



ANNEX 1 - Interim Report of the Welfare Reform Task Group
Select Committee Task and Finish Group Scoping Document

The process for establishing a task and finish group is:

1. The Select Committee identifies a potential topic for a task and finish group
2. The Select Committee Chairman and the Scrutiny Officer complete the scoping template.
3. The Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews the scoping document
4. The Select Committee agrees membership of the task and finish group.

<p>Review Topic: The impacts of welfare reform and key issues for Surrey County Council and partners.</p>
<p>Select Committee(s) Commissioned by the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p>
<p>Relevant background At its meeting of 12 September 2013, the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to set up a member Task Group to gather evidence from a range of stakeholders on the impacts of welfare reform and key issues for Surrey County Council and partners.</p> <p>The Coalition Government’s ongoing welfare reforms are a fundamental change to the welfare benefits system. The Government’s aims are to incentivise work, simplify the current system of benefits and tax credits, and promote personal responsibility among claimants. The reforms intend to deliver substantial savings. The changes have been introduced in Surrey from April 2013 and some will come into effect up to 2017 (or later depending on central government implementation timetables) so the effects on residents will be felt over time. The related service pressures (e.g. housing, financial, employment and training support, advice and information support) are likely to affect Surrey County Council and its partners. Please see report to COSC 12 September 2013 “The Impacts of Welfare Reform in Surrey” for further background information.</p>
<p>Why this is a scrutiny item Surrey County Council services are likely to be directly affected due to additional service pressures caused by the emerging impacts of welfare reform. Work is underway across partners to monitor impacts to anticipate pressures on services and respond effectively to minimise the financial consequences.</p> <p>At its meeting of 12 September 2013, Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee highlighted that it was not clear what action plans were being developed in relation to welfare reform. It also commented that further consideration would need to be given to how services were responding to the changes, and whether there would be alterations in individual service priorities in order to take the effect of welfare reform into account.</p>
<p>What question is the task group aiming to answer? What are the impacts of welfare reform and key issues for Surrey County Council and partners?</p>

Aim

1. Understand from partners:
 - a. what the impacts of welfare reform in Surrey have been so far;
 - b. what future impacts do they expect; and
 - c. what more would they like Surrey County Council to do, to help mitigate the impacts.
2. Understand from Surrey County Council services:
 - a. what the impacts of welfare reform in Surrey have been so far;
 - b. what future impacts do they expect;
 - c. what more would they like partners to do, to help mitigate the impacts; and
 - d. their response to partner suggestions from part 1 of evidence gathering.

Use these findings to make recommendations to services within Surrey County Council or Cabinet as appropriate.

Lines of Enquiry

Gather evidence from Surrey County Council and partners on the following questions.

1. What are the current impacts of welfare reform in Surrey?
2. What future impacts of welfare reform do you anticipate?
3. What positive impacts of welfare reform would you like to see in Surrey?
4. Do you have any particular concerns about any current/anticipated impacts?
5. Which aspects of the reforms will have the most significant impact in Surrey?
6. Which groups of residents have been/are likely to be the most affected?
7. Do you anticipate hard to reach groups having problems as a result of these reforms?
8. What (if any changes) would you like to see from Surrey County Council/partners to better mitigate the impacts of welfare reform?
9. What are the impact of barriers to accessing information on welfare reform and how can access be improved?
10. What is the impact on users of the requirement for Universal Credit applications to be made online?

Scope (within / out of): -

Outcomes for Surrey / Benefits

- To assist the Council and its partners in delivering services in the context of welfare reform.

This review will support the following corporate priorities:

- Residents: work with adults and children who need support to shape the sort of services they receive so they can lead more independent and fulfilled lives.
- Value: generating increased value for residents by finding innovative solutions which can achieve more for less.
- Partnerships: working with partners in the interests of Surrey.

Proposed work plan

It is important to allocate clearly who is responsible for the work, to ensure that Members and officers can plan the resources needed to support the task group.

Timescale	Task	Responsible
2 October 2013	Agree objectives for task group.	Task group members
By 14 October 2013	Complete scoping document recording agreed objectives and circulate to COSC.	Chairman of task group and scrutiny officers.
October – mid November 2013	Gather evidence from Part 1 witnesses	Task group members and scrutiny officers
Mid – November 2013	Review and planning meeting	Task group members
Mid November – December 2013	Gather evidence from Part 2 witnesses and review all evidence gathered to date. Suggest key points for inclusion in interim report.	Task group members and scrutiny officers
30 January 2014	Interim report to the Council Overview and Scrutiny on findings to date.	Chairman of task group and scrutiny officers.
January – February 2014	Gather evidence from Part 3 witnesses	Task group members and scrutiny officers
March 2014	Review and produce recommendations	Task group members
2 April 2014	Produce final report recording recommendations to Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee (and Cabinet if appropriate).	Chairman of task group and scrutiny officers.

Proposed Witnesses

Part 1

- DWP (Kim Goodall, regional office contact for Surrey & Sussex and Julia Curties – Grant Funding Manager)
- District/Borough housing managers, one with own housing stock and one without (Kim Rippett (Guildford) and Deborah Ashman (Spelthorne) (seen together))
- District/Borough benefits managers (Simon Rosser (Reigate and Banstead) and Grant Langford (Elmbridge)).
- Getwis£ (Clive Wood, CEO of Surrey Disabled Peoples Partnership (SDPP) (the lead provider of GetWise) and Vicki Atherton, SDPP's Deputy Chief Executive who manages the GetWise welfare benefits advice service)
- Surrey's Citizens Advice Bureau (Helen Drake, Citizens Advice Surrey) and CAB manager Tara Hastings (Camberley)).
- Surrey Welfare Rights Unit (Maria Zealey, CEO)

Part 2

- Adult Social Care (Toni Carney, Benefits and Charging Consultancy Manager and Norah Lewis, ASC Commissioning Assistant Senior Manager)
- Children Schools and Families (Ginni Smedley, Strategy and Policy Development Manager)
- Finance (Daphne Fraser, Senior Principals Accountant)
- Surrey Libraries (Janet Thomas (Programme Manager) and Rose Wilson (Head of Libraries))

Part 3

- GetwiS£ (Clive Wood, CEO of Surrey Disabled Peoples Partnership (SDPP), lead provider of GetwiS£) and claimant who has been successfully supported through the Employment Support Allowance appeals process by GetwiS£.
- DWP (Kim Goodall, regional office contact for Surrey & Sussex, and manager of local DWP ESA decision making team)
- SCC Director of Public Health (Helen Atkinson) and SCC Cabinet Member for Public Health and the Health and Wellbeing Board (Michael Gosling).
- SCC Shared Services (Simon Pollock, Head of Shared Services and Stewart Taylor, Customer Interaction Lead).

Useful Documents

- Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee (12 September 2013): The impacts of welfare reform in Surrey.
- Local Government Association (August 2013): The local impacts of welfare reform: an assessment of cumulative impacts and mitigations.
(http://www.local.gov.uk/publications/-/journal_content/56/10180/4098780/PUBLICATION) (08.10.13)
- Centre for Public Scrutiny (August 2013): The local impacts of the introduction of Universal Credit and the wider welfare reforms.
(<http://www.cfps.org.uk/cfps-publications?item=7914&offset=0>) (09.10.13)

Potential barriers to success (Risks / Dependencies)

- The task group will need to work alongside a developing landscape as welfare reform continues to be implemented. The Corporate Policy team will keep the task group alert to the developing programme nationally and locally.
- Mitigating the impacts of welfare reform in Surrey requires joint working between Surrey County Council and many external stakeholders. There will be some limitations on Members influencing external stakeholders.
- The timescales are tight. Members will need to be flexible with regard to meetings and witness sessions. Not all Members will be expected to attend every witness session but notes will be circulated after each session.

Equalities implications
 The welfare reforms will impact upon some of Surrey’s more vulnerable residents including looked-after children, care leavers, children/families with disabilities, and families in poverty. The support in place for all those affected, including these vulnerable groups, needs to remain effective by working with partners.

Task Group Members	Stephen Cooksey, David Harmer, Bob Gardner, and Fiona White.
Co-opted Members	N/A
Spokesman for the Group	David Harmer (Chairman of Task Group)
Scrutiny Officer/s	Jisa Prasannan and Thomas Pooley

This page is intentionally left blank