

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy and Performance Board
DATE: 1 September 2015
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Policy and Resources
PORTFOLIO: Resources
SUBJECT: Topic Group Updates
WARDS: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Board on the progress of the work of the two Topic Groups formed by the Board, namely
- The Discretionary Support Scheme Topic Group; and
 - the Fees and Charges Topic Group.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board notes the progress being made and the next steps to be taken by each of the Topic Groups.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Board had previously formed two Topic Groups to carry out overview and review of two particular areas of activity.

3.2 The Discretionary Support Scheme (DSS) Topic Group

This Topic Group was formed at the beginning of 2013 to oversee and guide the development of the Council's Discretionary Support Scheme. The Scheme came into existence on 1 April 2013 and has been revised and fine-tuned since that time, through guidance provided by this Topic Group. The scheme has been supported by Government grant and, whilst technically this grant is still there in the list of grants provided by the Government, the Council's main grant has been reduced by that amount. So, in effect, a grant to the amount of that provided for this purpose has been cut. Owing to the careful use of the grant previously awarded, the Council has developed a 'reserve' which it could use to provide a scheme for a couple of years but when that has run out it will need to find an alternative way to fund the scheme or cease it.

- 3.3 It is suggested that the Topic Group meets again soon to review this issue, which is also connected with the future approach of the Government to Discretionary Housing Payments. Having reviewed the options available to the Council the Group would then formally report

back to this Board and, where appropriate, make recommendations to the Executive Board about the future of the scheme.

3.4 Fees and Charges Topic Group

3.5 The Board established the 'Fees and Charges' Topic Group during the last Municipal Year. The Topic Group includes membership from each of the other Policy and Performance Boards and the Development and Licensing Committees. Its purpose was to examine, in detail, the opportunities the Council has to increase its income from fees and charges, given the current financial pressures the Council finds itself in.

3.6 The Topic Group is making good progress and has reviewed opportunities in the Communities Dept and the Policy, Planning and Transportation Dept. It is likely to require two or three more meetings before bringing its conclusions and recommendations to this Board. It is fair to say, following the first two meetings of the Topic Group, that increasing income significantly from fees and charges will be difficult.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Any significant change to the Council's policy in the operation of the DSS would require this Board to make recommendations to the Executive Board.

4.2 Similarly, changes to fees and charges or the introduction of new fees and charges would need to be approved by Council as part of the Budget process.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Increased fees and charges would assist the Council in continuing to deliver on its priorities, given reductions in Government grant and the increasing demand on some of its services.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are no direct risks associated with this report.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no equality and diversity issues associated with this report.

**9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

9.1 None.