

Appendices:

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**NORTHAMPTON**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

## CABINET REPORT

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Cabinet Response to Scrutiny Panel – Poverty in Northampton</b>
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**AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC**

<b>Cabinet Meeting Date:</b>	21 October 2015
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Within Policy:</b>	Yes
<b>Policy Document:</b>	No
<b>Directorate:</b>	Customers and Communities
<b>Accountable Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Alan Bottwood
<b>Ward(s)</b>	All

### 1. Purpose

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- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to respond to the recommendations set out in the Overview and Scrutiny document constructed between May 2014 and March 2015 presented to cabinet in March 2015.

### 2.0 Recommendations

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- 2.1 That the recommendations included in the Overview and Scrutiny report “Impact of the Welfare Reform Act” are accepted.
- 2.1.2 That the Scrutiny Panel are formally congratulated for their commitment to evaluating and mitigating the impact of the Welfare Reform Act on the public and council employees, their commitment to improving the customer experience and the high quality and comprehensive report produced and thanked for the time and effort given to produce it.
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### 3. Issues and Choices

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#### 3.1 Report Background

The Review took place between May 2014 and March 2015, and the Panel received evidence both written and spoken, from a variety of expert advisors

The Purpose of the Scrutiny Panel was to review poverty in the town to ascertain whether it is a serious issue.

- Whether it is growing and, more generally, what are the trends (including migration)
- What are the causes of poverty locally?
- What can public services do in this time of austerity?
- What can other groups/individuals do to help?
- What the impact is, if any, is there on the economy, crime, health and education

#### 3.2 Response to Overview and Scrutiny Recommendations

3.2.1 All 13 recommendations included in the report have been considered by Customer Services, LGSS Revenues and Benefits and Housing (including Northampton Partnership Homes) and the representatives from the voluntary sector.

Cabinet's response to the 13 recommendations in the Overview and Scrutiny report are as follows:

- (1) The definition of poverty, as devised by the Scrutiny Panel (Poverty in the Town), is used by Northampton Borough Council:
  - Have nothing set aside for emergencies
  - Cannot replace broken goods or furniture
  - Can't afford their children's school uniforms, or the cost of school trips
  - Have no spare money for holidays, hobbies or leisure activities
  - Can't afford to keep their homes warm
  - Can't afford to participate in social activities and customs of their community

#### **Response:**

#### **This recommendation is accepted**

- (2) Northampton Borough Council actively promotes the work of Voluntary Sector organisations such as Charity Link, Citizens Advice Bureau and Community Law via the Council's website, within the One Stop Shop, as part of outreach activities, such as tenants' conferences and by having a regular information stand on the town's market.

**Response:**

**This recommendation is accepted, the customer service team work closely with voluntary sector organisations including charity link, CAB, Community Law and Credit Union to offer face to face, telephone and on-line support. Barclays Digital Eagles offer digital training and support and have floor walkers in the One Stop Shop to assist customers with making claims and applying for assistance. Market stalls are offered free of charge to registered charities and voluntary sector organisations to promote awareness and support.**

- (3) Northampton Borough Council works with the Director of Health, Northamptonshire County Council, in the promotion of national health awareness campaigns in Council facilities such as the One Stop Shop and through links available on the Council's website.

**Response:**

**This recommendation is accepted. Partnership working arrangements are in place to support public health promotions within the one stop shop and on the council's website.**

- (4) Northampton Borough Council works with the Voluntary and Community Sector regarding the introduction of a strong referral network amongst Agencies.

**Response:**

**This recommendation is accepted. A review is underway to analyse referrals for information and advice between NBC and the voluntary and community sector agencies. The outcome of the review is focussed on reducing duplication and increasing support to customers most in need.**

- (5) Northampton Borough Council allotment holders are informed of the Restore Northampton Project and provided with details of how they can provide assistance to the Project.

**Response:**

**This recommendation is accepted. The Committee of Northampton Allotment Network have provided members with details of the project.**

- (6) Northampton Borough Council and Voluntary Impact Northampton work together to inform people of, and promote both the smaller charities and the high profile charities.

**Response:**

**This recommendation is accepted.**

- (7) Northampton Borough Council promotes the work of smaller scale charities in the Council's One Stop Shop, through links on the Council's website and considers how it can link businesses with smaller charities.

**Response:**

**This recommendation is accepted. Charities are promoted wherever possible within the One Stop Shop and via support and advice given to customers on-line and by telephone.**

- (8) Northampton Borough Council promotes the work of Northamptonshire Credit Union to encourage people to use it as an alternative to payday loans.

**Response:**

**This recommendation is accepted. Northamptonshire Credit Union are now based within the One Stop Shop and have regular sessions with customers referred from customer services, Housing and Revenues and Benefits. Since the Credit Union have been based in the One Stop Shop referrals have increased significantly.**

- (9) Northampton Partnership Homes is asked to provide budget management training and money advice for its tenants; ahead of the introduction of Universal Credit.

**Response:**

**This recommendation is accepted. Northampton Borough Council housing money advice team offer financial inclusion and advice and the review of referrals for information and advice as mentioned in (4) above will include an analysis of tenants support and training required to support customers with Universal Credit claims.**

- (10) Northampton Partnership Homes is asked to promote the work of Northamptonshire Credit Union to its tenants.

**Response:**

**This recommendation is accepted. Northampton Borough Council Customer Services on behalf of Northampton Partnership Homes promote the Credit Union to tenants by ongoing referrals as appropriate.**

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- (11) A copy of the final report is sent to the Environment, Development and Transport Scrutiny Committee, Northamptonshire County Council.

**Response:**

**This recommendation is accepted**

- (12) The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers commissioning a Scrutiny review on equalities between estates and wards within the Borough of Northampton.

**Response:**

This recommendation is accepted. A review on equalities between estates and wards within the Borough of Northampton will be suggested as a future Scrutiny Review.

- (13) The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as part of its monitoring regime, reviews the impact of this report in six months' time.

**Response:**

**This recommendation is accepted**

### **3. Implications (including financial implications)**

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#### **4.1 Policy**

- 4.1.1 There are none specifically

#### **4.2 Resources and Risk**

- 4.2.1 There are no financial implications at this stage, from the adoption of these recommendations.

#### **4.3 Legal**

- 4.3.1 None specifically.

#### **4.4 Equality**

- 4.4.1 There are no specific new equality implications in adopting these recommendations.

#### **4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)**

- 4.5.1 The Panel took evidence from a wide range of Stakeholders, Councillors from Northampton Borough Council;

- Cabinet Member for Housing, Northampton Borough Council
- Cabinet Member for Finance, Northampton Borough Council
- Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Regeneration and Planning, Northampton Borough Council
  
- Head of Revenues and Benefits, LGSS
- Chair, Community Safety Partnership
- Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning, Northampton Borough Council
- Community Law
- Central and East Northants Citizens' Advice Bureau
- Community and Voluntary Sector - Voluntary Impact Northampton
- University of Northampton

- Nationwide Building Society
- Director of Public Health, Northamptonshire County Council
- Chair, Northampton Inter Faith Forum
- Dr Matthew Callender
- Father Tim Curtis
- Community Groups
- Nationwide Building Society
- Growing Together

#### **4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes**

- 4.6.1 NBC Corporate Plan – creating empowered communities and responding to your needs.

#### **4.7 Other Implications**

None

### **5. Background Papers**

O & S Scrutiny Report to Cabinet March 2015

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**Marion Goodman**  
**Head of Customer and Cultural Services**  
**01604 838273**