

Corporate Resources

FACT SHEETS

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CR1. Review the level of Housing Benefit payments to claimants in properties that are exempt from the Local Housing Allowance

Current Service	Under existing Housing Benefit (HB) legislation where care / support or supervision that is of real benefit to a vulnerable claimants ability to remain in their accommodation, HB can be paid a level greater than Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates, i.e. above market conditions. The payments that are eligible to will be comparable to other providers of similar accommodation.				
Budget	£8.600m	Reduction 13/14	£1.250m	Reduction 14/15	£1.250m
Proposed Changes to Service	<p>The proposal is to review existing HB payments above those dictated by the market (i.e. above Local Housing Allowance rates). The Local Authority has a duty to manage public money and to ensure that where it is spent on schemes that provide care / support and supervision to support a vulnerable person, it is of real benefit to the claimant.</p> <p>In circumstances where evidence of the support provided suggests that it is provided to a level which is not more than minimal (and hence of no benefit to the claimant) these payments cannot be made.</p> <p>It is good practice to have monitoring arrangements and regular reviews of the levels of expenditure paid out to ensure that vulnerable people receive what they are supposed to receive. Invariably as a result of improved controls and rigorous application of our obligations in this policy, expenditure will vary.</p>				
Managing the implications of change for Service Users and Partners	<p>There may be a potential impact on other Council services (particularly homelessness) if the providers do not wish to continue providing the existing accommodation to existing households. Various departments have been In close contact to develop appropriate responses. Some owners have been proactive by entering into new leasing arrangements. Claimants have been supported through awards of Discretionary Housing Payments aimed to prevent financial hardship whilst they look to renegotiate rent levels or seek cheaper, alternative accommodation.</p>				

What further Policy Decisions are required	None
More information	Chris Gibbs – chris.gibbs@birmingham.gov.uk

CR2. Benefit Advice Centre – service redesign

Current Service		The Benefit Advice Service deals with a range of service offerings designed to assist customers with benefit take up, improving customers' financial circumstances and quality of life.			
Budget	£8.600m	Reduction 13/14	£0.250m	Reduction 14/15	£0.250m
Proposed Changes to Service		With introduction of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and Universal Credit, the service offerings for this team will diminish and eventually cease. It is proposed to commence the redesign of this team in readiness for the implementation of the changes which will realise savings.			
Managing the implications of change for Service Users and Partners		The services are being phased out linked to the Welfare Reform. The Government's prediction for Universal Credit is that many customers will be better off under this scheme, and the responsibility for take up of its own benefits will rest with the Department for Work and Pensions.			
What further Policy Decisions are required		None.			
More information		Chris Gibbs – chris.gibbs@birmingham.gov.uk			

CR3. Corporate Resources savings

Current Service		Corporate Resources Organisational Design Review.			
Budget	£31.000m	Reduction 13/14	£3.325m	Reduction 14/15	£3.925m
Proposed Changes to Service		The savings include £1.700m savings ongoing and £1.625m one-off. The one-off savings increase by £0.600m in 2013/14. These savings are not service specific at this stage. A review of services including Property Services, Shared Services, Corporate Procurement and Performance & Information Management will be undertaken			
Managing the implications of change for Service Users and Partners		An organisational review is being undertaken with the aim of achieving greater alignment and streamlining of services, and creating efficiencies. The new Directorate will provide a Council-wide professional lead to develop a more efficient and businesslike culture throughout the City Council.			
What further Policy Decisions are required		None			
More information					

CR4. Use of provisions for Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit Subsidy reimbursements from national Government

Current Service	A prudent level of reserves is maintained for Housing Benefit / Council Tax Benefit Subsidy, pending the completion and certification of the final grant claims by the external auditor.				
Budget	£8.600m	Reduction 13/14	£0.600m	Reduction 14/15	N/A
Proposed Changes to Service	An assessment of the current provisions indicates that it would be possible for one-off savings of £0.600m to be realised in 2013/14				
Managing the implications of change for Service Users and Partners	It is envisaged that there will be no direct impact.				
What further Policy Decisions are required	None.				
More information	Chris Gibbs – chris.gibbs@birmingham.gov.uk				

CR5. Corporate Communications – further service redesign

Current Service	<p>Corporate Communications comprises the Council's Press & PR, publications, marketing and communications campaigns (including social media) and corporate design & photography. The service budget meets the costs of staffing (currently concluding a redesign) and publications. Campaign budgets sit in individual directorates. The design function is funded by corporate recharging.</p>				
Budget	£2.400m	Reduction 13/14	£0.300m	Reduction 14/15	£0.300m
Proposed Changes to Service	<p>The major part of the reduction required will be met by the current redesign. The remainder will need to be found from reducing publications (Forward, Bulletin, Inner Voice, Jobs4U). In order to make required reduction, Forward, Bulletin and Inner Voice have been reviewed and reduced in frequency or moved to electronic format. With very limited options for further reductions it is proposed to cease publication of fortnightly Jobs4U in order to meet the balance of the reduction. This publication advertises vacancies externally in community venues for BCC jobs, almost exclusively in schools. There is currently no evidence that a separate fortnightly printed vehicle is a cost effective form of advertising recruitment.</p>				
Managing the implications of change for Service Users and Partners	<p>It is proposed that, if schools wish to continue to advertise via hard copy print, they pay for this service directly – possibly through a consortium arrangement.</p>				
What further Policy Decisions are required	<p>There is already an expectation that Council services meet the costs of advertising vacancies from their own budgets. A policy of passing direct costs of staff recruitment to schools may require Member agreement.</p>				
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