caerphilly County Borough Council and Get IT Together (a nationwide digital inclusion programme run by national charity Citizens Online with support from BT, Nominet Trust, Communities 2.0 and a variety of local partners), has supported 4000 residents to "get online" and improve their digital and IT skills.

4.8.4 The support described in this document compliments work carried out on the key Welsh Government funded programmes tackling poverty and vulnerability. Residents are signposted to **Communities First** (supporting the most disadvantaged people in the most deprived areas of Wales), **Families First** (a preventative and early intervention programme providing support for families throughout the borough, incorporating Team Around the Family), **Supporting People** (providing housing-related support to help vulnerable people to live as independently as possible) and **Flying Start** (Early Years programme for families with children under 4 years of age in some of the most deprived areas in Wales) projects which are the subject of regular dedicated reports authored by colleagues responsible for these programmes. The key poverty programmes, Families First, Communities First and Flying Start work collaboratively together to complement each other, plug gaps in provision, and avoid duplication.

4.9 Focus on partnership working

- 4.9.1 Debt has been identified as a key issue amongst our residents. The provision of neutral and independent advice and support with debt has been seen as a priority across service areas including Caerphilly Homes, Families First and Supporting People and various referral mechanisms to **Caerphilly Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)** specialist debt workers have been developed. For the residents referred via these methods, CAB currently provide full casework support including contacting creditors on clients behalf, obtaining information for formal debt remedy from creditors, challenging debts and negotiating repayments on behalf of the client. *Table 4* below provides key figures of the amount of debt identified for those referred.
- 4.9.2 Numerous council tenants in rent arrears are found facing multiple debts and complex personal and financial difficulties. These problems may appear to be insurmountable to the tenant and, in this situation, they may feel overwhelmed and avoid taking action to try resolving or improving their situation. Since 2008 **Caerphilly Homes** have worked in partnership with CAB in the provision of debt and money advice to tenants, which includes surgeries being held at various locations within the county borough. Rent staff maintain the appointment lists and offer appointments to tenants who are experiencing difficulties in maintaining their tenancies due to debt of budgeting issues. Since March 2013, the TSOs have completed income and expenditure forms with the tenants affected by under-occupancy as part of the application for a Discretionary Housing Payment. This has led to the identification of significant levels of debt and the need for a more enhanced support in dealing with the issue. In view of this a new casework support service was developed, in partnership with CAB, to ensure that the tenants received support from a debt specialist who provides an in depth supported service. The new service commenced in October 2013 as part of the Universal Credit Pilot and has continued beyond the pilot with close monitoring being carried out to ascertain the long term impacts of the support. The levels of debt identified through this process are indicated in *Table 4* below.

The partnership work with CAB was recently recognised as an example of good practice and showcased on the national Citizens Advice Bureau website (<http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/policy/welfareproject/mwwl-case-study-showcase.htm>).

- 4.9.3 **Supporting People** have also developed a debt service to support residents. Between October 2013 and June 2014 the service was delivered in CAB office with the support officer accompanying the resident to the appointment, however due to falling attendance rates from June 2014 a joint visiting service has been trialled with CAB and the support worker attending the residents home. This enables those residents who may have difficulties in leaving their house to receive the support. This ensures that residents with additional support needs are not excluded from the debt support. Key figures relevant to these referrals are also included in *Table 4* below.

Tab. 4 – Debt Referrals - From Oct. 2013 to Aug 2014.

Referral source	No. people referred	No. appointments attended	% attendance rate	No. with Rent arrears	No. with Council Tax arrears	Total of priority(*) debts	Total of non-priority(**) debts	Total Debts
Tenancy Support Officer	294	166	56%	135	75	£316,262	£1,162,764	£1,479,026
Supporting people	153	96	63%	Not recorded	Not recorded	£147,522	£902,618	£1,050,140
Total	447	262	59%	n/a	n/a	£463,784	£2,065,382	£2,529,166

Notes to Tab. 4

(*) Priority debts, according to CAB definition, are those that can threaten serious legal action if left unpaid, for example mortgages, rent, secured loans, council tax and utility bills.

(**) Non-priority debts, according to CAB definitions, include credit card and store card arrears, catalogue debts, bank overdrafts and unsecured personal loans.

- 4.9.4 A new financial inclusion project called “Confident with Cash” delivered through CAB is being piloted by **Families First**. The caseworker will visit the family in their home to address the immediate debt issue which will then be followed by longer term specialist financial capability support to ensure that the clients understand priority debts, the importance of maintaining payments and gain the ability to budget effectively to avoid debt problems arising in the future.
- 4.9.5 The local **JobCentre Plus** (JCP) has developed partnership arrangements with a number of council departments to support residents with reducing barriers to employment. The JCP local offices refer job-seekers to digital support provided by CCBC in libraries and for support with developing skills at Communities First job clubs and through the Bridges into Work programme. Discussions have taken place with jobcentre staff in regard to the sanctioning of vulnerable clients resulting in reduction of their benefits, agreement has been reached that jobcentre staff will liaise with support workers to clarify clients circumstances and mitigate the effect of sanctions.
- 4.9.6 During the Universal Credit Local Authority Led Pilot Project, a new referral procedure to JCP was tested. It provided under-occupying tenants the opportunity to receive additional support to improve their employment prospects. A total of 260 tenants were referred to this support during the Pilot. Changes in working practice introduced by JCP have resulted in this service no longer being an option, but officers are currently working closely to develop a new support mechanism which will target specific groups. Meanwhile the Tenancy Support Officers continue to offer employment support to tenants and refer directly to the Bridges into Work programme or signpost to Communities First job clubs.
- 4.9.7 At a more strategic level, CCBC, JCP and DWP continue to work closely to ensure support mechanisms are in place for residents when the new Universal Credit is introduced in the area (the precise time has not been announced yet) through the development of a Local Support Service.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Support activities described in this report are contributing to ensure that those residents who are adversely affected by Welfare Reform have the information and opportunities to access the range of support available via the council or other third sector organisations.
- 5.2 It is recognised that the impact of Welfare Reform can be significantly greater on the more vulnerable groups in society who already face different barriers to leading independent lives - people of all ages with disabilities for example.
- 5.3 In order to help staff understand these links and to help those in society manage their finances in better ways, the Council’s Equalities and Welsh Language Team have worked with various teams across the council and the CAB to provide relevant training. This has included sessions on the impact of Welfare Reform, Financial Capability and Maximising Income. The sessions have been run in the council for staff and in the community for residents.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The support activities described in the report are all currently funded for the financial year 2014/15.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 A number of the initiatives by both the Authority and specific grants require fixed term contracts or secondments.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 This report includes all consultations as listed below.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That the report is noted for information.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 To ensure that members of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee are kept abreast of the work-streams being undertaken by the Authority and its partners to mitigate against the effects of the Welfare Reform changes.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 This report is for information only. The programme activities described in this report are to comply with the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Local Government Finance Act 2012.

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Background Papers: - Programme Working Documents
- *Welfare Reform Programme update*, report to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee – 04/03/2014,
- *Welfare Reform Programme update*, report to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee – 27/07/2013