

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

AGENDA

HEALTH AND HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW PANEL

Date: Thursday, 13 November 2014

Time: 6.00 pm

Venue: Vannes/Pulheim Room

Members:

Councillor Mrs M E Ellerton (Chairman)

Councillor D L Steadman (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors T G Knight
N R Gregory
Mrs K K Trott
Miss S M Bell
D M Whittingham

Deputies: P J Davies

D J Norris



1. Apologies for Absence

2. Minutes (Pages 1 - 6)

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the Health and Housing Policy Development and Review Panel meeting held on 11 September 2014.

3. Chairman's Announcements

4. Declarations of Interest and Disclosures of Advice or Directions

To receive any declarations of interest from members in accordance with Standing Orders and the Council's Code of Conduct and disclosures of advice or directions received from Group Leaders or Political Groups, in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

5. Deputations

To receive any deputations of which notice has been lodged.

6. Health Update

To receive a verbal report by the Executive Member for Health and Housing on Local Strategic Health Issues.

7. Review of Homelessness (Pages 7 - 12)

To consider a report by the Director of Community on a Review of Homelessness.

8. Welfare Reform Update (Pages 13 - 18)

To consider a report by the Director of Community on an update on the Welfare Reform.

9. Review of the Work Programme (Pages 19 - 22)

To consider a report by the Director of Community, which invites the Panel to review the work programme for 2014/15.

P GRIMWOOD
Chief Executive Officer

Civic Offices
www.fareham.gov.uk
5 November 2014

**For further information please contact:
Democratic Services, Civic Offices, Fareham, PO16 7AZ
Tel:01329 236100
democraticservices@fareham.gov.uk**

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Health and Housing Policy Development and Review Panel

(to be confirmed at the next meeting)

Date: Thursday, 11 September 2014

Venue: Collingwood Room - Civic Offices

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs M E Ellerton (Chairman)

Councillor D L Steadman (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: T G Knight, Miss S M Bell, N R Gregory and Mrs K K Trott

Also Present: Councillor B Bayford, Executive Member for Health and Housing (items 6, 7 & 8)



1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor D M Whittingham.

2. MINUTES

It was AGREED that the minutes of the Health and Housing Policy Development and Review Panel held on 17 July 2014 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Richard Samuels and Dr David Chilvers from the Fareham and Gosport Clinical Commissioning Group.

The Chairman also announced that the first meeting of the Member/Officer working group on a Review of Street Homelessness in Fareham will take place on 30 September 2014.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISCLOSURES OF ADVICE OR DIRECTIONS

There were no declarations of interest or disclosures of advice or direction made at this meeting.

5. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations made at this meeting.

6. HEALTH UPDATE

At the agreement of the Chairman this item was taken early.

The Panel received a verbal report by the Executive Member for Health and Housing on local strategic health issues. He informed the Panel that he had recently attended two meetings with Health. He attended the CCG AGM which provided members with a performance review of the year and their five year action plan.

The second meeting attended was a seminar held at Fareham Community Hospital which focused on areas where the facility could be developed and to address issues and concerns that members have regarding the facility. The main cause for concern highlighted was the management of the hospital which is currently managed by 5 different organisations. The Panel were informed that the hospital is currently only being used for 45 hours per week between 8.30am-5.30pm and that at any time up to 25% of the rooms within the hospital are not being used, so further work will need to be undertaken to identify opportunities to make better use of the facility.

The Executive Member for Health and Housing was thanked for his verbal update.

7. PRESENTATION ON THE CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP'S 5 YEAR PLAN

The Panel received a verbal report by Richard Samuels, Chief Officer of the Clinical Commissioning Group and Dr David Chilvers, Chairman of the CCG on the CCG's 5 year plan.

Councillor Trott addressed the Panel on this item and referred to item 6 of the minutes of the previous meeting in which it stated, *Councillor Trott proposed that the Panel write a letter to the Health Minister and send a copy to all other interested parties including the local MP and the Chairman of the Clinical Commissioning Group, expressing the Council's concerns over the management and use of the hospital*, and requested an update from Councillor Bayford, Executive Member for Housing on this item. Councillor Bayford informed the Panel that the letter had not been sent as he had taken the decision not to send the letter as progress is now being made to address the issues raised by the Panel.

Richard Samuels circulated papers to the Panel which provided an outline of the CCG's 5 year plan, and took questions from members.

Members expressed concern over the recent incident which led to the Queen Alexander hospital closing the A&E service for a couple of hours. Members asked about the reasons behind the decision and what the financial impact was on the hospital as a result of it. Richard Samuels addressed the Panel to explain that the decision was taken to close the A&E department to new admissions for the safety of the patients that had already been admitted and for all new patients as the department was overloaded with cases and there were not enough staff or facilities to safely accept anymore. He also explained that the department was closed for an hour and the situation was reviewed after 40 minutes. In total 6 patients were diverted to Southampton General Hospital. He also explained to the Panel that there are no surcharges applied for those patients diverted to Southampton each hospital charges for every patient that is admitted to them.

Councillor Knight expressed concern over the treatment of elderly patients in hospitals and asked how the CCG are planning to improve this. Dr David Chilvers addressed the Panel to inform them that they are developing a single care plan which GP's would set up with patients which would outline the care and treatment that the patient would require should they become ill, this will ensure that the patient's wishes are met and empowers them to take control of their future.

Richard Samuels explained to the Panel that the CCG will be making emergency care a priority and offered to return to the Panel to give a more detailed presentation on this item. He also explained that they are looking at developing a single workforce across the Health and Social Care sector. This will consist of a whole range of professionals including, nurses, GP's and carers. He explained that it will take some time to fully develop an integrated community team, but that it will not be economically driven but driven by demand from community needs.

It was AGREED that Richard Samuels and Dr Chilvers be thanked for their verbal presentation.

8. DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS 2014-16

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Community on Disabled Facilities Grants 2014-16.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Bayford, Executive Member for Health and Housing addressed the Panel on this item.

The Panel noted that last year was the best year so far for the Council as it dealt with the highest number of cases, within the shortest length of time and for the lowest average cost per case.

The Panel noted that funding for the next financial year is going to change as the funding will be directed through Hampshire County Council as part of the Better Care Fund and not direct from the Government. The main concern over receiving funding this way is that the money is not 'ring fenced' by Hampshire County Council and therefore there is the potential that the money may be used for other services.

Members expressed great concern over the change as to how the Council receives funding for this service, with their main concern pertaining to the fact that the service is a mandatory service for the Council to provide and if the funding does not get passed on to the Council for this scheme the Council will need to find this money from other sources. The Director of Community addressed the Panel to confirm that he shared the same concerns as the Panel and that he felt that District Councils would need to work closely with Hampshire County Council to secure the long term funding for Disabled Facilities Grants.

Members expressed their praise for the hard work and excellent results achieved by the disabled facilities team to date and hope that the potential funding issues for the next financial do not impact upon the achievements made by the team.

It was AGREED that:

- a) the Panel notes the position with the Disabled Facilities Grants programme in 2013/14 and the challenges for the current financial year and beyond; and
- b) the Executive is asked to note the Panel's concerns regarding the future funding of disabled facilities grants which will leave the Council with the mandatory duty of these grants but no guarantee of securing the necessary funding from Hampshire County Council.

9. SUPPORTING PEOPLE - CHANGES TO BUDGET AND COMMISSIONED SERVICES

The Panel considered a report by the Director of Community on Supporting People, which highlighted the changes to the budget and commissioned services.

The Director of Community addressed the Panel on this item to explain that due to the recent changes to the Supporting People programme announced by Hampshire County Council, the County have decided they will no longer contribute to the funding of the warden service for sheltered accommodation. The Council recognises the continuing need for this important service and as a result has been proactive in addressing this issue and is conducting a review of the Sheltered Housing service to see where it can be streamlined and savings could be made. The Director of Community explained that the County are proposing using their savings from the warden service to provide a 12 week intensive support service for elderly residents and has invited the Council to tender to provide this new service. The Director of Community outlined the difference between the sheltered housing warden service and the proposed 12 week intensive support service. The Panel discussed the merit of the sheltered housing service and expressed the view that delivery of the sheltered housing service and an intensive support service by a single agency (i.e. Fareham Borough Council) could lead to confusion for the tenant and their relatives. The Panel concluded that the Council should focus its efforts on providing a good quality sheltered housing service which would not be reliant on funding from other agencies.

The Panel AGREED that Fareham Borough Council should not tender to provide the intensive support service commissioned by Hampshire County Council.

10. REVIEW OF THE WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

The Panel considered a report by the Director Community which reviewed the current Work Programme 2014/15.

Members were asked to note the revisions to the work programme as set out in paragraph 2 of the report.

Members discussed the offer from Richard Samuels the Chief Officer of the Clinical Commissioning Group to return to the Committee to give a presentation on 'How the Emergency Care System is Planned and Works', and agreed that this should be open to all members and therefore should be arranged as a members training session.

It was AGREED that the Work Programme for 2014/15, as set in Appendix A to the report, be approved.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm
and ended at 8.04 pm).

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Health and Housing Policy Development Review Panel

Date **13 November 2014**

Report of: **Director of Community**

Subject: **REVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS**

SUMMARY

This report provides a review of homelessness in the past 12 months, and updates Panel members as to the progress made with the new initiatives launched to reduce rough sleeping and increase access to accommodation in the private rented sector.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Panel notes the contents of this report.

INTRODUCTION

1. Since the Review of Homelessness Report to Panel in November 2013, the Homelessness and Housing Options Strategy was agreed by Executive in April 2014. The Strategy focuses on the issues and barriers the Council faces in meeting the needs of homeless households. It sets out new initiatives and projects designed to reduce these and includes key actions the Housing Options team aims to achieve over the next 3 years. Following the introduction of the new Allocations Policy in May 2013, a review was undertaken 6 months later, to establish the impact the changes had had, and as a result minor amendments were agreed by the Executive in March 2014. The Policy, which determines how all Council and Housing Association stock (excluding temporary accommodation) is allocated to households on the Housing Waiting List, is fundamental in managing movement through temporary accommodation and identifying those in the greatest housing need.

REVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS SEPTEMBER 2013 – SEPTEMBER 2014

2. In the period September 2013 to September 2014, 1007 households approached the Housing Options Team for housing advice compared to 1,181 in the previous year. Of these, 674 were considered to be threatened with homelessness compared to 766.
3. For 55 of these cases, homelessness was successfully prevented by the Housing Options Team. A further 10 households were prevented from becoming homeless through the actions of organisations other than the Council. 202 of these households went on to make a homelessness application, compared to 122 in the previous year. The reason for the increase in the number of homelessness applications is due to the introduction of legislation enabling the homelessness duty to be discharged through an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector. Previously households were able to refuse offers of accommodation in the private rented sector, however, since September 2013, if an accepted homeless household refuses an offer of suitable private rented accommodation; they have to make their own housing arrangements.
4. A concern at the time of writing last year's report was the sudden increase in the number of households requiring emergency Bed and Breakfast placements (B&B). Having remained consistent at an average of 4 households per month for well over twelve months, the number suddenly increased in September 2013 to 6 households, 11 in October, 8 in November and December 2013. However, from the start of 2014 the number reduced to 4 households per month again. Weekly meetings were held during the last quarter of 2013 to determine the possible causes for the increase, identify how B&B placements could be avoided and what alternative accommodation options could be accessed.

As a result of this analysis it was established that the increase was due mainly to young adults (16-21) being evicted from their family home. The Housing Options Officers therefore took a firmer, proactive role in negotiating with parents/extended family to agree a planned move for the young person, rather than an immediate eviction into B&B. Steps were also taken to improve the void turnaround period for the 3 units of accommodation at 24 Wickham Road, which is temporary accommodation used as an alternative to B&B.

5. The number of households approaching the Council threatened with homelessness during the period reduced from 766 to 674. However, from the lower number of households threatened with homelessness, a greater number have required assistance

to secure alternative accommodation. The average number of households accommodated in temporary accommodation at any one time during the period September 2013 to September 2014 was 99 compared with 93 households for the same period in 2012/2013. This increase is on top of an unprecedented number of moves of households out of temporary accommodation into permanent social housing stock or private rented accommodation due to the change in Allocations Policy and the creation of the Initiatives Team, whose role it is to manage moves into and out of temporary accommodation.

6. From the period 1st October 2013 to 30 September 2014, 60 offers of permanent accommodation were made to households in temporary accommodation. Moves out of temporary accommodation into permanent accommodation prior to this were not monitored, however, it is estimated that no more than 10 moves would have been achieved in any 12 month period. 60 moves in 11 months is therefore evidence of the increase in demand on the service.
7. The reason for the increase in the number of households requiring assistance to secure accommodation, is due to the continuing difficulties households face in raising deposits, rent in advance, finding landlords willing to accept households in receipt of welfare benefits and the general lack of affordable accommodation (rents within Local Housing Allowance levels) in the Borough.

PERSONNEL, POLICY AND PRACTICE CHANGES INTRODUCED IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

8. Whilst the Housing Options Team was restructured in January 2013, to create a team of 6 generic Housing Options Officers, the last member of the new Initiatives Team only started in July 2014. This temporary 12 month post of Tenancy Support Officer was created to support and manage households into and out of temporary accommodation (TA). The new Initiatives Team which is responsible for improving the management of TA, making the best use of it and identifying what is required to gain access to more accommodation in the private rented sector, has achieved a great deal in the short time it has been fully staffed.
9. FareLets launched on 1 July 2014, is an initiative aimed at increasing access to accommodation in the private rented sector, 3 schemes have been promoted to private landlords, ranging from a basic tenant find to a fully managed service. The strategy behind these schemes is to build on the Council's reputation, promoting our ability to help resolve housing benefit issues, provide 12 month rent guarantees, tenant referencing, and easy access to other Council services such as Building Services, Community Safety, and Environmental Health.
10. Since the launch, 12 properties have been taken on under the fully managed lease scheme and 8 under tenant find. To date promotion has been through our existing landlord contacts, an article in the spring edition of Fareham today, flyers on all Council noticeboards, a press release and a dedicated webpage with an email address. Further publicity is currently being arranged which will include adverts on the plasma screens in the Council's reception area and on the Council's Connect stand in the shopping centre. Due to the increase in demand for TA, a radio advert campaign is also being developed.

11. From January 2014 monthly meetings have been held to review the progress being made to move households on from TA, minimise the use of B&B and ensure the best use is being made of all forms of TA available to the Council. These meetings have proved very successful, achieving a significant reduction in the average length of time households now stay in TA. Households moving into TA are advised by the Tenancy Support Officer of the plan to move them on within specified target times. The plan identifies how this will be achieved, which is either through an offer from the Housing Waiting List or a move into the private rented sector.

Several households had been in TA for numerous years due in part to a lack of officer time to effectively manage the situation and also because some households were happy to remain in TA (often due to a leased house on a private estate being more desirable than a council flat on a large estate) and therefore deliberately failed to bid on properties advertised on LetSelect. Through the monthly meetings, those identified as being well placed for an offer of accommodation via the Housing Waiting List are actively encouraged to start bidding on all suitable vacancies. Failure to do so, results in bids being automatically submitted on their behalf and offers of accommodation made.

As mentioned above, this active management has resulted in 60 offers of permanent accommodation and 21 moves into private rented accommodation in the last 11 months. The number of units available as TA during this period has not increased overall, despite the success of FareLets, due to the loss of 15 units of accommodation at Meon House, Fareham. Whilst First Wessex the owners of Meon House have indicated that they will work with the Council to replace these units, it is likely that we will have an overall reduction in the number of TA units available for use, for a substantial period of time to come.

ROUGH SLEEPING

12. Last year's report introduced the work of the Regional Rough Sleeper Group and the imminent appointment of an Outreach Worker. Marcus Chapman took up this post on 8th January 2014; working out of 101 Gosport Road, Fareham (direct access hostel) he covers the boroughs of Fareham, Gosport and Havant. Since January he has engaged with 64 clients in Fareham. Of these 64 clients, 18 were taken into 101 Gosport Road, 2 were found private rented accommodation in Fareham. 7 were helped to resolve their original housing issues or assisted to move back with family, 13 were relocated to an area where they had an established connection and 3 were linked in with ARC (young people's service) and provided with a positive outcome. Of the remaining 21, 6 disengaged and 7 went on to serve a custodial sentence. Marcus continues to work with the remaining 8 clients.
13. The Panel agreed at the meeting on 17 July 2014 to set up a Member Officer Working Group to look at the issue of rough sleeping in the Borough. The group held their first meeting on 30 September 2014, to which Marcus gave a presentation on the work he had achieved. Since being in post Marcus advised that he had already established a multi-agency working group, involving the Police, Community Safety, Probation, Housing Options and Avalon, to look at ways in which the various agencies and the community could help rough sleepers and deal with some of the issues they presented, such as Anti-Social Behaviour. The Member Officer Working Group felt it would be beneficial to observe the work of this group and from there determine how best they could help influence and support their activities.

LOOKING FORWARD TO THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

14. The Homelessness and Housing Options Strategy 2013 – 2017 will be formally reviewed and progress towards the action plan reported to the Panel meeting being held in March 2015.
15. A Systems Thinking intervention is due to start in Housing Options in November 2014, which will inform the review of the Homelessness and Housing Options Strategy and the Allocations Policy. An intensive piece of work, the journey of customers approaching the Council for housing assistance will be followed to determine how we can improve their experience and meet their needs. As temporary accommodation is often the solution for many customers, it is envisaged that the intervention will also look at how this is accessed and managed, which will also aid the review of the FareLets schemes.
16. Hampshire County Council announced substantial cuts to the Supporting People budget at the end of last year, some schemes and services have already been reduced or withdrawn, with other cuts due to take effect from April 2015. Homelessness services funded by Supporting People were due to be reduced from April 2015, however, due to the unknown impact such cuts would have, the 11 districts challenged the proposed timescale and as a result the County are now working with the districts to assess need and determine the outcomes required of the services to be commissioned from April 2016.
17. The potential impact for Fareham of the cuts being proposed by the County are a reduction in the number of support hours at 101 Gosport Road and the requirement for the hostel to become a County wide resource, enabling those districts without a direct access hostel/ night shelter access to an emergency facility. This reduction and opening up of access could lead to an increase in the number of rough sleepers in the borough, as hostel staff will no longer have time to support the work of the Outreach Worker and competition for bed spaces will increase.

RISK ASSESSMENT

18. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report. However, there could be financial implications if further temporary accommodation is not secured to replace the units lost through the sale of Meon House and FareLets fails to attract sufficient landlords in the private rented sector. This could lead to increasing B&B costs and the possibility of the Council facing legal challenges and increased complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman.

CONCLUSION

19. The number of households requiring assistance to secure accommodation has increased in the last 12 months, placing increasing pressure on the Initiatives Team to proactively manage all forms of temporary accommodation as well as successfully marketing the FareLets Schemes. The Systems Thinking intervention in Housing Options will hopefully identify where improvements and efficiencies can be made, so that resources and staffing can be targeted to achieve maximum effect for the service.

Background Papers:

Reference Papers:

Homelessness and Housing Options Strategy 2013-2017

Report to the Housing Policy Development and Review Panel – November 2013
Review of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in the Borough.

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Sara Head. (Ext 4369)

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Health and Housing Policy Development Review Panel

Date **13 November 2014**

Report of: **Director of Community**

Subject: **WELFARE REFORM UPDATE**

SUMMARY

Further to the report brought to the Panel in January 2014, this paper provides Panel members with an update on the progress of the Government's reform of welfare, the implications for the Council and the impact on our residents currently receiving assistance towards their rent and Council Tax.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Panel notes the content of this report.

INTRODUCTION

1. Following the coalition Government's commitment to reform the current welfare system, the main changes affecting benefit claimants since April 2013 are:
 - Social Sector Size Criteria restriction (removal of the Spare Room Subsidy)
 - Overall Benefits Cap
 - Local Support for Council Tax
 - Single Fraud Investigation Service
 - Universal Credit

SOCIAL SECTOR SIZE CRITERIA

2. There are currently 116 Council tenants affected by the Social Sector Size Criteria (SSSC) regulations. Of these tenants, 100 (86%) have had a 14% reduction and 16 (14%) have had a 25% reduction in their Housing Benefit entitlement.
3. The number of affected SSSC tenants in arrears increased from 46 in April 2013 to 59 tenants in August 2014. It is important to note here that these figures are just a snapshot in time and it would be presumptive to assume that this is purely as a result of welfare reforms.
4. There are currently 121 Registered Social Landlord (RSL) tenants affected by the SSSC regulations. Of those tenants, 111 (92%) have had a 14% reduction and 10 (8%) have had a 25% reduction in their Housing Benefit entitlement.
5. SSSC regulations are also applicable to benefit claimants living in temporary accommodation. Families are always, where possible, placed in properties that reduce the likelihood of SSSC regulations applying. However, there are occasions when they have had to be placed in larger properties to meet their emergency housing needs. Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) applications are submitted for all appropriate cases.
6. The Housing Team and Benefits Team continue to engage with those affected, providing advice and support for rent arrears and housing options, benefit checking, income maximisation and assistance with DHP.

THE BENEFITS CAP

7. The Benefits Cap was introduced in April 2013 and sets a limit on the total amount in benefits that most working age claimants can claim. The total amount that can be claimed is £500 per week for single parents and couples with children, and £350 per week for single people.
8. Claimants who receive working tax credits or who work enough hours to claim tax credits are exempt from the Cap. Similarly those claimants who receive certain disability benefits are also exempt.
9. There are currently 11 households affected by the Benefits Cap (2 families in Council properties, 4 families in Housing Association properties and 5 renting in the private sector). Due to the significant work undertaken by the Benefits Team with these families since the introduction of the Benefits Cap in April 2013, the majority of these households have now adapted well to the reduced level of Housing Benefit and are

maintaining their rent payments.

LOCAL SUPPORT FOR COUNCIL TAX

10. Since the abolition of Council Tax Benefit, the Government devolved the responsibility to design a Council Tax Support scheme for working age claimants to local billing authorities from April 2013. Fareham Borough Council has implemented its own schemes for 2013/14 and 2014/15 and work is currently under way to design the scheme that will run from April 2015.
11. Currently 4737 claimants receive Council Tax Support. The funding for Council Tax Support is contained within an element of the Revenue Support Grant each year rather than reimbursement of actual expenditure as was the case under the previous Council Tax Benefit regime. The scheme for pension age claimants (56% of our total caseload) is prescribed by Central Government therefore to reduce the financial impact on FBC and our precepting authorities, the cost of supporting working age claimants must come from the funding left over after the cost of the pension age scheme has been met.
12. Council Tax collection rates have remained largely unchanged since the reduction in support available to working age claimants. There has been a significant increase in the level of recovery activity carried out by the Council Tax team to ensure our collection rates remain high. Since the introduction of Council Tax Support, the number of summonses issued to those receiving assistance has, unfortunately, more than doubled to 375 issued in the first 6 months of this financial year.
13. 64 applications have been made for assistance through our Hardship Fund and applicants are required to engage with our dedicated budgeting officer (funded by FBC and employed by the CAB).
14. It is being proposed that for the 2015/16 scheme we continue with the current level of support which contains the following key elements:
 - Every working age claimant pays the first 20% of their Council Tax bill
 - For those claimant living in large homes, the amount of Council Tax Support they receive is no higher than that given for a smaller house (a band C property)
 - Where claimants have other adults living with them who are not dependent upon them (for example grown up children), this non-dependent adult is expected to contribute a minimum rate of £3.70 per week towards the household council tax bill
 - As well as pensioners, the most vulnerable working age claimants are exempt from the reductions above.
15. Following a period of public consultation (22 September 2014 to 19 October 2014), the Executive will consider the proposals for 2015/16 and Full Council will agree a final scheme at their meeting of 11 December 2014.

SINGLE FRAUD INVESTIGATION SERVICE

16. The formation of a Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS) covering the investigation of all welfare benefit fraud was announced in the Autumn Statement (December 2013) by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It was confirmed that SFIS would be launched

within the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as a single organisation and implementation would commence in 2014 with a gradual roll out nationally ending in 2016. FBC were selected for Phase 2 of the roll out timetable and our two investigators transferred to DWP on 1 October 2014. FBC are no longer responsible for investigating Housing Benefit fraud as this function will be undertaken by SFIS however we are still required to investigate allegations of Council Tax Support fraud, Council Tax discount fraud and Tenancy fraud, therefore we are currently recruiting to a new post of Investigations Officer who will undertake this work.

UNIVERSAL CREDIT

17. The latest statistics from the DWP show that 11,070 people are now receiving Universal Credit (UC). This is significantly lower than the estimated 1 million claimants being in receipt of the new benefit by October 2014 (estimations were revised in December 2012). 80% of current claimants are in the North West of England and of these; the vast majority are single unemployed males under 25 years of age who would otherwise have been receiving Job Seekers Allowance.
18. Approximately 9 million claimants will eventually transfer to UC and DWP expect full migration by 2017. On 30/9/14, the Work and Pensions Secretary announced that the national expansion of UC will commence from February 2015 for single claimants previously eligible for Job Seekers Allowance. It is important to note that the transfer of 2.5 million claimants from Incapacity Benefit to Employment & Support Allowance (a far simpler transfer by comparison) took over 3 years so the actual timetable and impact on Fareham residents remains very unclear.
19. Local Authorities will be expected to provide face-to-face assistance to vulnerable UC claimants through a Local Support Services Framework (recently rebranded to '*Universal Support – delivered locally*'). Formal trials of various aspects of local support began on 1 September 2014 in 11 Jobcentre Plus/Local Authority partnership areas across the UK and findings from these will inform future delivery.
20. Whilst UC will undoubtedly change our relationship with those of working age, there are currently no plans to introduce anything similar for pensioners. The Welfare Reform Act 2012 provided a facility for a Housing Credit to be introduced as part of Pension Credit but DWP are not committing to a timetable for this and have intimated that Housing Benefit for pensioners will remain with Local Authorities for the foreseeable future.
21. The Head of Housing, Revenues & Benefits is a member of the Solent Local Authorities Support Services forum which meets regularly with Jobcentre Plus to discuss UC and associated developments.

RISK ASSESSMENT

22. Any financial and reputational risks to the Council as a result of the Government's Welfare Reform agenda continue to be monitored and mitigated against as detailed in the last update to the Panel at their meeting of 16 January 2014.

CONCLUSION

23. The impact of the Government's Welfare Reform agenda continues to affect the

Council, our partners, local communities and individuals. We remain committed to mitigate the impacts as much as possible.

24. The continual delays in the implementation of UC mean that there is still considerable uncertainty around funding, demand and how services will need to be delivered in the future which can make planning difficult.
25. The changes continue to be a considerable risk in relation to funding levels, increasing debt levels and increased demand on our services. Accordingly, the risk remains on the Council's corporate risk register.

Reference Papers:

[Report to Health and Housing Policy Development Review Panel 16 January 2014.](#)

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Caroline Holmes. (Ext 4645)

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Health and Housing Policy Development Review Panel

Date **13 November 2014**

Report of: **Director of Community**

Subject: **REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15**

SUMMARY

At its meeting on 11 September 2014, the Health and Housing Policy Development and Review Panel agreed the Work Programme for 2014/15.

RECOMMENDATION

Members are now invited to further review the Work Programme for 2014/15.

INTRODUCTION

1. At the last meeting of the Panel on 11 September 2014, members reviewed and agreed the Panel's Work Programme for 2014/15. Members are now invited to give further consideration to the Work Programme for the current year.

REVISIONS TO THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2014/15

2. Members are asked to note the following revisions to the Work Programme:
 - (a) a Presentation by Richard Samuels the Chief Officer for the CCG - - 'How the Emergency Care System is Planned and Works' has been added to the Work Programme as an unallocated item.

RISK ASSESSMENT

3. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report

CONCLUSION

4. The Panel is now invited to review and confirm the programme of items as set out in the attached Appendix A.

Background Papers:

None

Reference Papers:

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Martyn George. (Ext 4400)

**HEALTH AND HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW PANEL
PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2014/15**

<u>MEETING DATES FOR 2013/14</u>	<u>ITEMS</u>
17 July 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the Work Programme 2014/15 • Health Update • Introduction to the Role of the Panel • Affordable Housing Programme 2015-18 • Development Opportunities • Collingwood Court Update
11 September 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Work Programme 2014/15 • Health Update • Disabled Facilities Grants 2014-16 • Presentation by the Chairman of the Clinical Commissioning Group on the CCG 5 Year Plan • Supporting People – Changes to Budget and Commissioned Services
13 November 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Work Programme 2014/15 • Health Update • Review of Homelessness • Welfare Reform Update
15 January 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary Review of Work Programme 2014/15 and Draft Work Programme 2015/16 • Health Update • Annual Review of Housing Waiting list & Allocations Policy • Annual Review of Discretionary Housing Payments
12 March 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Review of Work Programme 2014/15 and Draft Work Programme 2015/16 • Health Update • Annual Review of Homelessness Action Plan

Unallocated Item: Presentation by Richard Samuels the Chief Officer of the CCG - 'How the Emergency Care System is Planned and Works'

