Submission from Dundee City Council

As part of our scrutiny of local government budgets the Local Government and Regeneration Committee is seeking the following information from your council on the financial and resource impact of UK Government welfare reforms, for the period 2012/13 to 2014/15—

• Q1 – In what areas of (a) work and (b) costs and resources has the ongoing programme of UK welfare reforms affected your council?

  - Additional work has been in multiple areas. Increased resources have been required to deliver the Scottish Welfare Fund, increase in rent arrears, and increase in DHP applications.
  - The Scottish Welfare Fund Administration Costs have exceeded the allocation provided to us by the Scottish Government administration costs for 2013/14 have been £464,363 versus the allocation of £180,000.
  - The increase in the applications for Discretionary Housing Payment has also increased our staff costs. An additional 8 staff members for a six month period circa £80k have had to be recruited to ensure applications could be reviewed. Also the increase in the number of appeals has meant more resource being allocated to the DHP Team.
  - Rent Arrears have increased as a result of the Under Occupancy Reform with our bad debt provision increasing £640k in 2013/14 and £640k in 2014/15

• Q2 – What was the level of actual or budgeted crisis grants made by your council in the period 2012/13 to 2014/15? What percentage increase/decrease did this represent over the previous three financial years?

  - The Council only started administering Crisis Grants in 2013/14 during this period 5992 applications have been made with 3660 being granted. We anticipated having a small underspend on Crisis Payment due to the slow uptake when the scheme was launched. We anticipate a higher level of crisis grants in the 2014/15 due to the fund being in operation for a whole year.

• Q3 – What has been the financial and resource implication of the welfare reforms for your social work and housing services in the period 2013/14 to 2014/15? What has been the level of emergency housing applications your council has dealt with in 2013/14? What level do you expect to deal with in 2014/15?

  o Main resource implication has been within Rent Recovery and ensuring that arrears are being managed. Additional support and work needed to ensure DHPs were promoted and applications made.
  o Increase demand for Welfare Rights staff providing advice and support for those claimants impacted by the reforms.
  o At this time we have seen no increase in Homeless Applications as a result of solely welfare reforms.
Q4 – What actions has your council taken to coordinate its efforts and responses to the welfare reform changes to ensure the most needy/vulnerable people in your council area receive the support and assistance they require?
  o The Council has established a Corporate Welfare Reform Group, this group is responsible for the work being delivered. The Council has a co-ordinated approach for Welfare Reform and engages with partners to ensure the most needy/vulnerable are being support. Example of this are:-
    o **Support and Connect Team**
      - This is a Big Lottery funded project which works in local communities aiming to support those affected by Welfare Reform.
    o **IT4 Work**
      - This project is funded from the DWP local flexible fund and provides IT support in local community centres to those who are looking to enhance there IT skills to assist them in entering the job market.
    o **Opportunities Room**
      - This project operates within the Central Library in Dundee, where we have created a space which is around IT, learning and Development. This project also recruits volunteers who train individuals on IT skills.
  o DHP Applications/Promotions
  o Welfare Reform Action Plans – Scottish Government Pilot
  o Staff E-Learning Module