

DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Context

Discretionary Housing Payments are funded from a Central Government pot to meet a shortfall between housing benefit payments and rent. There is national (DWP) guidance on how the payment should be administered, but each Local Authority has its own policy.

This topic was raised as a potential Scrutiny item through the Portfolio Holder Planning Housing and Commissioning (Central) following a question from an elected Member.

The specific focus of the issue to be explored is – How does Shropshire Council apply its policy for Discretionary Housing Payments?

Objectives

To understand how Shropshire Council applies its policy and the underpinning principles to support financial physical and emotional independence

To understand the national legislative and policy frameworks and guidance, and how they are applied in Shropshire

To understand the wider context of Shropshire in terms of demand, need and the development of future approaches

Information Required From Officers

Current Shropshire Policy and Procedures including all documentation and guidance for staff, partners and the public

National policy, legislation and guidance

Future developments relevant to Discretionary Housing Payments

Local (Shropshire) profile and background information relevant to Discretionary Housing Payments

Other Sources of Information

Shropshire Registered Social Landlords – Strategic Welfare Reform Group

DWP – national and local representatives

Methods To Be Used

Desktop research

Attending meeting of the Shropshire Registered Social Landlords – Strategic Welfare Reform Group

Visit the officers and walkthrough decision making

Walkthrough, with officers, the local policy and future plans

Meet with DWP representatives and the local Job Centre Plus (attend existing fortnightly meeting)

Timescales

End of March 2014 – with further areas of research ongoing as required

Key Results Expected

Increased understanding and support of the local approach – current and future

Development of the local process and communication of the purpose of the Discretionary Housing Payment