Background
At the Committee session on 28 May 2014 members held evidence from representatives of four local authorities, including Sandra Black, Director of Finance and Corporate Services from Renfrewshire Council on the impact of welfare reform on local government funding. In addition to the evidence offered at the session, further information was requested by the Committee and this information is provided in the following paragraphs for the Committee’s consideration.

Column 3608 – Housing

Housing Waiting Lists

Information extracted from Renfrewshire Council’s housing waiting list as at 30 June 2014 indicates that there were 6,325 applicants on the Council's housing waiting list. This includes:

- 166 homeless applicants,
- 357 with a Mobility priority (medical)
- 1,164 existing Council tenants seeking a transfer
- 2,031 applicants in the general category who have no assessed housing need, but who wish to remain on the housing list

House building programmes

In relation to new affordable housing, the number of house completions in the last two financial years is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Year</th>
<th>Number of Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>196 (including 37 new Council homes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over 2014/15 projects are being progressed to deliver 230 new affordable homes. These are expected to complete during 2014/15 and 2015/16.

Column 3616 – gaps in provision of foodbanks

Food bank provision in Renfrewshire is provided by the Renfrewshire Food bank, an organisation supported through the Trussell Trust. The Renfrewshire Food bank currently operates in three locations across Renfrewshire. The locations and opening hours of food banks in Renfrewshire are detailed below:

Johnstone Distribution Centre
Johnstone High Parish Church Halls
Quarry St, Johnstone
Wednesdays 10am - 12pm

Paisley Distribution Centre
CGC Paisley Church
31 Broomlands St, Paisley
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 2pm-4pm

Erskine Distribution Centre
Erskine Baptist Church
Park Mains, Erskine
Monday 10am-12pm

The Food bank opening hours are limited to two hours a week in Johnstone and Erskine and to six hours a week over three days in Paisley. This means that service users seeking support when the Food bank is not operating have to travel to another location or seek alternative support. Currently there is no provision to meet demands in Renfrew. Further expansion is being considered to meet potential demand in Renfrew; however this is limited by the development capacity of the Food bank.
Renfrewshire Food bank is managed by one part time manager who is supported by around 60 volunteers. Renfrewshire Council has developed excellent relationships with the Renfrewshire Food bank and is engaged in discussions to consider the nature and extent of assistance that the Council could provide to support an extension to service provision, both in terms of opening hours and in other locations.

The process for accessing assistance from the Renfrewshire Food bank is based on a referral process that has been developed in partnership by the Food bank and a number of local agencies, including Renfrewshire Council.

Anyone requiring assistance generally requires a food bank voucher to be issued by a partner agency and this is then taken by the customer to the food bank for fulfilment.

- A number of agencies in Renfrewshire hold vouchers.
- The workers in these agencies will know the clients most in need and so be in position to make referral and also offer additional advice and support.
- Agencies include: Housing Associations, Social Work, CAB, Advice Works, Charleston Centre, RAMH, RDS, Integrated Alcohol Team and Victim support.
- Self referrals are not standard, but if someone in need presents at the food bank an emergency voucher will be issued and the food bank will provide support. Where Food banks direct people needing assistance to referral agencies for additional support to seek to address underlying issues.

**Column 3621 – Eligibility for Social Care Services**

Renfrewshire Council has not detected an increase in social work section 12 or section 22 emergency payments, nor has there been an increase in the number of food parcels issued by the Council Social Work service. The Council Social work Service has historically issued food parcels to people who present as vulnerable and destitute. The evidence for increased levels of need lies in the increasing reliance of large numbers of local people on the Renfrewshire food bank rather than on council provision.

Eligibility to social work services is not linked to benefit eligibility, and there is no clear evidence at this stage of increased referrals to social work as a direct result of the welfare reform changes. Impacts on social work budgets in relation to charging are similarly not yet in evidence; the impact is anticipated once the migration of DLA to PIP and the built in 20% reduction takes effect.

Committee members received information on the increase in Advice services you will already have the stats on this, and the increased staff numbers in advice services to support increased welfare-reform related activity is evidence of council budget impact.

We continue to work with housing services, the health service and others to support vulnerable people known to the service in terms of under-occupancy provisions, Disability Living Allowance (DLA) to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) migration, awareness raising and support for service users and training for staff.

**Blue Badges** - In terms of Blue Badges (awarded to people with health, mobility and medical issues who meet criteria established by the Scottish Government), the current Blue Badge application form doesn't ask any questions related to PIP however that is about to change. A new form has been circulated to Councils, although no date for implementation of the new form has been communicated as yet, and there are three sections with questions directly related to PIP and this will then be used as part of the application and assessment process. Renfrewshire Council understands that DWP has a backlog of PIP applications waiting to be assessed and it is not yet clear what the impact of the newly assessed applications will be on blue badge entitlement.

Renfrewshire Council supports the recent amendments to the regulations for Blue Badge pass porting entitlement:

- to allow the issue of a temporary badge for 12 months to those who have lost their entitlement in the migration to PIP but who are appealing and/or disputing this decision
- the proposed creation of a new eligibility criterion to protect Blue Badge holders currently in receipt of indefinite awards of HRMCDLA who will lose their badge in the migration to PIP. This criterion
will enable local authorities to issue further blue badges at the conclusion of the current transitional arrangements, for a period of up to 3 years, for Blue Badge holders who previously had an indefinite award.

The proposed mitigation will offer reassurance to Blue Badge holders currently in receipt of HRMCDLA and avoid increased administration for the Council.

The number of applications for Blue Badges is steadily increasing and the potential addition of Blue Badge holders who currently qualify under the ‘eligible without further assessment’ criteria is likely to place a further pressure on the Blue Badge process and systems and is also likely to increase the number of disputed decisions and appeals from unsuccessful applicants.

**Free School Meals and Clothing Grants** - The criteria for Free School Meals and Clothing Grants have not changed as result of the welfare reform changes and awards are made where it is assessed that the applicant has a low income. The number of applications, and pupils in receipt of FSM/CG, has remained constant over the past few years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Applications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>3843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>3964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15*</td>
<td>2598</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*As at 21 August 2014 - this is expected to rise to levels similar to those in previous years

**Educational Maintenance Allowance** –Similar to Free School Meals and Clothing Grants the criteria for receiving Educational maintenance Allowance has not changed as a result of welfare reform changes. There has been a small but steady increase in the number of applications over the last 4 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Applications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014*</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*As at 21 August 2014, this is expected to rise to levels similar to those in previous years

Sandra Black
Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Renfrewshire Council