
WELFARE BENEFITS POLICY

To: **Council**

Main Portfolio Area: **Customer Services and Business Transformation**

By: **Carol Gray – Revenues & Benefits Manager**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Ward: **All**

Summary:

A report to recommend the formal adoption of a Joint Welfare Benefits Policy with Dover District Council

1.0 Introduction and Background

1.1 Welfare Benefits are a vital lifeline to families and individuals in need. Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit are two of these key Welfare Benefits and they are administered by Local Authorities. The systems that control the payment of these benefits are very complex and there is a tendency for these systems to sometimes overshadow the needs of the customers at the heart of the service. Openly stating our aims - in providing an efficient, customer-focussed service - helps to ensure that the outcomes for customers remain at the centre of what we do.

2.0 The Current Situation

2.1 Dover District Council and Thanet District Council administer the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefits for their respective areas. We are working ever more closely with our colleagues at Dover, to share good practices and support each other with information and advice. We believe that having a Joint Welfare Benefits Policy and Strategy would cement this close relationship between the teams, for the benefit of customers. This policy has been devised by staff from each Council, in conjunction with the Benefits Community Groups and with open consultation.

3.0 Options

3.1 Following on from the Cabinet meeting of 29 April 2010 Members are asked to consider the recommendation shown below.

4.0 Corporate Implications

4.1 Financial

4.1.1 None.

4.2 Legal

4.2.1 None.

4.3 Corporate

4.3.1 None.

4.4 **Equity and Equalities**

4.4.1 The Policy and Strategy help to formalise a fair and equitable approach to the delivery of this service for all.

5.0 **Recommendation(s)**

5.1 Cabinet recommend to Council that Members note and formally adopt the Policy and Strategy as shown at Annexes 1 & 2 respectively.

6.0 **Decision Making Process**

6.1 This is a policy framework matter to be decided upon by Council.

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Reporting to:	David Willis, for Director of Customer Services & Business Transformation

Annex List

Annex 1	Benefits Policy
Annex 2	Benefits Strategy

Corporate Consultation Undertaken

Benefits Community Group	
Finance	Sarah Marin, Financial Services Manager
Legal	Harvey Patterson, Head of Legal & Democratic services