

Cabinet Meeting	
Meeting Date	4 February 2015
Report Title	Scrutiny Committee recommendations on Discretionary Housing Payment Policy
Cabinet Member	Cllr Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Cabinet Member for Finance
SMT Lead	Abdool Kara – Chief Executive
Head of Service	Brian Planner – Head of Service Delivery
Lead Officer	Zoe Kent – Assistant Revenue and Benefits Manager
Key Decision	No
Classification	Open
Forward Plan	Yes
Recommendations	1. Cabinet is asked to agree the response to the Scrutiny Committee’s recommendations as attached in Appendix I.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Committee reviewed the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy at their meeting on 27 November 2014. The Scrutiny Committee recommendations and the Cabinet’s responses to those recommendations are attached as Appendix I.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee’s Review are set out below for completeness (Minute No. 373/11/14 refers):

The Chairman welcomed the Assistant Revenue and Benefits Manager to the meeting.

The Assistant Revenue and Benefits Manager introduced the report and explained that, following changes brought in by Central Government for Welfare Reform, SBC’s Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) budget had increased in 2014/15 to £346,325 and as such it was considered necessary to review the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy.

The Assistant Revenue and Benefits Manager explained that all claimants were to be consulted in 2015 on the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy. The consultation would consider things such as: how claimants were meeting their shortfall; which vulnerable groups require more help than others; and how the DHP budget should be spent.

A Member requested that the period over which someone would receive support be included within the policy and also that the appeals system should conclude with an assessment by an independent reviewer. The Assistant Revenue and Benefits Manager agreed to add the information requested and also explore whether an independent appeals reviewer could be provided.

Assistant Revenue and Benefits Manager

Following a discussion about questioning a claimant about how they managed their money the Assistant Revenue and Benefits Manager suggested a general box be included on the claim form asking claimants 'Was there any type of expenditure you are having to cut back on?', this was welcomed by Members.

Assistant Revenue and Benefits Manager

A Member suggested that the order of the objectives be amended to read:

- Prevent homelessness
- Help alleviate poverty
- Support Vulnerable households
- Provide support at a time of crisis
- Encourage Employment

The Chairman thanked the Assistant Revenue and Benefits Manager for attending the meeting.

Resolved:

That Scrutiny recommend to Cabinet:

Recommended: (1) That the current Discretionary Housing Payment Policy be reviewed subject to the inclusion of the comments made by the Scrutiny Committee as minuted.

Recommended (2): That a full consultation be carried out to obtain feedback on how the budget should be spent.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 To approve the Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

4 Alternative Options

None.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

N/A

6 Implications

- 6.1 None identified at this stage. All implications will be considered as part of the consultation process.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Scrutiny Committee Recommendations

8 Background Papers

None.

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Scrutiny Committee Recommendations on Discretionary Housing Payment Policy

Policy Overview Committee Recommendations	Cabinet Response	Portfolio Holders	Lead Officer
R1: That the current Discretionary Housing Payment Policy be reviewed subject to the inclusion of the comments made by the Scrutiny Committee as minuted.	The comments made by scrutiny will be considered as part of the review of the policy when the full consultation as set out in recommendation 2 is completed.	Councillor Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Cabinet Member for Finance	Zoe Kent, Assistant Revenue and Benefits Manager
R2: That a full consultation be carried out to obtain feedback on how the budget should be spent.	A full consultation will be carried out to obtain the necessary feedback.	Councillor Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Cabinet Member for Finance	Zoe Kent, Assistant Revenue and Benefits Manager