



Subject:	Motion – Welfare Mitigation Schemes
Date:	23rd August, 2019
Reporting Officer:	Henry Downey, Democratic Services Officer
Contact Officer:	Henry Downey, Democratic Services Officer,

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To consider a response from the Department of Communities to the motion on Welfare Mitigation Schemes, which was passed by the Council at its meeting on 1st July.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is requested to consider the response and to take such action thereon as may be determined.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	At the Council meeting on 1st July, the following motion, which was proposed by Councillor Canavan and seconded by Councillor Black, was passed: “The policy of austerity and welfare cuts imposed by the British Government is wrong and should be reversed.

This Council recognises that mitigation packages have provided vital support to the most vulnerable members of our society and should continue to be provided as Tory austerity measures continue to impact.

The Council notes with deep concern the range of reports published recently which highlight the serious risk of greater hardship for many within our community, if welfare mitigations do not continue beyond March 2020. These reports include:

- Welfare Reform: Mitigations on a Cliff Edge;
- Cliff Edge Coalition NI; and
- NIAO: Welfare Reforms in NI.

The Council calls on all parties to support the need to continue welfare mitigations beyond March 2020, agrees to write to the Department for Communities calling for it to take all steps necessary to ensure that mitigations schemes will continue to help the most vulnerable in our community and calls for the immediate restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive so that it can take decisions and actions on this important issue.”

3.2 A response to the Council’s motion has since been received from Ms. T. Meharg, Permanent Secretary, Department for Communities, a copy of which is attached.

3.3 The Permanent Secretary states that the legislation made following the Fresh Start Agreement, which provided authority to make welfare supplementary mitigation payments, will end on 31st March, 2020 and that no funding will be allocated beyond that date. In the continued absence of the Assembly, the Department for Communities is, therefore, unable to amend the existing welfare supplementary mitigations legislation beyond March, 2020, as such regulations would be subject to Affirmative Resolution.

3.4 She explains that, in line with the Fresh Start Agreement, the Department for Communities has undertaken a review of Welfare Mitigation Schemes. The outcome of that review was published on 25th March, 2019 and can be accessed at www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/review-welfare-mitigation-schemes.

3.5 Following on from the review, the Department has held a series of public engagement events with key stakeholders, primarily, the advice sector, voluntary/community groups and Housing Associations, to obtain feedback on the review which had been undertaken into the mitigation schemes.

3.6	<p>The Permanent Secretary concludes by pointing out that the Department for Communities is aware of the challenges which are likely to arise from the termination of the welfare mitigation package and is currently considering all of the evidence surrounding the potential impact.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>
3.7	<p>None</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.8	None
4.0	Documents Attached
	None