

Appendix C (November 2012)

Welfare Reform Strategy Board - Terms of Reference

Introduction

The overall aim of the Board is to ensure that Leeds is the best prepared city for dealing with the implementation and implications of the Government's welfare reform programme. The key reforms include:

- reform of Housing Benefit affecting both the private-rented sector and the social-housing sector, including supported and specialist housing;
- reform of Council Tax Benefit, which is to be replaced by local schemes of support;
- reform of disability benefits with the replacement of DLA with Personal Independence Payments and the migration of Incapacity Benefit claimants to ESA;
- reform of elements of the Social Fund scheme with responsibility for administration of Social Fund and Community Care Grants passing to local councils;
- replacement of IS, JSA, HB and Tax Credits by a new Universal Credit which will be delivered by DWP, be 'digital by default' requiring claimants to apply online and where payments will be made directly to claimants instead of to social sector landlords.

The specific aims of the Board are:

- to ensure that all key partner organisations are fully aware of the programme of reform;
- to develop detailed intelligence and information on how the changes impact on different groups, different tenure types and different parts of the city;
- to develop and deliver a strategy that ensures that the implications and opportunities created by the welfare reforms are fully addressed with specific reference to impacts in the following areas:
 - o affordable housing, housing provision and homelessness;
 - o financial inclusion, budgeting support and advice to tenants;
 - o worklessness and support to claimants new to conditionality requirements;
 - o **child poverty**;
 - o independent living and personal choice; and
 - o customer services and communications
- to develop proposals and arrangements for engaging with DWP in relation to Universal Credit and its delivery including:
 - o developing the role of the council and partners in providing access to benefits for vulnerable tenants;
 - o developing arrangements for social sector housing providers to secure direct payments in appropriate circumstances; and

- exploiting Government funding streams for the implementation of Universal Credit.

Membership

The Group will be chaired by Steve Carey, Chief Revenues and Benefits Officer, and will include representatives from the following areas:

- E&N, Housing Services
- Employment and Skills
- Adults Social Services
- Customer Services
- Economic Development
- E&N, Strategy and Commissioning
- Business Transformation
- ALMOs
- Connect housing
- Leeds Federated Housing Association
- Leeds CAB
- Advice Leeds Network
- Communications and Marketing

Methods of working

The first meeting of the Group will be a workshop to develop a strategy for preparing for the reforms and thereafter the Group will meet on a cycle to be agreed. The Strategy will be shared with Executive Board for approval and it is intended to report progress against the strategy to Resources Leadership Team and Corporate Leadership Team on a regular basis.

Subsequent meetings will include:

- Focus on a specific aspect of the welfare reform programme;
- Updates from each board member on progress with actions arising from the strategy;
- Updates from meetings/forums relevant to the welfare reform programme;
- Discussions and next steps arising from updates
- Agreement on messages from the Board.

The Welfare Reform Strategy Board has no budget for arising actions and a key action will be to understand the budget implications of required activity and explore funding options.