

Executive response to the Scrutiny Committee's Financial Inclusion Strategy – Action Plan Update provided by the Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services

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Recommendation	Agreed? (Y / N / In part)	Comment
1. That the Action Plan should be kept under review so that the Council can be responsive to significant changes in circumstances (e.g. further welfare reforms, reduced children's centre provision).	Y	The report delegates authority to update the Action Plan as and when required, which enables us to be responsive to new or changing situations. In such an event we can add or change actions in the plan. I review the plan on a monthly basis with officers to look at any significant variations and officers also review it on a monthly basis. We will report any significant variations under delegated authority.
2. That the directory of affordable childcare should be shared with Councillors.	Y	There is no directory of affordable childcare. The availability of childcare is a constantly changing situation. The action in the plan that this relates to is to identify local providers of childcare. The County Council have a service which is able to tell you what is available at the time of contacting them. Anyone can access this, so we can provide the contact details. It is provided by the Family Information Service who can be reached on 08452 262636.
3. That the Action Plan should contain a stronger emphasis on more joined up partnership working, for example with the health sector to support social prescribing.	N	Action 28 in the plan deals with this area, although the wording doesn't make this explicit. The action is being delivered through our participation in the social prescribing project being carried out by Bury Knowle Surgery.
4. That all frontline staff should receive training on recognising the indicators of financial exclusion.	N	The revision of the action plan explicitly excludes contact centre staff from this training as it has been deemed not appropriate. The time spent identifying indicators of financial exclusion on a phone call would be too onerous and would require additional resource to maintain the same level of service as calls would take longer to deal with. Instead the new action focuses on delivering this to teams who have longer periods of engagement with customers likely to be at risk of financial exclusion. This would include tenancy sustainment, energy advice officers and the welfare reform team.

<p>5. That the City Council should monitor the accessibility of the private rented sector to people who are out of work and the use of the Lord Mayor's Deposit Scheme.</p>	Y	<p>The Housing Needs Team already produces performance data relating to this area which includes number of new starts in Home Choice, and deposits provided under the Deposit Scheme. Housing Scrutiny Panel reviews performance in this area including the number of households in temporary accommodation, which is a good indicator of the difficulty in accessing the PRS. Housing Scrutiny could request that other data is reported relating to access to the PRS if this would be helpful.</p>
<p>6. That the City Council should bring forward any plans that would assist households in taking advantage of higher feed in tariff rates.</p>	N	<p>Recent policy changes from the government mean that drastic cuts in the housing revenue account budget will be required. This is subject to government confirmation but this is highly likely later in the autumn.</p> <p>This means that the Council will have to reassess its existing spending priorities between December and March so can no longer commit to many non-essential services. It is very likely that the major programmes with the housing stock such as energy efficiency and solar PV will be significantly affected.</p> <p>Tighter budgets mean that the Council will have to do more with less, and means we are unable currently to commit to any work other than those that are basic, cost effective and/or vital programmes of work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loft insulation work to top up to about 270mm • Heating replacement programme • External insulation, double glazing and improved ventilation in Tower Blocks