

Welfare reform and poverty issues

Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report provides an update to Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) on the Welfare Reform and Poverty Issues Cabinet report, 21 October 2015 (attached at appendix 2), and to inform Members of the proposed consultation on the draft County Durham Poverty Action Plan (appendix 2 of the attached Cabinet report).

Consultation on the draft County Durham Poverty Action Plan

- 2 In order to focus on the actions necessary to respond to the challenges facing the county's residents, the Poverty Action Steering Group has developed a draft Poverty Action Plan based on six key themes agreed by Cabinet in December 2014:
 - a) attitudes to poverty and raising its profile;
 - b) focus on child poverty;
 - c) involvement of agencies with direct involvement in poverty;
 - d) credit and debt;
 - e) further welfare reform and benefit changes;
 - f) work and personal wellbeing and sense of worth.
- 3 Once this has been agreed by Cabinet, a consultation will take place whereby partners will be encouraged to comment and contribute to the development of the plan. This will be fundamental to its successful delivery and achieving better outcomes for the residents of County Durham.
- 4 As part of this consultation, OSMB members are invited to comment upon the draft County Durham Poverty Action Plan, which aims to build a more comprehensive response to the changes to welfare and the wider poverty issues within the county.

Recommendations

- 5** OSMB is recommended to:
- a) note the contents of this report and the progress being made by the council and its partners in addressing welfare reform and the wider poverty issues in the county;
 - b) note the proposed consultation and comment on the draft County Durham Poverty Action Plan.

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Background papers

Cabinet, 21 October 2015 – Welfare Reform and Poverty issues

Appendix 1: Implications – as per Cabinet report 22 October 2015

Finance – The £140,000 for Area Action Partnership welfare-related projects will be met from provision carried forwards from the 2014/15 welfare assistance budget; the £35,000 additional support for the Housing Solutions Service will also be met in this way; the estimated £70,000 cost over two years for the Advice in County Durham partnership co-ordinator is being funded by welfare reforms new burdens funding; the £7,374 (plus travel expenses) to extend the contract of the Employability Performance Officer by three months will be met from the existing allocation to the employability project from the welfare assistance budget.

Staffing – There are no new staffing implications contained within the report.

Risk – N/A

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – The council's Welfare Assistance Scheme and Discretionary Housing Payments policy have been subject to equality impact assessments where appropriate.

Accommodation – N/A

Crime and Disorder – N/A

Human Rights – N/A

Consultation – The draft County Durham Poverty Action Plan would be subject to consultation with other organisations and groups, including the County Durham Partnership

Procurement – N/A

Disability Issues – N/A

Legal Implications – N/A