



## City and County of Swansea

### Notice of Meeting

You are invited to attend a Meeting of the

## Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee

**At:** Remotely via Microsoft Teams

**On:** Monday, 27 September 2021

**Time:** 3.30 pm

**Chair:** Councillor Philip Downing

**Membership:**

Councillors: C R Doyle, D W Helliwell, P K Jones, L R Jones, E T Kirchner, D Phillips, C Richards, K M Roberts and L V Walton

**Watch Online:** <https://bit.ly/39m4lm0>

---

### Agenda

	Page No.
<b>1 Apologies for Absence.</b>	
<b>2 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.</b> <a href="http://www.swansea.gov.uk/disclosuresofinterests">www.swansea.gov.uk/disclosuresofinterests</a>	
<b>3 Minutes.</b> To approve & sign the Minutes of the previous meeting(s) as a correct record.	1 - 3
<b>4 Corporate Personal Debt Recovery Policy Development and Next Steps. (Verbal) (Anthony Richards)</b>	
<b>5 Benefits Take-up. (Anthony Richards / Jane Storer)</b>	4 - 15
<b>6 Fairness in Green Health. (Paul Meller)</b>	16 - 25
<b>7 Work Plan 2021-2022.</b>	26

**Next Meeting:** Monday, 25 October 2021 at 3.30 pm

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Huw Evans'.

**Huw Evans**  
Head of Democratic Services  
Monday, 20 September 2021

---

**Contact: Democratic Services: - 636923**

# Agenda Item 3



City and County of Swansea

## Minutes of the **Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee**

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Monday, 26 July 2021 at 3.30 pm

**Present:** Councillor P Downing (Chair) Presided

**Councillor(s)**

C R Doyle  
D Phillips  
L V Walton

**Councillor(s)**

P K Jones  
C Richards

**Councillor(s)**

L R Jones  
K M Roberts

**Officer(s)**

Gareth Borsden  
Amy Hawkins  
Anthony Richards

Democratic Services Officer  
Interim Head of Adult Services  
Poverty and Prevention Strategy and Development  
Manager

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor(s): D W Helliwell and E T Kirchner

---

**8 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

**9 Minutes.**

**Resolved** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee held on 28 June 2021 were approved as correct record.

**10 Swansea Council Tackling Poverty Strategy Revision.**

Anthony Richards, Poverty and Prevention Strategy and Development Manager presented a report which sought to revise and update the Swansea Council Tackling Poverty Strategy 2017 - 2020.

He outlined the background and rationale behind the introduction of the original strategy and indicated that the revised document outlined was a starting point for discussions and consultation through co-production with partners and the public.

He outlined and detailed the current basis for the strategy across the council, referred to the three main definitions of poverty outlined in paragraph 2.2 to the

report, and the outlined the six main areas that the new strategy establishes a vision for the future.

He referred to the nine areas to be included/added to the new document as outlined in paragraph 2.4 to the report.

Members discussed the proposed revised strategy and suggested the additions around the following areas: - add higher education and vocational training (2.4.2), add paragraph detailing a summary of the main areas of successes/initiatives added during the lifetime of the strategy and refer to ideas that have proved less successful, in order to give context to the report.

Members also asked questions and raised queries around the structure of the authority and cross departmental working on poverty matters and the impact of Covid on service provision, to which the Officers responded accordingly.

Officers then referred to the main developments over the years, and indicated that the relevant information could be circulated to Members and added to the report as suggested. The proposed revised strategy would then come back to this committee for discussion following the consultation process in the new year.

**Resolved** that the Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee approve the Swansea Council Tackling Poverty Strategy Revision as set out in Section 2 of this report (subject to the amendments/additions outlined above) be approved as a starting point to coproduce a final version with our partners and communities

## **11 Corporate Personal Debt Recovery Policy Development.**

Anthony Richards, Poverty and Prevention Strategy and Development Manager presented a report which sought to work towards the adoption of a policy which embeds a corporate approach to the collection of personal debt.

The report set out some of the types of personal debt that would be covered by any new policy, and referred to the issues of debt collection that the authority has to undertake legally.

Members discussed the issues around the manner in which the council should be applying to collect debts, particularly around the wording of the initial letters, and indicated that the giving of advice and options for payment and the non-escalation of debt are key issues to be looked at.

The Chair outlined the proposal to hold a series of working groups with relevant officers to look into the issue. Members of the committee supported this and requested that copies of relevant letters initially sent to debtors are made available for discussion at the first meeting.

**Resolved** that: -

- 1) a Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee Working Group be established together with relevant service representatives invited to develop of a Corporate Personal Debt Recovery Policy.
- 2) the first meeting of the Group be held at 2.30pm on Monday 23 August 2021.

**12 Work Plan 2021-2022.**

The Chair referred to the Committee work plan for 2021-2022, subject to the addition of the working group on 23 August as outlined in minute 11 above.

**Resolved** that the work plan be noted.

The meeting ended at 4.36 pm

**Chair**

# Agenda Item 5



## Report of the Director of Social Services

Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee – 27 September 2021

### Benefits Take Up

**Purpose:** To provide the Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee with information about the problems with claiming benefits, the reasons for under-claiming, example of work we have undertaken in the past to increase benefit take up, current campaigns, the identification of future priorities in terms of increasing benefit take up and how the PDC can support this work in the future.

**Report Author:** Jane Storer

**Finance Officer:** Paul Roach

**Legal Officer:** Craig Davies

**Access to Services Officer:** Rhian Millar

#### For Information

#### 1. Background

1.1 The Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee has identified the need to increase the take-up of benefits in Swansea. The maximization of benefit entitlement aims to ensure that people claim their entitlements and maximize their household income. This is an update report from the February report which is attached as Appendix 1.

#### 2. The problem with claiming benefits

2.1 There are a number of problems that people can experience when trying to claiming benefits. These include;

- People lacking the knowledge and understanding of the benefits system. They need to know what questions to ask in order to establish entitlement. But if you do not know what questions to ask, then how can they establish entitlement?

- The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) administer benefits and staff are only trained in the area that they are working in – so do not know how benefits link together.
- People may ring DWP and believe that they are seeking advice – but they are getting through to a call centre. There is a regular occurrence of call centre staff providing information and advice which leads the claimant to believe that they are not entitled to benefit. However unless a claim is made, entitlement has not been established.
- People’s circumstances differ – so entitlement is dependent on their individual circumstances. There is a lot of information about benefits on-line – but this can be misleading, out of date and can take you down different paths until you are completely overwhelmed. The Welfare Rights Team would recommend that people use sites such as Citizen’s Advice; Turn2Us. In addition, not everyone has access to the internet or the necessary skills to interpret the written word.
- Access to free and impartial advice – all organisations that do provide this are overwhelmed; there are waiting lists; queues; and calls are not always answered.
- There are constant changes to the benefit system, claimants moving in and out of entitlement and changing circumstances affecting entitlement which benefit claimants do not realise will have an impact.

### **3. The reason for under claiming**

3.1 There are a number of reasons why people under claim benefits. These include;

- a lack of resources to help claimants through the process,
- a lack of knowledge about the benefits that are available,
- Claimant’s don’t think that they are entitled to benefits,
- Poor past experience,
- Continual reassessments,
- Fear,
- Stigma.

### **4. The extent of under claiming**

4.1 Research has shown that both nationally and locally that under claiming benefits is a wide spread problem amongst certain groups of people. For example, 2 out of 5 pensioners do not claim the Pension Credit that they are entitled too, and 1 in 7 working households do not claim help with their rent.

- 4.2 The latest (2017/18) UK Government figures estimated more than £16 billion goes unclaimed in means tested benefits. These figures do not include tax credits, universal credit or council tax reduction.

## **5. What works**

- 5.1 A number of actions have been proven to increase the take up of benefits. Firstly, raising awareness of people's entitlement to benefits can increase the take up of benefits. However, simply raising the awareness of benefit entitlement is not sufficient to increase benefit take up amongst all those groups of people who under claim benefits. A key factor which can drive an increase in benefit take up is to challenge people's perceptions of benefit claimants, negative stereotyping and the way in which organisations perceive and interact with benefit claimants. One of the most effective ways of increasing benefit take up is to provide tailored 1 to 1 support.
- 5.2 Our experience has also shown that we need to provide additional tailored support to the individuals when they need it e.g when their benefits are being reviewed, or when their circumstances change. Finally take up campaigns should be targeted at particular groups where we know that there is evidence of wide spread under claiming or there is a change in legislation and we need to protect claimants income or future entitlement.

## **6. What's going on right now?**

- 6.1 Tackling Poverty is one of the key priorities for Swansea Council. The Welfare Rights Team are a small team that provides a second tier service. Their remit is to increase the knowledge and capacity of the workforce to try and meet the demand for welfare benefits advice and support. The team do this by providing training on a range of welfare benefits, an advice line, joint appointments for complex casework, appeal representation and publications. The team also undertake targeted take up campaigns.
- 6.2 The latest Welfare Reforms whilst focussing on those of working age has impacted across age groups, with some client groups being more affected than others. The roll out of Universal Credit which is a benefit for those of working age, has had a negative impact on the most vulnerable citizens, from making online claims to reduce amounts of income for those who are severely sick and disabled. The increase in the use of technology marginalises the vulnerable from making online claims to lodging appeals and appeal hearings taking place via telephone and video.
- 6.3 Due to the pandemic, there has been an increase in the number of claimants of Universal Credit. This could potentially change people's perceptions of 'benefit claimants' and being seen as a separate group

but more of a situation we can all find ourselves in. However, it could have an adverse effect, in that those who have skills and experience and have managed to remove themselves from benefit entitlement having even less understanding and empathy for those who through no fault of their own, have to remain on benefits.

- 6.4 The Universal Credit £20 uplift is due to be removed this month. This will have an impact on benefit claimants, especially those with families and in low paid work. The team are already receiving calls from distressed claimants concerned over how they will be able to manage financially.
- 6.4 Another area that is and will have an impact on services is the UK's removal from the European Union. EEA nationals, even if they already have a permanent right to reside in the UK, need to ensure that they have applied for settled and pre-settled status originally before June 2021, however the DWP are accepting late applications. The DWP are aware that 50,000 current EEA benefit claimants have not applied to this scheme.
- 6.5 Welsh Government have commissioned free benefit awareness training to try and increase knowledge to identify those that may be missing out. Swansea's Welfare Rights Team will be delivering this training on behalf of Dangos Cymru.

## **7. Pension Credit take up campaign**

- 7.1 UK Government figures have shown that 2 out of 5 pensioners are not claiming the pension credit that they are entitled too. Pensioners who do not claim this benefit not only lose the income from this benefit, but are also missing out on accessing other grants and benefits because pension credit can act as a "passport" to other entitlements.
- 7.2 The Welfare Rights Team are leading on a Pension Credit take up campaign for this group because they are easily identifiable and systems have been developed to make it easier to claim – telephone claims; claim forms and online claiming.
- 7.3 The Council's Revenues and Benefits service initially identified potentially 465 claimants who may be entitled and not receiving this benefit; as a consequence of the numbers involved the welfare rights team decided to take a partnership approach.
- 7.4 The welfare rights team contacted Citizen's Advice; Swansea Carer's Centre; Age Cymru West Glamorgan; Care and Repair Western Bay. As these three organisations also covered Neath Port Talbot; Neath Port Talbot Welfare Rights Unit were also contacted to provide a partnership approach to this take up campaign. Unfortunately due to sickness and workload, Age Cymru West Glamorgan were unable to

participate in this take up campaign, however the team continue to work with the other organisations

7.4 A free phone helpline which operates between Monday to Thursday from 10 – 3 was established on the 21<sup>st</sup> December. To date, Swansea Revenue's and Benefits section and have sent out letters to 465 potential claimants on the first run and a further 535 on the second run to claimants who may be entitled to Pension Credit. Port Talbot sent around 165 to residents in Neath Port Talbot; there have been articles in the Evening Post relating to this take up campaign; information on social media and newsletters. To date we have taken around 250 calls and Swansea have been allocated 58 cases from calls taken, but have received referrals from other sources, which has resulted in 83 enquiries in total. Out of these cases we have:

- 8 successful claims for Attendance Allowance;
- 3 successful supersessions for Personal Independence Payment
- 33 claims have been made for Pension Credit
- 5 'underlying entitlement' to Carer's Allowance claimed
- 5 people met the criteria for an award of Disability Benefits but would not claim it
- 2 claims for Council Tax Discount
- 1 claim for Council Tax Reduction
- 6 claims for health benefits

7.5 We have raised £781.70 per week in disability benefits; claimants have received £9,272.54 backdated payments. Pension Credit claims have increased the weekly income by £10,492.45 per week; these claimants have received £20,877.93 in backdated payments. For every £1 a week increase in benefit income has a multiplier effect and is worth an extra £4 to the local economy, This means that this is worth £45,096.60 to our local economy – keeping people in jobs.

## **8. Other take up campaigns?**

8.1 When there are changes to the benefit system, there will always be an opportunity to implement a targeted take up campaign. Welfare Reform has provided many opportunities for;

- (i) Mixed Aged Couples,
- (ii) Sick and Disabled claimants,
- (iii) Disabled Children.

8.2 Universal Credit still causes the most concern. Claimants being advised to claim Universal Credit when they may have entitlement to remain on legacy benefits along with poor decision making within the DWP are contributing to some claimants losing out on a substantial amount of income now and in the future; It is really important claimants seek immediate welfare rights advice before making a claim for

Universal Credit – however advice agencies do not have capacity to manage this.

- 8.3 The groups that we should be focusing on now are those claimants who are in receipt of a legacy benefit and are not claiming a disability benefit; or not claiming the correct rate. By focusing on this group it will have a long term impact as it will increase the likelihood of protection of higher benefit levels when transferring over to Universal Credit. There is only a short period for acting or those potential increases will be lost permanently, but it is a vicious circle as claimants are continually being reassessed and losing entitlement. This group includes families with a disabled child who are not claiming a disability benefit or not claiming the correct rate; By ensuring the child is receiving the correct disability benefit rates, not only brings in much extra income but reduces the rules and conditionality on means tested benefits and allows the necessary time to focus on care.

## **9. Equality and Engagement Implications**

- 9.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Our Equality Impact Assessment process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above. (tbc by AtS)

## **10. Financial Implications**

- 10.1 There are no financial implications

## **11. Legal Implications**

- 11.1 There are no legal implications

**Background papers:** None.

**Appendices:** Appendix A – Previous Committee Report – February 2021.



## Report of the Director of Social Services

Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee – 22 February 2021

### Benefits Take Up

**Purpose:** To provide the Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee with information about the problems with claiming benefits, the reasons for under-claiming, example of work we have undertaken in the past to increase benefit take up, current campaigns, the identification of future priorities in terms of increasing benefit take up and how the PDC can support this work in the future.

**Report Author:** Jane Storer

**Finance Officer:** Paul Roach

**Legal Officer:** Craig Davies

**Access to Services Officer:** Rhian Millar

#### For Information

#### 1. Background

1.1 The Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee has identified the need to increase the take-up of benefits in Swansea. The maximization of benefit entitlement aims to ensure that people claim their entitlements and maximize their household income.

#### 2. The problem with claiming benefits

2.1 There are a number of problems that people can experience when trying to claiming benefits. These include;

- People lacking the knowledge and understanding of the benefits system. They need to know what questions to ask in order to establish entitlement. But if you do not know what questions to ask, then how can they establish entitlement?

## Appendix A

- The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) administer benefits and staff are only trained in the area that they are working in – so do not know how benefits link together.
- People may ring DWP and believe that they are seeking advice – but they are getting through to a call centre. There is a regular occurrence of call centre staff providing information and advice which leads the claimant to believe that they are not entitled to benefit. However unless a claim is made, entitlement has not been established.
- People's circumstances differ – so entitlement is dependent on their individual circumstances. There is a lot of information about benefits on-line – but this can be misleading, out of date and can take you down different paths until you are completely overwhelmed. The Welfare Rights Team would recommend that people use sites such as Citizen's Advice; Turn2Us. In addition, not everyone has access to the internet or the necessary skills to interpret the written word.
- Access to free and impartial advice – all organisations that do provide this are overwhelmed; there are waiting lists; queues; and calls are not always answered.
- There are constant changes to the benefit system, claimants moving in and out of entitlement and changing circumstances affecting entitlement which benefit claimants do not realise will have an impact.

### 3. The reason for under claiming

3.1 There are a number of reasons why people under claim benefits. These include;

- a lack of resources to help claimants through the process,
- a lack of knowledge about the benefits that are available,
- Claimant's don't think that they are entitled to benefits,
- Poor past experience,
- Continual reassessments,
- Fear,
- Stigma.

### 4. The extent of under claiming

4.1 Research has shown that both nationally and locally that under claiming benefits is a wide spread problem amongst certain groups of people. For example, 2 out of 5 pensioners do not claim the Pension Credit that they are entitled too, and 1 in 7 working households do not claim help with their rent.

## **Appendix A**

- 4.2 The latest (2017/18) UK Government figures estimated more than £16 billion goes unclaimed in means tested benefits. These figures do not include tax credits, universal credit or council tax reduction.

### **5. What works**

- 5.1 A number of actions have been proven to increase the take up of benefits. Firstly, raising awareness of people's entitlement to benefits can increase the take up of benefits. However, simply raising the awareness of benefit entitlement is not sufficient to increase benefit take up amongst all those groups of people who under claim benefits. A key factor which can drive an increase in benefit take up is to challenge people's perceptions of benefit claimants, negative stereo-typing and the way in which organisations perceive and interact with benefit claimants. One of the most effective ways of increasing benefit take up is to provided tailored 1 to 1 support.
- 5.2 Our experience has also shown that we need to provide additional tailored support to the individuals when they need it e.g when their benefits are being reviewed, or when their circumstances change. Finally take up campaigns should be targeted at particular groups where we know that there is evidence of wide spread under claiming or there is a change in legislation and we need to protect claimants income or future entitlement.

### **6. What's going on right now?**

- 6.1 Tackling Poverty is one of the key priorities for Swansea Council. The Welfare Rights Team are a small team that provides a second tier service. Their remit is to increase the knowledge and capacity of the workforce to try and meet the demand for welfare benefits advice and support. The team do this by providing training on a range of welfare benefits, an advice line, joint appointments for complex casework, appeal representation and publications. The team also undertake targeted take up campaigns.
- 6.2 The latest Welfare Reforms whilst focussing on those of working age has impacted across age groups, with some client groups being more affected than others. The roll out of Universal Credit which is a benefit for those of working age, has had a negative impact on the most vulnerable citizens, from making online claims to reduced amounts of income for those who are severely sick and disabled. The increase in the use of technology marginalises the vulnerable from making online claims to lodging appeals and appeal hearings taking place via telephone and video.
- 6.3 Due to the pandemic, there has been an increase in the number of claimants of Universal Credit. This could potentially change people's perceptions of 'benefit claimants' and being seen as a separate group but more of a situation we can all find ourselves in. However, it could

## Appendix A

have an adverse effect, in that those who have skills and experience and have managed to remove themselves from benefit entitlement having even less understanding and empathy for those who through no fault of their own, have to remain on benefits.

6.4 Another area that is and will have an impact on services is the UK's removal from the European Union. EEA nationals, even if they already have a permanent right to reside in the UK, need to ensure that they have applied for settled and pre-settled status before June 2021. EEA nationals need to be aware of what they need to do for themselves and their children.

6.5 Welsh Government have commissioned free benefit awareness training to try and increase knowledge to identify those that may be missing out. Swansea's Welfare Rights Team will be delivering this training on behalf of Dangos Cymru.

### **7. Pension Credit take up campaign**

7.1 UK Government figures have shown that 2 out of 5 pensioners are not claiming the pension credit that they are entitled too. Pensioners who do not claim this benefit not only lose the income from this benefit, but are also missing out on accessing other grants and benefits because pension credit can act as a "passport" to other entitlements.

7.2 The Welfare Rights Team have agreed to undertake a Pension Credit take up campaign for this group because they are easily identifiable, and systems have been developed to make it easier to claim – telephone claims; claim forms and online claiming. The Council's Revenues and Benefits service could identify those that were potentially entitled and not receiving this benefit. The Welfare Rights Team had previously undertaken a sample take up and found that on average this group were missing out on £42.00 per week. Removal of the TV licence for those over 75 not in receipt of Pension Credit may have also increase the amount of interest.

7.3 Because of the number of potential claimants (465), the Welfare Rights Team were unable to undertake this take up campaign with their current level of resources, so contacted Age Cymru; Care and Repair Western Bay; Swansea Carer's, Citizen's Advice and Neath Port Talbot to work in partnership with them. As three of these organisations also covered Neath Port Talbot, it was agreed to include this area too and involve the Welfare Rights Unit from Neath Port Talbot Council.

7.4 A free phone helpline which operates between Monday to Thursday from 10 – 3 was established on the 21<sup>st</sup> December. 465 letters were sent out to Swansea residents and around 165 to residents in Neath Port Talbot and there has been an article in the Evening Post. To date we have taken around 130 calls and Swansea have been allocated 25 cases. Out of these cases we have identified:

## Appendix A

- 8 claimants qualified for a payment of Pension Credit,
- 5 people who qualify for 'underlying entitlement' to Carer's Allowance were not claiming it,
- 3 people met the criteria for an award of Disability Benefits but were not claiming it.

7.5 The estimated income of Pension Credit and underlying entitlement to Carer's Allowance increased these 8 claimants income by an average of £35.18 per week; with arrears totalling on average £444.18 per claimant. This represents an extra income of £281.46 per week. For every £1 a week increase in benefit income has a multiplier effect and is worth an extra £4 to the local economy, This means that this is worth £1125.85 to our local economy – keeping people in jobs.

### 8. Other take up campaigns?

8.1 When there are changes to the benefit system, there will always be an opportunity to implement a targeted take up campaign. Welfare Reform has provided many opportunities for;

- (i) Mixed Aged Couples,
- (ii) Sick and Disabled claimants,
- (iii) Disabled Children.

8.2 The groups that we should be focusing on now are those claimants who are in receipt of a legacy benefit and are not claiming a disability benefit; or not claiming the correct rate. By focusing on this group it will have a long term impact as it will increase the likelihood of protection of higher benefit levels when transferring over to Universal Credit. There is only a short period for acting or those potential increases will be lost permanently, but it is a vicious circle as claimants are continually being reassessed and losing entitlement. This group includes families with a disabled child who are not claiming a disability benefit or not claiming the correct rate; By ensuring the child is receiving the correct disability benefit rates, not only brings in much extra income but reduces the rules and conditionality on means tested benefits and allows the necessary time to focus on care.

### 9. Equality and Engagement Implications

9.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

## **Appendix A**

Our Equality Impact Assessment process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above. (tbc by AtS)

### **10. Financial Implications**

10.1 There are no financial implications (tbc by Finance)

### **11. Legal Implications**

11.1 There are no legal implications (tbc by Legal)

**Background papers:** None.

**Appendices:** None.

# Agenda Item 6



## Report of the Director of Place

### Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee - 27 September 2021

## Fairness in Green Health

<b>Purpose:</b>	To consider the options in relation to the next steps of developing a Fairness in Green Health policy.
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Environment Act (Wales) 2016
<b>Consultation:</b>	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	It is recommended that:  1) It is recommended that a Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee consider the options outlined in this report and agree the next steps in relation to the draft Fairness in Green Health Policy  2) Following the decision as to the way forward a further report will be brought back to the PDC prior to any draft policy being submitted to Cabinet.
<b>Report Author:</b>	Paul Meller
<b>Finance Officer:</b>	Paul Roach
<b>Legal Officer:</b>	Craig Davies
<b>Access to Services Officer:</b>	Rhian Millar

### 1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 In September 2019, the Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee (PDC) resolved to develop a Fairness in Green Health Policy (formerly known as a Green Health Policy).
- 1.2 A draft policy was developed by a working group made up from members of the Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee.

- 1.3 The draft policy was informed by research and the wide evidence base about the benefits of the natural environment and its impact in terms of tackling health and wellbeing inequalities, presentations by external speakers such as Natural Resources Wales and ongoing discussions with the committee.
- 1.4 The main aim of the policy is to promote the provision of high quality green infrastructure and natural greenspace in deprived neighbourhoods, in order to improve health and wellbeing inequalities and increase resilience to climate change.
- 1.5 The draft policy suggests that the Council can promote fairness in green health in a number of ways and through a wide range of activities e.g tree planting, managing hedgerows and verges, improving the quality of and access to parks, wildlife and nature reserves, ensuring that there are sustainable youdrainage systems, and taking action to lower air pollution.

## **2 Existing Council Policies**

- 2.1 In terms of considering the next steps in relation to the development of this draft policy, it is necessary to consider how it fits with existing Council polices. A review of existing Council policies suggests, that most of the aims of the new policy are being, or could be delivered via the following:
  - Countywide Green Infrastructure Strategy,
  - Public Service Board's Working with Nature Action Plan,
  - Council's Corporate Plan i.e. the poverty and biodiversity priorities and objectives
  - Local Natural Recovery Action Plan (not yet published),
  - Section 6 Biodiversity Plan,
  - Tree Policy (due to go to PDC later this year),
  - Climate Change Action Plan.
- 2.2 This raises a number of questions about whether the policy should be adopted as a stand-alone policy, integrated as an objective into existing strategies and plans, or adopted as a short hybrid policy which is delivered and reported through existing plans and strategies.
- 2.3 Regardless of which option is agreed, a caveat is that green fairness needs to be **one** of a series of criteria on which projects / interventions are judged including connectivity, application / suitability of intervention (i.e. what is the intervention trying to solve, such as flooding or air pollution issues), suitability of Green Infrastructure interventions etc. Likewise Green Infrastructure intentions should also follow the 5 principles of Green Infrastructure – multifunctional, adapted to climate change, biodiversity, health and wellbeing and smart and sustainable.

### **3. Options**

3.1 The Poverty Reduction Committee (PDC) is asked to consider three options in relation to the further development of a Fairness in Green Health policy;

#### **(i) Stand-alone policy**

A stand-alone policy could be adopted corporately with specific actions and high visibility. However a challenge to a stand-alone policy is that there are no identified resources in terms of delivery, monitoring and reporting.

#### **(ii) Integrated as an objective into existing strategies and plans**

Existing delivery, monitoring and reporting mechanisms could be used. However as it would not be a stand-alone policy there would be less visibility from a Poverty perspective. This issue / assumption could be overcome if green fairness was monitored / reported through the Climate Change Strategy and Nature Programme Board and the Well-being Objective on Biodiversity and/ or if Fairness in Green Health was made one if the requirements of the Integrated Impact Assessment process.

#### **(iii) Hybrid policy**

A short stand-alone policy stating the Council's intent to be delivered through existing strategies, which would avoid additional reporting and double handling. However this option will still require some resource both initially for development and through future governance

### **4. Integrated Assessment Implications**

4.1 The Council is subject to the public sector duties relating to equality and socio-economic inequalities as prescribed by the Equality Act 2010 , the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 4.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2005 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.
- 4.3 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 4.4 An IIA Screening / Full IIA would be completed prior to a draft policy report going to Corporate Briefing.

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from this report, it may lead to decisions being taken at a later date that may have costs attached. Any such costs will need to be managed within departmental resources at that time with due regard to the Council's medium term financial plan.

## **6. Legal Implications**

- 6.1 The Council must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty under s149 of the Equality Act 2010 as well as its duties under the Equality Act (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 .

### **Appendices:**

Appendix A Draft Fairness in Green Health Policy



# Fairness in Green Health

## Contents

1. Introduction
2. Definition
3. Policy Statement
4. Action Plan and Monitoring

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 There is a direct link between people's good health and their level of interaction with the natural environment. Green and blue spaces, including parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, wetlands, heathlands, coastlands, street trees, road verges, rivers, canals, allotments and private gardens not only define and shape the character of a place but also deliver multiple benefits for biodiversity ecosystem services, climate change, resilience, improving air and water quality, local food production, social interaction, cohesion and creative play and mental and physical health and well-being.
- 1.2 Epidemiological studies have shown that access to greenspace encourages increased physical activity, lowers rates of obesity and morbidity, lowers stress and blood pressure, helps concentration and cognitive development in children and patient recuperation is reported to be improved when vegetation is visible (Swansea Central Area – Regenerating Our City for Wellbeing and Wildlife).
- 1.3 A Healthier Wales' is a policy developed by Welsh Government in June 2018. It is the Welsh Government's response to a Parliamentary Review of the 'Long-Term Future of Health and Social Care, A Revolution from Within: Transforming Health and Care in Wales'. The Review's remit was to make recommendations on how Health and Social Care services might be realigned to manage current and future demands. It seeks to shift services out of hospital and into communities and support people to live healthy, happy lives, ensuring they stay well at home.
- 1.4 The concept of Green Health within this context is supported by organisations such as Green Health Wales – launched in June 2021 to equip people working in the Health and Social Care sector in Wales with the tools and knowledge to transform health care to be climate smart and environmentally

## Appendix A

sustainable. Greenspace projects include assisting patients and the wider community with their local greenspace to benefit their health

- 1.5 Swansea has high levels of health inequality. Public Health Wales have estimated that the gap in the life expectancy of males between the most and least deprived fifth is about 12 years. The gap in healthy life expectancy is even greater, at nearly 23 years. People living in deprived areas not only die sooner, but are also more likely to have a poorer quality of life and are more likely to live with disability or a life limiting condition.
- 1.6 Deprived communities often have less, or more barriers to accessing good quality green space. People on lower incomes may not have a garden or may struggle to access the countryside, coastline or other natural spaces due to barriers such as lack or cost of transport. Studies such as Urban Green Space Interventions and Health: A Review of Impacts and Effectiveness, WHO (2017) and research commissioned by the Wildlife Trusts have shown that interventions to increase or improve urban green space can deliver positive health, social and environmental outcomes for all population groups but particularly among lower socioeconomic status groups.

### **Existing Policies to support Green Health – Why have a Fairness in Green Health Policy ?**

- 1.6. A Fairness in Green Health Policy is needed is to bring together existing Council policies and activities under a single policy statement and to provide greater clarity and focus in order to improve and increase opportunities for people to benefit from contact with nature and reduce health inequalities. The Policy will aim to bring together the Council's approach to tackling the climate and nature emergency with the Council's approach to tackling poverty.

The Council has recently adopted a new corporate priority for maintaining and enhancing Swansea's natural environment and biodiversity. This includes an ambition for everyone in Swansea to have access to and to benefit from an ecologically diverse, attractive, well managed and resilient natural environment. One of the longer-term challenges this well-being objective will help address is to:

'Reduce inequalities in health and well-being by maintaining and enhancing a high quality and accessible natural environment across the whole county, and encouraging greater use of public access land such as parks, nature reserves, commons and forests'

- 1.7 The Council has committed to a number of actions including;
  - Working with partners to develop and deliver a Green Infrastructure Strategy for Swansea,
  - Developing and adopting a Council tree policy,

## Appendix A

- Beginning to map existing Green Infrastructure assets and ecosystem service provision and identify areas which provide the best opportunities for improvement,
- Working with partners to develop and implement opportunities to enhance biodiversity and improve ecological connectivity,
- Supporting initiatives that will increase Swansea's urban tree cover,
- Improving awareness and understanding of our natural environment through provision of information, training and events,
- Providing opportunities for schoolchildren to access and learn about their natural environment,
- Working towards improving access to and maintaining the quality of our parks and greenspaces,
- Continuing to deliver a programme of wildflower planting and management,
- Engaging with local communities to encourage volunteering and to support them taking action to enhance and maintain their local greenspaces and wildlife sites,
- Undertaking (selected or targeted) enhancements to greenspace as part of an environmental works programme to meet our commitment to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard,
- Undertaking a range of actions to improve air and water quality.

1.8 In addition to this new Corporate Objective there are a number of other emerging policies and strategies that will contribute to delivering the Fairness in Green Health Policy. These include the Nature Recovery Action Plan, Swansea Central Area: Regenerating Our City for Wellbeing and Wildlife, , , Supplementary Planning Guidance on Biodiversity, and the Residential Developers Guide, and the development of a County Wide GI Strategy..

1.9 Tackling Poverty is one of the priorities in the Corporate Plan. The Swansea Tackling Poverty Policy states that in delivering this objective:

“The Council will work towards ensuring that people are supported to live healthy lives.” Swansea Council's Prevention Strategy aims to intervene earlier in order to support people at greatest risk, change behaviours and prevent the need for costly specialist services, often with a long-term support programme.”

1.10 The Council also has a community leadership role to develop green health fairness through the implementation of Swansea's Local Well-Being Plan and participation in Phase VII of the Healthy Cities programme. The Well-Being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 also provides a framework and impetus to develop a green fairness policy

1.11 One of the key anticipated outcomes of Swansea's Local Well-Being Plan is to ensure that people are healthy, safe and independent. The assessment of well-being identified the following as a primary driver:

## Appendix A

- to ensure that people live well and age well is to ensure that people have the greatest possible level of health and well-being

and a number of secondary drivers:

- key health and well-being messages are identified, targeted and promoted,
- every citizen has access to health and well-being opportunities,
- that environments that encourage health and well-being are created and sustained.

1.12 Another key anticipated outcome of Swansea's Local Well-Being Plan is to improve health, enhance biodiversity and reduce our carbon footprint. The assessment of well-being identified the following as a primary driver:

- the natural environment is managed to support health and well-being

and a number of secondary drivers:

- air quality is improved,
- everyone has access to green space,
- the water environment is managed and improved and flood risk is managed.

1.13 The Council approved a resolution to participate in Phase VII of the Healthy Cities programme at full Council in August 2019. One of the overarching goals for Phase VII is to:

- foster health and well-being for all and reducing health inequities.

One of the core themes for Phase VII of the programme is to:

- design urban places that improve health and well-being

It is anticipated that the Healthy City designation would be used to support the Public Service Board in its implementation of the agreed Local Well Being Plan through:

- Improving and embedding the relationship of access to green space and health, emphasising and equalising access to quality green environments.

1.14 The Well Being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 brings together health and equality goals including;

- A healthier Wales. A society in which people's physical and mental wellbeing is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood,

## Appendix A

- A more equal Wales. A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances,
- A more resilient Wales. A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience.

1.15 The Environment Act (Wales) 2016 is designed to ensure Wales's long term well-being and to enable current and future generations to benefit from a prosperous economy, a healthy and resilient environment and vibrant, cohesive communities. It positions Wales as a low carbon, green economy ready to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Under the Act the Council has an enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty (the S6 duty). In meeting this duty the Council must also have regard to Section 7 which list of habitats and species of principal importance for Wales:

- State of Natural Resources Report (SoNaRR), published by Natural Resources Wales,
- South West Wales Area Statement covering all or part of the area in which the authority exercises its functions, published by Natural Resources Wales,
- Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales (NRAP).

1.16 A Fairness in Green Health Policy is not only needed to bring together existing policies and provide a single focal point, but also to inform and add value to existing Council policies and activities in order to reduce long term social, economic and health inequalities.

## 2. Definitions

2.1 Fairness in Green Health is about the provision of high quality green infrastructure and natural greenspace in deprived neighbourhoods to help improve well-being, increase biodiversity and resilience to climate change and reduce health inequalities.

Examples of activities to promote green fairness in areas of high deprivation include:

- Planting trees in streets and green spaces where feasible,
- Improving the quality of and access to nearby parks and wildlife areas/nature reserves,
- Encouraging soft instead of hard landscaping e.g. native hedgerows instead of fencing and maintaining verges (avoiding loss to parking spaces),
- Supporting Community Orchards,
- Using sustainable urban drainage systems reducing the urban heat island effect by using vegetation to create summer shading and cooling Lowering levels of air pollution,

## Appendix A

- Increasing the availability of community growing space,
- Developing more spaces, infrastructure and opportunities for natural play,
- Supporting outdoor activities and learning eg nature walks, forest school, wildlife volunteering,
- Increasing biodiversity and ecological connectivity through habitat enhancement and creation.

2.2 Areas of High Deprivation are defined in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, which ranks Swansea LSOAs according to domains such as low income, poor health outcomes and poor physical environment. The WIMD will be used to prioritise neighbourhoods for interventions under this policy.

### 3. Policy Statement

3.1 Swansea Council aims to:

- 1) Develop high quality multifunctional green infrastructure and natural greenspace in deprived areas,
- 2) Develop resilience to climate change and its impact in deprived areas through nature based solutions and interventions,
- 3) Promote improved access to green space to equalise access to high quality green environments in deprived communities to reduce health inequalities,
- 4) Assess all relevant incoming resources (e.g. tree donations; GI funding, etc) for its ability to be deployed to benefit deprived areas, and do so unless demonstrably impossible,
- 5) Further the aims of this policy by seeking collaboration with partners such as Welsh Water, developers or others whose work necessitating alterations to local infrastructure may offer opportunities to do so,
- 6) Apply a green fairness lens to strategic Council policy developments and decisions,
- 7) Collaborate with other stakeholders to develop and deliver an action plan to achieve the aims of the policy,
- 8) Use the WIMD and local knowledge to identify the locations across Swansea where health inequality, income and other forms of deprivation can be shown to co-exist with an absence of accessible and biodiverse green space,
- 9) To identify and map opportunities for improvement.

### 4. Action Plan and Monitoring

4.1 This policy will be implemented through a three year Action Plan, reviewed annually.

# Agenda Item 7



## Report of the Chair

Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee – 27 September 2021

### Work Plan 2021-2022

Date of meeting	Agenda items and Format
28/06/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Promoting Affordable Credit Draft Policy. (Anthony Richards)</li><li>Work Plan Discussion 2021-2022</li></ul>
26/07/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Tackling Poverty Strategy Revision. (Anthony Richards)</li><li>Corporate Personal Debt Recovery Policy. (Anthony Richards)</li></ul>
23/08/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Working Group</li></ul>
27/09/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Corporate Personal Debt Recovery Policy Development and Next Steps. (Anthony Richards)</li><li>Benefits Take-up (Anthony Richards / Jane Storer)</li><li>Fairness in Green Health. (Paul Meller)</li></ul>
25/10/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Swansea Poverty Truth Commission</li></ul>
<b>Topics</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Corporate Debt Policy</li><li>Implementation on the Socio-Economic duty &amp; the Community Food Growing Policy</li><li>Garden sharing</li><li>Social Care Financial Guidance</li><li>Volunteering Policy</li><li>Passport to Leisure</li><li>Working to Prosperity: Tackling Poverty Strategy</li><li>Period Poverty</li></ul>