The Health and Adult Services Select Committee (HASSC) has almost completed its scrutiny review on the impact of the current recession and the welfare reforms on the mental health and wellbeing of residents in Barking and Dagenham. As part of its investigation, the Committee has now undertaken three sessions and two site visits with representatives from various statutory Council services, voluntary organisations, Job Centre Plus and the North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT) Service User Reference Group. The Committee has also hosted a focus group with service users to coincide with World Mental Health Day on the 10 October 2013.

This report gives an update on the progress of the Scrutiny Review since the last HASSC meeting on 1 October 2013. Importantly, the report also provides Members with the first draft of the Executive Summary and recommendations of the scrutiny review report (see Appendix 1) for comment and discussion with Councillor Maureen Worby in her capacity as Cabinet Member for Health and Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board.

Finally, the report provides a summary of the final stage of the review, before the final draft of the report and recommendations are presented to HASSC in January 2014. To inform proceedings officers will give a short presentation at the meeting to give a re-cap of the review and highlight key points raised by Members and witnesses thus far.
Recommendation(s)

Members of the Health and Adult Services Select Committee are recommended to:

1. Note the progress of the scrutiny review and the final steps in the scrutiny review process.

2. Discuss the first draft of the Executive Summary and recommendations with the Cabinet Member for Health and Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board to inform the final report.

3. After arriving at its key findings and recommendations Members are asked to guide officers on the content of the final report.

4. Receive a full draft report for approval at the 14 January 2014 meeting of the HASSC.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Health and Adult Services Select Committee (HASSC) have chosen to conduct a scrutiny on the impact of the current recession, and the subsequent welfare reforms, on the mental health and wellbeing of residents in Barking and Dagenham as their scrutiny review for 2013/14.

1.2 Members have attended a number of site visits and sessions to inform the findings of the scrutiny review. A summary of the previous session with primary care services is outlined below, as well as a brief summary of the site visit which Members attended at Job Centre Plus and the focus group with service users on World Mental Health Day. Finally, this report gives an outline for the session on with the Cabinet Member for Health and plans the final stages of the scrutiny process.

2. Summary of the ‘The impact on mental health services and primary care’ session (1 October 2013)

2.1 The third session of the scrutiny review, entitled ‘The impact on mental health services and primary care’ took place at the start of the last Select Committee meeting on 1 October 2013.

2.2 Members met with representatives from Barking & Dagenham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT) to discuss the impacts of austerity and welfare reforms on mental health through the perspective of mental health services and primary care providers and to question the CCG about current commissioning of mental health services and long term commissioning plans.

2.3 Representatives from the CCG advised Members that there has been an increase in people presenting to GP surgeries with increased levels of anxiety and stress. They reported that GPs are spending more time looking at patient’s history to identify previous mental ill health as well as looking at opportunities for self-help. A ‘Primary Care Depression Pathway’ has been developed for GPs to help enable management in primary care for self help although Members were concerned by the use of anti-depressants as a method of treatment and felt that the pathway should include a ‘holistic’ approach to treatment.

2.4 Representatives from NELFT also report an increase in demand for services with a 19.6% increase in referrals in the first two quarters of this year against the same
period last year. They reported more joined up work and the development of initiatives such as the Recovery College as part of the recovery process.

3. **World Mental Health Day (10 October 2013)**

3.1 World Mental Health Day took place on 10 October 2013 and as part of the day, the Chair of the Health and Adult Services Select Committee invited residents and service users to participate in a focus group session at the Broadway Theatre to find out their views on how the current recession is affecting their mental health and wellbeing. This was the final session in which Members were able to explore issues with residents and services users.

3.2 The session was a success and there was very good representation from service users who highlighted a number of concerns including anxiety around Universal Credit and Benefits Assessments; supporting people who have experienced mental ill health to up-skill for work; and feelings of victimisation in the workplace. This highlights the fact that there is still a lot of work to do to help break down the stigma surrounding mental ill health.

4. **Site Visit to Job Centre Plus (21 October 2013)**

4.1 Following recommendations from the Select Committee Members and officers from the Council took part in a site visit to Job Centre Plus in Barking as part of the scrutiny review process on 21 October 2013.

4.2 The visit enabled Members to explore how well the service gauges emotional health and wellbeing issues in people that arrive in the service, and how well it can provide them with support; how people are supported into employment through the Work Programme and other current Government employment schemes; and to explore changing levels of people accessing the service, and whether there are changes to the types of people accessing the service and their levels of need around mental or emotional support.

4.3 Members spoke with staff and discussed the support given to people with mental ill health in terms of identifying what type of work they could do and securing employment. At least 40% of people claiming incapacity benefit have mental health problems (of approximately 8,400). Staff at the JCP explained that they are working in close partnership with employers and the council to help improve opportunities for support and employment.

5. **Outline of the session with the Cabinet Member for Health**

5.1 Councillor Maureen Worby, Cabinet Member for Health and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board has been invited to the November HASSC meeting. This session is an opportunity for the Select Committee to discuss the initial findings of the Mental Health Scrutiny Review with the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board, in particular asking her to comment on mental health service provision in Barking and Dagenham, future commissioning intentions and priorities, and how issues that have been raised in the review may be explored in further depth.
6. **Next Steps**

6.1 An initial draft of the Mental Health Scrutiny Review has now been written, taking into account all of the analysis and information gathered during the review and the comments and questions which were raised by the Select Committee. Following this meeting a copy of the draft report will be circulated to the Chair and Members of the Health and Adult Services Select Committee for their consideration and comment. Members will have the opportunity to make further comments and amendments up until the final draft of the report is presented to the HASSC on 14 January 2013 for sign-off.

6.2 The review into the impact of austerity and recession on mental health and wellbeing will result in a number of findings and recommendations which the Select Committee will be proposing to put forward to the Health and Wellbeing Board for further exploration and action. The delivery of any recommendations will be monitored by the HASSC through a series of progress reports on the action plan produced by the Health and Wellbeing Board in response to the review.

7. **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1: Scrutiny Review on the Impact of the Recession and Welfare Reforms on Mental Health (Executive Summary - Draft)