

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

16 January 2014

Report by Director of Environment

WELFARE REFORM HOUSING ADVICE POST

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To seek the Cabinet's Permission to use resources from the Welfare Reform contingency provision to fund a temporary staff member until March 2015 to provide housing advice in order to mitigate the impact of welfare reform.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet approves the proposal to use resources from the Welfare Reform contingency provision to fund a temporary Housing staff member until March 2015 to provide housing advice in order to mitigate the impact on welfare reform and in particular to prevent homelessness.

**BACKGROUND**

3. The Cabinet will recall that in approving the Revenue Estimates for 2013/14 at the Council meeting on 7 February 2013, a contingency provision was established to meet unforeseen Welfare Reform costs.

4. This provision has to date been used for a variety of purposes. A report approved by the Cabinet on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2013 provided for an initial allocation of £189,000 to be drawn from the Welfare Reform contingency sum provided to be used for a variety of measures.

**REPORT**

5. Many households within East Renfrewshire find themselves experiencing hardship as a result of the legislative changes in relation to housing benefit whereby households who are under occupying their properties may experience a reduction in housing benefit entitlement.

6. Due to a shortage of available properties within the social rented sector additional provision for advice is necessary such as exploring the private sector opportunities or considering different arrangements for accommodation such as flat sharing.

7. Consequently it is felt necessary to create additional staffing resources which will undertake two key functions:

- developing housing advice options available for those in need; and
- the delivery of advice options.

8. Therefore it is proposed that one post be created on a temporary basis until March 2015.

### **FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY**

9. The Director of Finance has confirmed that the resources required for the creation of the post can be met from the Welfare Reform contingency sum. It is expected that the creation of the post will assist the alleviation of hardship for households in East Renfrewshire including the prevention of homelessness.

### **CONSULTATION AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

10. In devising this proposal, consultation has taken place with appropriate Council services including Finance and Human Resources.

### **IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSAL**

11. There are no implications in relation to IT, legal, property, equalities or sustainability.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

12. Due to the likelihood of financial hardship to East Renfrewshire Council residents as a result of legislative changes in relation housing benefit it is felt necessary to create this post in order to provide additional advice and additional options.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

13. It is recommended that the Cabinet approves the proposal to use resources from the Welfare Reform contingency provision to fund a temporary Housing staff member until March 2015 to provide housing advice in order to mitigate the impact on welfare reform and in particular to prevent homelessness.

Director of Environment

Further details can be obtained from Phil Daws, Housing Services Manager, 0141 577 3186.

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### **KEY WORDS**

Welfare reform, Scottish Welfare Fund, Housing advice, homelessness