

Portfolio Holder Report – Council 16 April 2014

By Cllr Jackie Branson – Governance and Logistics

Electoral

The Borough elections this year will be combined with the European Parliamentary elections. Both will be held on 22 May 2014 to coincide with voting in Europe. The count for the local elections will be held at the Leisure Centre, Havant after the polls close on 22 May, commencing after the European ballot papers have been verified. The European count will take place in the Plaza on Sunday 25 May from 5.30 pm. No results for this can be announced until they have been agreed by the Regional Returning Officer in Southampton, after 9pm when polls close in Europe.

Democratic services

The Councillors' Training Programme is ongoing and all members were asked to complete a training needs assessment earlier this year to support a targeted approach to training. Sessions on Charing Skills, Strategic Leadership and Media Skills/Complaints Handling and have all been held recently and specialist training/conferences arranged for individual Councillors as required. Forthcoming planned training sessions will include Public Speaking, Overview and Scrutiny and Social Media, and invitations will be going out shortly. Good training is crucial in enabling Councillors to develop and carry out their roles effectively and I would encourage all Councillors to make every effort to attend training sessions. Your feedback is very important in helping to assess the effectiveness of training and I would also ask that evaluation forms are completed and returned at the end of each training session.

Revenues and Benefits

Welfare Reform

Removal of the spare room subsidy

The drafting error in the legislation that allowed some people an exemption from the removal of the spare room subsidy rules has now been corrected by the Department for Work & Pensions with effect from 3 March 2014.

All affected claims have now been re-assessed and arrears of housing benefit paid up to 2 March 2014. From 3 March 2014 the spare room subsidy deduction for these claims has been re-applied.

On 21 February, the Court of Appeal rejected the latest appeals against the removal of the spare room subsidy rules. It had been argued before the Court that the regulations were unlawful because they unfairly discriminated against people with disabilities, who have a need for accommodation larger than the rules allow because of their disability. The Court of Appeal found that whilst the regulations do contain

some discriminatory impact, overall the measure is lawful. Appeals to the Supreme Court are being considered.