

3 March 2017

WHITTLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 13 MARCH 2017

A meeting of the Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held at 5.30pm on Monday 13 March 2017 in Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Rugby.

Councillor Howard Roberts
Chair of Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committee

A G E N D A

PART 1 – PUBLIC BUSINESS

1. Minutes

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2016.

2. Apologies

To receive apologies for absence from the meeting.

3. Declarations of Interest

To receive declarations of:

(a) non-pecuniary interests as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors;

(b) pecuniary interests as defined by the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors;

(c) notice under Section 106 Local Government Finance Act 1992 – non-payment of Community Charge or Council Tax.

Note: Members are reminded that they should declare the existence and nature of their non-pecuniary interests at the commencement of the meeting (or as soon as the interest becomes apparent). If that interest is a pecuniary interest, the Member must withdraw from the room unless one of the exceptions applies.

Membership of Warwickshire County Council or any Parish Council is classed as a non-pecuniary interest under the Code of Conduct. A Member does not need to declare this interest unless the Member chooses to speak on a matter relating to their membership. If the Member does not wish to speak on the matter, the Member may still vote on the matter without making a declaration.

4. Welfare Reform Update.
5. Finance and Performance Monitoring 2016/17 Quarter 3 – Members are reminded to bring copies of the relevant Cabinet report from 6 February 2017 to the meeting.
6. Communications at Rugby Borough Council – to receive a verbal report from the Communication, Consultation and Information Manager on matters relating to waste collection services, current and emerging ways to communicate public information, and the council's role in promoting Rugby as a place.
7. Review of a proposed Green Plaque Scheme.
8. Committee Work Programme.

Any additional papers for this meeting can be accessed via the website.

Membership of the Committee:

Councillors H Roberts (Chair), Allen, Brown, Douglas, Gillias, Keeling, Pacey-Day, Ms Watson-Merret and one vacancy

If you have any general queries with regard to this agenda please contact Linn Ashmore, Democratic Services Officer (01788 533522 or e-mail linn.ashmore@rugby.gov.uk). Any specific queries concerning reports should be directed to the listed contact officer.

If you wish to attend the meeting and have any special requirements for access please contact the Democratic Services Officer named above.

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

<i>Name of Meeting</i>	Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<i>Date of Meeting</i>	13 March 2017
<i>Report Title</i>	Welfare Reform Update
<i>Ward Relevance</i>	None
<i>Contact Officer</i>	David Wortley, Benefits Manager Tel: 01788 533440
<i>Summary</i>	This report updates the committee on aspects of welfare reform since the Summer Budget 2015 and Autumn Statement came into effect.
<i>Financial Implications</i>	There are no financial implications arising from this report.
<i>Risk Management Implications</i>	There are no risk management implications arising from this report.
<i>Environmental Implications</i>	There are no environmental implications arising from this report.
<i>Legal Implications</i>	There are no legal implications arising from this report.
<i>Equality and Diversity</i>	No new or existing policy or procedure has been recommended.

Public Report to Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13 March 2017

Welfare Reform Update

Summary

This report updates the committee on aspects of welfare reform since the Summer Budget 2015 and the Autumn Statement came into effect.

1. BACKGROUND

A review of Universal Credit and Welfare Reform commenced in 2013 with a watching brief over the council's corporate approach to managing the impact of the welfare reforms on the council and the local community. The first interim report of the task group was published in March 2014, with a second report considered by the former Customer and Partnerships Committee in June 2015.

There was a pause in the work of the task group in 2015 as it awaited the outcomes of the General Election to bring greater clarity about the national policy position in relation to welfare reform. The task group was due to recommence its work later in that year, however, most of the Summer Budget (2015) measures were at that time still going through the legislative process so there was a lack of experience on which to base any conclusions.

At its meeting on 14 July 2016 Brooke Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the future of the overview and review of welfare reform and decided that the topic no longer lent itself to being scrutinised by means of a task group review and instead to maintain overview of the impact of welfare reform at committee level. It was agreed the task group be disbanded and an annual report on the impact of welfare reform produced.

2. CURRENT POSITION

The current position on welfare reform is as follows:

- **Benefit Cap**

In November the Benefits Cap was reduced from £500 to £384 per week for families and from £350 to £257 per week for single people. The Benefits Cap limits the total amount of benefit that can be received by a customer if they are not in work. Where their total benefit income exceeds this amount, Housing Benefit is reduced accordingly. Where customers are in receipt of Universal Credit then Universal Credit is reduced. There are currently 41 customers in receipt of Housing Benefit affected by the cap. The amount by which Housing Benefit has been reduced varies but currently it amounts to

an average reduction of £48.00 per week, but four customers face a reduction of over £100.00 per week.

There are 12 Council Tenants currently affected by the Benefits Cap and in total they have rent arrears totalling £6,000.

A summary of the 12 cases is shown below

Tenant	Rent Balance (November 2016)	Rent Balance (February 2016)	HB Reduction	DHP awarded	Other Support offered	Payment arrangement in place
1	£0	£314 (cr)	£17			
2	£55	£1,178	£68			Tenant not engaging, Notice Seeking Possession issued
3	£0	£741	£69			Yes
4	£0	£315 (cr)	£15			
5	£0	£427	£90			
6	£0	£960	£69			Legal action commenced
7	£0	£491	£0			Now in receipt of Universal Credit. Awaiting payment
8	£223	£223	£112			
9	£30 (cr)	£8	£12			
10	£1,617	£1,727	£77			
11	£1,036	£528	£0			Now in receipt of Universal Credit
12	£60 (cr)	£69	£43			

The Council is using its discretionary housing fund to support customers as they adjust to the reduction in their income. Currently four Housing Association Tenants are being supported in this way,

- **Universal Credit**

The rollout of Universal Credit continues to have an impact on our own tenants and other residents of the Borough who need financial help with housing costs or day to day living expenses. In May 2016, large parts of the Borough moved onto the next phase of Universal Credit rollout and now most working age customers who are making a new claim for benefit are required to apply for Universal Credit. In the Spring, there will be a further expansion to include Wolvey.

Based on Department for Work and Pensions information, as at the end of January 2017, a total of 2,309 residents were in receipt of Universal Credit, of these 1,303 are out of work and 1,006 are in work.

Delays in the payment of Universal Credit and the payment of Universal Credit direct to the customer rather than to their rent account is having a significant impact on rent arrears. There are currently 378 tenants in receipt of Universal Credit, of these 361 have rent arrears with total arrears amounting to £309,434, (this includes any arrears accrued before receiving Universal Credit). The largest amount of arrears for an individual tenant is £4,330, legal action has been commenced for this tenant and a further Court date is awaited.

Housing Officers are working with tenants to ensure that paying their rent is seen as a priority.

The Council continues to work in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions to support residents who need help; to make a claim, or manage their finances on a monthly basis. To do this we have been working with the third sector and a tender exercise is currently under way to procure these services externally from April 2017 the cost of which is met from Department for Work and Pensions funding.

A major issue for the Council has been the migration of customers in temporary accommodation onto Universal Credit. This has resulted in a significant loss of income to the Council during the year. In 2015/16 the net cost to the Council was in the region of £35,000, this is expected to increase to around £60,000 for the current year. In addition to working with the Department for Work and Pensions, the Council is also investing in leasing accommodation from landlords short-term accommodation, thereby reducing the need to use more expensive bed and Breakfast accommodation.

It has been recognised as a significant issue by the Department for Work and Pensions and they along with Local Authority representatives, including Rugby, are looking at potential solutions.

- **Social Housing Rents**

Since April 2016, social landlords have been required to reduce rents for tenants by 1% each year up to 2020. The following table shows the impact of this change on the Housing Rent Account (HRA)t.

Impact on Housing Rent Account

	2016/17 £m	2017/18 £m	2018/19 £m	2019/20 £m
Income	18.312	17.972	17.736	17.541

As part of rent-setting for 2017/18 (February 7th 2017) Council agreed to restructure the HRA debt repayment profile to offset this loss of income. The indicative impact of the rescheduling is a cost to the HRA of £2.946m in increased interest payments with the debt profile extended to 2028/29 (previously 2023/24).

The 2015 Autumn Spending Review also announced that Housing Benefit / Universal Credit Housing Element would be capped at Local Housing Allowance Rates rather than the actual amount of rent paid being used. This currently affects those renting in the private sector. Originally this was planned to be implemented from April 2018, affecting those with a tenancy created from April 2016. This will have a significant impact for single people under the age of 35 due to the level of the Local Housing Allowance being significantly less than the rent charged for a one bedroom property in the Borough (the average rent is around £95 per week, but the Local Housing

Allowance Rate is a round £65 per week). The Housing Team are currently looking at the availability of houses in multiple accommodation rather than separate housing units, although it is anticipated that the supply of accommodation may not be sufficient. It has recently been announced that the implementation date has been moved back to April 2019. This is to align the change with a review of Housing Benefit for Supported Accommodation

- **Supported Accommodation Review**

The Government has recently consulted on a change to the way in which customers with higher levels of support receive financial support with their housing costs. The cost of this accommodation can be in excess of £200 per week and a significant proportion of this is funded through the general fund rather than by the Department for Work and Pensions. The Council has very little ability to influence the availability or costs of these services.

Proposals currently being consulted on include Housing Benefit being paid at Local Housing Allowance Rates with additional costs being funded from a ring fenced budget. This fund could potentially be administered by Warwickshire County Council. The consultation also refers to the possibility of additional services being subject to commissioning, again by the County Council

This will have a significant impact both for customers of this type of accommodation and also on the providers themselves.

Any changes arising from this review are planned to be implemented from April 2019. At this time no further work can be undertaken, until the outcome of the review is known.

- **April 2017 Changes**

Two Child Policy

From April 2017, customer who make a new claim for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit and have more than two children, or an existing customer who has a third child will see their benefit based on two children only. There will be a number of exceptions to this policy which will need to be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Although this change will affect Universal Credit, it cannot be delivered through Universal Credit at this time. This means that new customers with three or more children making a new claim will be told to apply for Housing Benefit rather than Universal Credit. Existing Universal Credit customers who have a third child and are not covered by one of the exemptions will be transferred from Universal Credit back to Housing Benefit. This is likely to add to confusion for customers and cases will need to be dealt with on an ongoing basis.

18 – 21 year olds – removal of automatic entitlement to help with housing costs

Legislation is currently going through the parliamentary process to remove the automatic entitlement for single people between the ages of 18 and 21 to receive help to pay their rent. There are a number of exemptions which will mean that very few residents are expected to be affected by this change.

3. SUMMARY

The Benefits Team and The Housing Team continue to identify and work with residents affected by the impact of welfare reform. We are working in partnership with the third sector and other agencies to avoid duplication of resources.

It is proposed to submit a further report in the Spring of 2018, unless significant new information with regards to Social Housing Rents and Supported Accommodation becomes available before then.

Name of Meeting: Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 13 March 2017

Subject Matter: Welfare Reform Update

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background papers relating to this item.

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

<i>Name of Meeting</i>	Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<i>Date of Meeting</i>	13 March 2017
<i>Report Title</i>	Review of a proposed Green Plaque scheme
<i>Ward Relevance</i>	Benn, Eastlands
<i>Contact Officer</i>	Michael Beirne, Economic Investment Officer Telephone: 01788 533734 Email: michael.beirne@rugby.gov.uk
<i>Summary</i>	Members are asked to agree the one-page strategy for the review of a proposed Green Plaque scheme.
<i>Financial Implications</i>	There are no financial implications arising from this report.
<i>Risk Management Implications</i>	There are no risk management implications arising from this report.
<i>Environmental Implications</i>	There are no environmental implications arising from this report.
<i>Legal Implications</i>	There are no legal implications arising from this report.
<i>Equality and Diversity</i>	No new or existing policy or procedure has been recommended.

Report to the Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13 March 2017

Review of a proposed Green Plaque Scheme

Summary

Members are asked to agree the one-page strategy for the review of a proposed Green Plaque scheme.

1. BACKGROUND

At its meeting on 12 September 2016 the committee considered a motion referred by Council on 19 July 2016 on the topic of a Green Plaque Scheme and decided to set up a task group to consider the motion.

It was agreed that the proposal should be considered alongside wider work taking place for the town centre. The committee subsequently received a presentation at their meeting on 7 November from the Economic Investment Officer providing further context around this.

Since then, on 6 February 2017, Cabinet also decided that a cross-party Visitor Economy Cabinet Members' Working Party would be established. This will provide guidance and overview on matters relating to tourism, destination marketing and the town centre.

The Task Group and one-page strategy proposed in this report would focus specifically on representing Rugby's heritage through initiatives to increase town centre footfall.

2. OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the review is to consider the motion alongside other options for heritage-based initiatives in the town centre. The following areas are relevant to the discussion:

- Use of digital and modern technology to provide unique visitor experiences.
- The wider marketing plan for the town centre and opportunities to collect information on our customers, particularly through the free public Wi-Fi network.
- Target audiences – the extent to which initiatives are designed for different local, regional, national or international visitors.

- Promotion of the town's wider heritage links alongside Rugby's unique selling point as the birthplace of the game.
- Ways to increase footfall not only the town centre, but specifically between individual cultural assets.

A number of options are available, based on initial research of initiatives in other places, each with different advantages and disadvantages – broadly these include:

1. 'Augmented reality' mobile apps – this would allow people to view town centre environments through the lens of their camera phones, with additional interesting and engaging content. Examples include interaction with 3D characters, video or visitor interpretation.
2. Enhancing access to information and marketing activities for existing initiatives i.e. the Blue Plaque trail, Pathway of Frame and Town Guides.
3. Reviewing the extent to which the current town centre events programme focuses on heritage and making recommendations on how this can be improved.
4. Green plaque scheme – progress with the original proposal of a new trail focusing on heritage sites and places of interests in the town.

3. THE ONE-PAGE STRATEGY

Members are asked to consider the draft one-page strategy appended to this report.

Following the adoption of the one-page strategy, task group members will be appointed.

Name of Meeting: Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting: 13 March 2017
Subject Matter: Review of a proposed Green Plaque Scheme

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background papers.

TOWN CENTRE HERITAGE – TASK GROUP

DRAFT ONE-PAGE STRATEGY

What is the broad topic area?

Town Centre Heritage

What is the specific topic area?

Representing Rugby's heritage through initiatives to increase town centre footfall. A number of options are available, based on initial research of initiatives in other places, each with different advantages and disadvantages – broadly these include:

1. 'Augmented reality' mobile apps – this would allow people to view town centre environments through the lens of their camera phones, with additional interesting and engaging content. Examples include interaction with 3D characters, video or visitor interpretation.
2. Enhancing access to information and marketing activities for existing initiatives i.e. the Blue Plaque trail, Pathway of Fame and Town Guides.
3. Reviewing the extent to which the current town centre events programme focuses on heritage and making recommendations on how this can be improved.
4. Green plaque scheme – progress with the original proposal of a new trail focusing on heritage sites and places of interests in the town

The task group may identify additional options.

What should be considered?

The following areas are relevant to the discussion:

- Use of digital and modern technology to provide unique visitor experiences.
- The wider marketing plan for the town centre and opportunities to collect information on our customers, particularly through the free public Wi-Fi network.
- Target audiences – the extent to which initiatives are designed for different local, regional, national or international visitors.
- Promotion of the town's wider heritage links alongside Rugby's unique selling point as the birthplace of the game.
- Ways to increase footfall not only the town centre, but specifically between individual cultural assets.

Who shall we consult?

The Council's Economic Investment Officer, responsible for overseeing the Town Centre Action Plan 2016 – 2020, will support the Task Group to develop their recommendations.

- Arts, Heritage and Visitor Service
- Representatives of places with current good practice examples
- Other bodies or individuals as identified by the task group.

How long should it take?

Report to committee on -----.

What will be the outcome?

Recommendations on the development of heritage-based initiatives to increase town centre footfall.

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

<i>Name of Meeting</i>	Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<i>Date of Meeting</i>	13 March 2017
<i>Report Title</i>	Committee Work Programme
<i>Ward Relevance</i>	None
<i>Contact Officer</i>	Linn Ashmore, Democratic Services Officer, Tel: 01788 533522
<i>Summary</i>	This report updates the committee on items for future meetings. The content of each committee's work programme is agreed jointly by the Chairs and Vice Chairs, but committee members are invited to suggest items for inclusion.
<i>Financial Implications</i>	There is a budget of £500 available in 2016/17 to spend on the delivery of the overview and scrutiny work programme.
<i>Risk Management Implications</i>	There are no risk management implications arising from this report.
<i>Environmental Implications</i>	There are no environmental implications arising from this report.
<i>Legal Implications</i>	There are no legal implications arising from this report.
<i>Equality and Diversity</i>	No new or existing policy or procedure has been recommended.

Public Report to Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13 March 2017

Committee Work Programme

Summary

This report updates the committee on items for future meetings. The content of each committee's work programme is agreed jointly by the Chairs and Vice Chairs, but committee members are invited to suggest items for inclusion.

1. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Items to be allocated to future meetings

Topic	Description
Coventry and Warwickshire Stroke Service Reconfiguration	Public Consultation
Fixed term tenancies	The fixed term tenancies review (June 2014) recommended that the council's tenancy policy should be reviewed again. Following the decision of Government not to proceed with the pay to stay policy there was a question over whether the topic should remain in the work programme.
Homelessness (Brooke)	Review report
Public Space Protection Order Task Group (Whittle)	Review report

2. PROGRESS OF SCRUTINY REVIEWS

Public Space Protection Orders Task Group

Due to current work pressures the task group is unlikely to re-commence its work in the near future.

3. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW ACTION PLANS

It is the responsibility of the scrutiny committees to monitor progress against the scrutiny review action plans arising from reviews for which they have been responsible.

The committee is asked to note there are no 'live' action plans for which this committee has responsibility.

4. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME WORKSHOP 2017/18

The annual overview and scrutiny work programme workshop was scheduled for 8 March 2017. The Chair's and Vice-Chairs are due to meet on 16 March to discuss the outcomes and agree the forward overview and scrutiny work programme for 2017/18.

The committee will receive a report on any work allocated to it at its next meeting on 12 June 2017.

Name of Meeting: Whittle Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 13 March 2017

Subject Matter: Committee Work Programme

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background papers relating to this item.