

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

7 DECEMBER 2010

ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY PANEL - PROGRESS REPORT

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To provide members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board (OSB) with an update on the work of the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel.

BACKGROUND

2. Since the last update report to OSB the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel has met on one occasion, on 9 November 2010.
3. At that meeting the panel continued gathering evidence as part of its review into social housing. The panel considered the potential impact of the cuts in Housing Benefit on Middlesbrough tenants coupled with reductions in the funding used to provide homelessness prevention services.
4. A number of representatives from external agencies were in attendance at the meeting including the Homelessness Manager from Erimus Housing, the Youth Homeless Panel Co-ordinator from Community Campus and the Director of Services at My Sister's Place. In addition the Benefits Manager was also in attendance to provide detailed information on the financial impact that the proposed cuts in Housing Benefit will have on tenants in Middlesbrough.
5. The Panel heard that the extent of the cuts will have a significant impact on people in receipt of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) to such an extent that if the proposed cuts came into effect immediately almost 60 per cent of people, in receipt of LHA in Middlesbrough, would experience a shortfall in their rent. The average weekly reduction per claimant is estimated to be £8.22 per week in Middlesbrough and the potential loss of total Housing Benefit to the town is £4.1 million.

6. In addition to the potential impact of these proposals the Panel also heard that the number of people presenting as homeless has already increased significantly in the April to October period of 2010/11 compared with 2009/10. Concern was also expressed by the representative from Community Campus in respect of the number of young people aged 16-25 being placed in emergency accommodation.
7. Information was provided to the Panel on the various homelessness prevention measures that are in place. It was acknowledged that without these measures the number of accepted statutory homelessness cases in Middlesbrough would have been significantly higher in 2009/10. With figures close to 400 compared with only 8 accepted cases.
8. At the Panel's next meeting which is scheduled for the 13 December 2010 the Panel is due to receive evidence from the Director of Operations at Fabrick Housing Group. The Director of Operations has been invited to provide the Panel with details of the work being undertaken by Fabrick, in partnership with the Council, to develop social housing that will meet the needs of an ageing population.
9. In addition the Panel will also receive an update on the progress that has been made in respect of its previous review on the University Resident's Parking Scheme. Finally the Panel will consider the final draft of the Local Transport Plan 2011-16.

RECOMMENDATION

10. That the Overview and Scrutiny Board notes the content of the report and the updated position.

COUNCILLOR JOHN COLE

CHAIR OF THE ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY PANEL

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