













No.	Recommendation	Response received from Cabinet	Comments	RAG
1	<p>Adult Social Care, Children Schools and Families, Libraries, Public Health and Finance teams to continue to monitor impacts of the welfare reforms on service users and services, and provide a joint update through the Welfare Reform Co-ordination Group to the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in October 2014. Adult Social Care to include a summary of the impact of the welfare reforms on carers and Children Schools and Families to include a summary of the impact of the welfare reforms on care leavers in their updates.</p>	<p>Although it is obviously for the COSC to determine its own work programme, I endorse these recommendations. As the report acknowledges, the impacts of welfare reform are expected to become more apparent over the next 12 months, as the initial reforms have embedded. Therefore it is sensible that the COSC continue to scrutinise this area, highlighting any issues or concerns with myself and the Cabinet as appropriate.</p>	<p>On 12 September the Task Group met with Service Leads and relevant Senior Managers to question them on the methods used to monitor the impacts of the welfare reforms and understand any initial impacts and outcomes.</p> <p>The Chairman will provide a short verbal update to the Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 2 October 2014, to summarise the findings from these meetings.</p>	
2	<p>The Welfare Reform Co-ordination Group be encouraged to continue to collate data on the impact of the reforms on residents and the cumulative impact of the reforms, and to share information and good practice within the group, and to report on progress to the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the update report in October 2014.</p>	<p>As above</p>	<p>The Policy Team put together a first draft of the Welfare Reform Impact Report 2013/14. The first section of the report analyses the impacts of the specific benefit reforms and the second section analyses the cross cutting impacts of the reforms for 2013/14.</p> <p>The Impact Report brings together data from a combination of internal and external partners and for each individual section partners have</p>	

			<p>provided their commentary on their figures for the year.</p>	
<p>3</p> <p>Surrey County Council's Organisational Development Team analyse training needs on welfare reform in the Council and explore how such training can be disseminated throughout affected council services and ensure consistency with training being delivered by partner organisations.</p>	<p>Organisational Development officers have been analysing the training requirements of the welfare reform changes for SCC staff, particularly related to the forthcoming Care Bill, and have already put in place the following learning and development offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e-learning package on Welfare and Benefits • Introduction to Welfare Benefits and Reform • Personal Independent Payments • Adult Social Care Eligibility Training (which includes some aspects of the welfare reform and the benefits system) <p>I fully support the Task Group's recommendation that the Organisational Development Team take this opportunity to work with wider SCC officers and external partners, particularly through the Welfare Reform Coordination Group, to ensure that this training offer is sufficiently comprehensive and reaching all staff that would benefit.</p>	<p>Members were particularly concerned about the very low take up of the training available, and the lack of visibility of training courses available to staff who might be dealing with or advising those affected by the reforms.</p> <p>The Chairman has written to the Strategic Directors for Adult Social Care and Children, Schools & Families and requested their support to work with officer in the Council's Organisational Development Team to raise the profile of training available on welfare benefits and reforms.</p> <p>The Strategic Director for Adult Social Care has advised that the current training offer is being overhauled to make them fit for purpose. In the meantime, Financial Assessments and Benefits Advisers have been trained on Personal Independence Payments and Universal Credit directly from the Department for Work and Pensions. A formal response from Children, Schools & Families is awaited.</p> <p>Work is already underway with the</p>		
<p>4</p>	<p>Surrey's Welfare Reform Co-</p>	<p>I welcome this recommendation. I believe that it is</p>	<p>Work is already underway with the</p>	


	<p>ordination Group to work with the Head of Family Services to explore the potential for the Supporting Families Programme (which is being extended through the Public Services Transformation Network) to provide early help/intervention to some of those families who are most severely impacted by the welfare</p>	<p>both sensible and proper that the Family Support Programme, which seeks to target the most vulnerable families, works with the Welfare Reform Co-ordination Group - particularly as we enter phase 2 of the programme.</p>	<p>expansion of the Supporting Families Programme to include a wider cohort of vulnerable families.</p> <p>An officer from the Supporting Families Programme will also be attending future Welfare Coordination Group meetings.</p>	
5	<p>Any Local Assistance Scheme (LAS) funding left unallocated at the end of 2013/14 is ring-fenced and rolled over into 2014/15 and continues to be committed to supporting residents in crisis through the LAS.</p>	<p>Rather than carryover the unspent LAS funding from 2013/14 to 2014/15, I would like to place this money in an earmarked reserve. This would mean that should the government choose not to fund the scheme from 2015/16 onwards, there is still a provision for providing emergency support to residents within the council's budget for 2016/17.</p>	<p>The Task Group will continue to receive updates on LAS fund spending.</p>	
6	<p>Shared services to provide an update on improvements to the LAS scheme and take up of the fund, as part of the update report to the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2014.</p>	<p>In order to be in a strong position to lobby government, I believe that it is important that we ensure our scheme is operating as effectively as possible and that we can clearly demonstrate how it is helping residents in crisis. As the task group recognises, there is scope to improve access to and awareness of the scheme. Therefore, I endorse Recommendation 6 as a way of scrutinising the effectiveness of the scheme and ensuring it meets its full potential.</p>	<p>The Council has now 'gone live' with an online application to improve the accessibility to the scheme and reduce any strain being placed on Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) offices. The online application has been operational since 16 July, and was introduced to CAB offices in a phased manner, followed by the wider public.</p> <p>It has been noted by Shared Services that the same people have been applying on numerous occasions to the LAS Scheme.</p>	

7	<p>Surrey County Council to continue lobbying central government to provide funding for emergency crisis support for residents (known as the Local Assistance Scheme in Surrey) beyond 2015.</p>	<p>I welcome the task group's support of the Local Assistance Scheme. When the Government disbanded the social fund, they stated that they felt the money could be better administered at a local level. We have proved that in Surrey. Rather than merely replicating the social fund we have developed a truly local scheme where applicants receive advice and support through the CAB, or furniture through a re-use scheme, rather than just a one-off payment. I recognise the Government's concerns about councils not yet using their full welfare assistance allocation, but I know that here in Surrey this is because we are making better use of the funding by adopting this early intervention approach. By seeking to tackle the root of the problem and signposting to other more appropriate forms of support, we have demonstrated that we can reduce demand on our own services and other agencies. That is why I have recently written to Brandon Lewis to invite him to a roundtable discussion looking at how</p>	<p>Therefore, a review is being undertaken to ensure that the Scheme is not being used as a replacement for benefit payments that have been stopped.</p> <p>Surrey officers are working with external partners to start creating a business case/paper to look at the available options for this essential support, especially given that government funding will cease at the end of the financial year.</p>	
			<p>Response attached.</p>  <p>Lewis MP Local Welfare Provision 09x</p>	

8	<p>The Adult Social Care Committee to closely monitor the delivery of this service by getWiSE and report back to the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee as appropriate.</p>	<p>to build an effective and sustainable welfare assistance support service from 2015 onwards (attached to this response as appendix 1). I hope this assures the committee that I will continue to lobby government to fund emergency crisis support as per recommendation 7.</p>	<p>Adult Social Care Select Committee received a report and update from Get Wise in June 2014. The Committee acknowledged that the first year of Get Wise had been successful, with 2,300 people supported and over £1.6m secured in benefits.</p> <p>The Committee did note significant concerns regarding the delays in welfare reform delivery (such as the waiting times for benefit applications and appeals). Members were particularly worried that those waiting for applications to be processed might not be receiving benefits they needed. The Committee recommended that the Cabinet Member takes forward with the relevant government minister these significant concerns. Awaiting update. The Committee also requested that the service worked with Commissioners to ensure waiting lists were not created with rising demands.</p>	
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9	<p>Surrey County Council's Adult Social Care Commissioners, to work with Surrey's Welfare Reform Co-ordination Group, Public Health and getWiSE to:</p> <p>(a) promote the getWiSE advice and support service to all Surrey GPs through Surrey's 6 Clinical Commissioning Groups; and</p> <p>(b) continue to raise awareness of this service among key partners including District and Borough Housing and Benefits Officers and social housing providers; to ensure Surrey residents receive early help in dealing with the welfare reforms.</p>	As above	<p>a) The most appropriate method to raise awareness of the getWiSE advice and support service to all Surrey GPs is to use the Health and Wellbeing Communications Group. Raising awareness of the service through this forum will ensure this information is disseminated to all Surrey GPs.</p> <p>The Adult Social Care Select Committee was very supportive of Get Wise and asked that the contact details for the service was circulated to all County Councillors, so they could help raise its profile.</p> <p>b) Senior Benefits Adviser Femi Sorinwa has been asked to attend the next Surrey Benefit Managers group meeting to talk about the service offered by GetWiSE.</p>	
10	<p>The Public Health team to report to the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee with findings from their food access needs assessment, to inform the Committee's work around reviewing the impacts of welfare reform in Surrey.</p>	<p>The report highlights data which indicates that there has been a sharp rise in the number of people who are using food banks in Surrey. It is therefore timely that the Public Health team are carrying out a Food Access Needs Assessment to understand more about why people are accessing various forms of food aid. It seems sensible that COSC should review the outcomes of this work as part of their wider review into welfare reform.</p>	<p>Response attached</p> <p> Foodbank usage - welfare reform annue</p> <p> Foodbank usage Next steps.doc</p>	
11	Surrey County Council to work	I firmly support the key aims underpinning Universal	A working group for Universal	

	<p>Credit has been set up by Elmbridge Borough Council to work towards ensuring a smooth the implementation of Universal Credit in Elmbridge.</p> <p>The group which consists of representatives from County Council, Elmbridge Borough Council, DWP, CAB and Paragon Housing met back In April.</p> <p>The first task of the group has been to research and identify Universal Credit Numbers and build a profile of claimant types and needs. The working group met on 25/7 to discuss the progress so far and next steps. Elmbridge Borough Council are also in the process of putting together a formal project plan.</p> <p>Following recent meetings it has been established that the DWP have withdrawn all telephones from all Job Centres in the UK that were available for claimants to use for CAB support. The Task Group are very concerned about this change and will be arranging meetings with CAB later in the year. The timeline for future work is set out in Annex B.</p>	<p>Credit of simplifying the benefits system and making work pay. I also welcome the recognition from the Department of Work and Pensions that local authorities should be an equal and lead partner with DWP in developing the support for people that will struggle to adapt to the new system. Universal Credit will not be introduced in Surrey until at least 2016, but I fully endorse the Task Group's recommendation that officers work closely with local partners to use the intervening period to understand the nature and demand for this support in Surrey, and plan how best to deliver it in order for all residents to be able to make the transition. I will ensure Surrey County Council continues to make the case for sufficient central government funding to be able to provide this locally tailored support.</p>	<p>closely with the Department for Work and Pensions, District and Borough Councils, housing providers and the voluntary, community and faith sector to prepare for the introduction of Universal Credit; taking into consideration the concerns and recommendations highlighted in this report, and report back to the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress. This preparation should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) researching and understanding the need for digital access and support across Surrey; (b) the County Council better understanding the potential demand on IT resources as a result of the introduction of Universal Credit to enable Surrey to properly prepare for this, including reviewing budget provision; (c) reviewing the demand for money management advice and assessing existing service provision, in order to make evidence-based recommendations for sourcing the necessary support; and (d) lobbying central
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12	<p>government to ensure that support to access Universal Credit is adequately funded.</p>	<p>The Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions explaining the Task Group's concerns over the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) process including the following recommendations:</p> <p>(a) That firms carrying out the medical work capability assessments (WCA) for benefit claimants, on behalf of DWP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) treat benefit claimants like customers; and (ii) ensure appropriately qualified persons carry out these medical assessments. <p>(b) Bureaucracy within the ESA claims and appeals process be reduced. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) DWP to provide information on the number of medical certificates posted by claimants but not 	<p>I would like to thank the task group for their detailed and thorough investigation into this area. They have clearly uncovered some concerning issues with the way that the Employment and Support Allowance is being administered. I have already had a helpful discussion with the task group Chairman regarding these issues and will be writing to the Secretary of State of Work and Pensions to follow them up.</p>	<p>This action is on hold while the LAS recommendations progress.</p>	
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	<p>received by DWP and the reasons for this, (ii) DWP to accept claimant medical certificates for longer periods while claimants await mandatory re-consideration and tribunal decisions. This will save GP and claimant time and expense in having these certificates frequently renewed or re-requested where certificates have been sent by post but not received by DWP.</p> <p>(c) DWP's benefit claim forms and decision letters to signpost claimants to advice and support services to enable claimants to seek early help, preferably locally based organisation, such as local authorities, housing providers and Citizens Advice Bureaus.</p> <p>(d) DWP to build a closer working relationship with partners in the Welfare Reform Co-ordination Group, to bring about pro-active information sharing and signposting particularly where claimants</p>			
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	<p>have been sanctioned by DWP decisions and therefore lost their passported benefits, such as housing benefit. (e) DWP to use lessons learned from the ESA process and apply this to the roll-out of the Personal Independence Payments.</p>			
13	<p>The Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on simplifying the Universal Credit application process and exploring options for a common assessment for claimants across welfare benefits and support.</p>	<p>As above, I have already discussed these concerns with the task group Chairman and will be writing to the Secretary of State as recommended.</p>	<p>It has been agreed that the Task Group will wait to see how the Elmbridge Working group for Universal Credit meeting progresses on 25/7 and then the actions and progress of this project can be fed into the letter to the Secretary of State.</p>	