

# Report of the Head of Poverty & Prevention

## Communities Cabinet Advisory Committee (9<sup>th</sup> June 2016)

### AN UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S TACKLING POVERTY STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN

<b>Purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To provide an overview of the tackling poverty strategy, action plan and its implementation</li><li>• To provide a briefing on the progress of the tackling poverty action plan</li></ul>
<b>Content</b>	<p>This report contains the main tackling poverty strategy documents along with an overview of the review process and findings so far.</p> <p>This report will be of interest to members of the Communities Cabinet Advisory Committee.</p> <p>The report concludes that a good start has been made in delivering the tackling poverty strategy, with the review assisting in its revision.</p>
<b>Councillors are being asked to</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Give their views</li><li>• Consider the report as part of their support and advice to Cllr Evans – Cabinet member for Anti-poverty and communities</li><li>• Consider doing further work on this issue by assisting with a number of the actions</li><li>• Make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Anti-poverty &amp; Communities</li></ul>
<b>Lead Councillor(s)</b>	Chair: Cllr Bob Clay
<b>Lead Officer(s)</b>	Sarah Crawley, Head of Poverty & Prevention
<b>Report Author</b>	Sarah Crawley, 01792 637505, <a href="mailto:sarah.crawley@swansea.gov.uk">sarah.crawley@swansea.gov.uk</a>

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is a briefing report for the Communities Cabinet Advisory Committee, which has requested information on the Council's poverty strategy and its progress on the action plan.

#### 2. Tackling Poverty Strategy

- 2.1 The Poverty & Prevention Service was initially created in July 2013, and subsequently restructured in August 2014. During the restructure a new team was created called the Tackling Poverty Unit. One of the remits of this team was to oversee the development of the Council's tackling poverty strategy.
- 2.2 The Poverty & Prevention service runs a number of the Welsh Government's tackling poverty programmes including; Flying Start, Families First and Communities First. The intention of the Council in developing a Poverty strategy was to move action and progress beyond the bounds of these programmes, impacting on people outside of Communities First areas and beyond the eligibility and need required for these programmes.
- 2.3 The Council's tackling poverty strategy was developed in partnership with the Cabinet at the time in July 2014, and agreed by Council in November 2014. The strategy is split into four parts, the main strategy, a performance framework, action plan and poverty profile. (Appendix 1)
- 2.4 The consultation process for the tackling poverty strategy ran from 14 August 2014 through to the 29th September 2014 with responses from officers, partners, voluntary and community sector organisations and residents.
- 2.5 The Tackling poverty strategy is one of the tools and mechanisms for the delivery of the Councils Corporate priority of tackling poverty. This priority was updated in January 2016 and agreed in Council in March 2016. (Appendix 2)
- 2.6 The Tackling poverty strategy action plan is updated on a regular basis regarding progress, but it needs to be seen in the context of the strategy, in that many of the actions won't be delivered within the first twelve months, and certainly many of its impacts may not be visible for five to ten years or more. (Appendix 3 shows an updated action plan)
- 2.7 The strategy outlines what action will be taken to fulfil the promise to tackle poverty and prioritise services where they are most needed. "In essence, it means that we will prioritise investment and transformational change in these geographical areas and with these communities of interest, over and above other investment in other areas. However, a significant proportion of the resources that the Council has are spent in these areas due to the population presenting with higher levels of need. Budgets in areas such as children's social care, housing, early intervention and others are already disproportionately allocated in these geographical areas, because they are based on need, and the people who need these services are more likely to live in a concentrated area".

- 2.8 The tackling poverty action plan is not intended to be a full list of everything the Council is doing to address poverty. The Action Plan is focused on what action we will take additionally to that we are already doing. The Action Plan focuses on three themes:
1. Empowering local people
  2. Changing Cultures
  3. Targeting resources.
- 2.9 Under each of these themes resources are targeted through actions such as;
- The 'Ask' of Welsh Government to gain greater spending flexibilities across their Tackling poverty programmes
  - The Community Action Learning programme which is about to be piloted in Townhill and possibly Penderry.
  - The proposal for a Public Service Co-ordination Board for target areas.
- 2.10 Some of the actions have stalled due to a lack of interest from the target group, or in some cases a miss-understanding regarding the outcome and delivery of the action. An example of this is the Community Development training for Ward Councillors. Other actions have been delayed due to other wider decisions e.g. creation of the Public Service Board.

### **3. Reviewing the Poverty Strategy**

- 3.1 The tackling poverty strategy action plan under activity three always had a requirement to undertake a review after the first twelve months. This is good practice when implementing new policies.
- 3.2 It was agreed by Cllr Evans – Cabinet Member for Anti-poverty & Communities and the Leader – Cllr Stewart that a review of the Council's tackling poverty strategy should take place in January 2016. The initial phase of this review was an integrated impact assessment carried out on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2016. The recommendations from this review are available in Appendix 4.
- 3.3 This briefing and session with the Communities Cabinet Advisory Committee is one of the activities as part of the review process for the strategy. In order to shape a collectively owned council strategy and action plan the review timeframes need to be aligned for this and the scrutiny inquiry.

### **4. Governance and Reporting**

- 4.1 The Head of Service and Tackling Poverty Unit run a number of poverty forums, including an Executive poverty forum, and a wider poverty network internally within the Council. These have the role

of overseeing progress of the Council's tackling poverty strategy and are Chaired by the Director of People.

- 4.2 The Swansea Partnership Poverty Forum chaired by the Director of People reports directly into the Local Service Board. The Director of People presented the Council's tackling poverty strategy to the LSB (Local Service Board) back in 2015, which was well received, with a request for other organisations to look at developing their own.
- 4.3 This was followed up at subsequent meetings, but only the Environment Forum provided their own tackling poverty strategy/plan.
- 4.4 Regular updates on the actions in the tackling poverty plan are provided directly to the Cabinet Member for Anti-poverty and Communities by the Head of Poverty and Prevention.
- 4.5 The Council continues to have tackling poverty as one of its five priorities. The outcomes and indicators contained within the Corporate plan will be reported on quarterly. (Appendix 4)
- 4.6 Issues and actions are escalated by the Director of People when required to Executive Board.

## **5. Finance**

- 5.1 The Council has continued to receive considerable funding from Welsh Government in relation to its core tackling poverty programmes of Communities First, Flying Start, Families First and Supporting People. This totals a grant income per year of approximately £19m.
- 5.2 The Poverty strategy had £220k of Prevention Budget funding aligned to the actions. Of this funding £50k has been spent so far on the development of the Food Enterprise proposal and provision of a Ward Councillor Community development training programme. £20k has been allocated for the development and delivery of the Poverty Challenge from the prevention budget, and a further £20k for the Community action learning programme.

## **6. Future Challenges & Opportunities**

- 6.1 The prevention budget funding is limited to this financial year 2016/17, and no more funding is available at this point in time to implement the tackling poverty strategy outside of the Welsh Government's tackling poverty programmes.
- 6.2 The 'Ask' of Welsh Government has yielded little positive flexibility with limited changes to financial management and performance

reporting across the programmes.

- 6.3 A number of the actions in the tackling poverty action plan have taken time to develop; such as the community action learning programme. These are pilot projects testing out new methodologies across the council and its partners.
- 6.4 The Poverty Challenge is an opportunity to embrace a new way of involving those experiencing poverty in order for them to influence the Council's review of the poverty strategy, but also broader tackling poverty policy.
- 6.5 The review of the tackling poverty strategy is a good opportunity to re-engage staff, members, partners and the community in delivering this key Council priority.

## **7. Risks**

- 7.1 In implementing anything new or even tried and tested there are always risks which have to be managed and mitigated against. There are a number of key risks including:
- An ongoing risk is the continued reduction or possible loss of the funding from Welsh Government tackling poverty programmes.
  - National Government changes through Welfare Reform affect substantial numbers of residents introduced onto Universal Credit.
  - Changes to the Poverty & Prevention service focussing on family support
  - A lack of ownership of the existing tackling poverty strategy within the Council.
  - A lack of engagement in the Poverty Challenge
  - A reduction in available resources for targeted work
  - Establishment of the new Public Service Board and its key priorities

## **8. Overall assessment**

- 8.1 The poverty strategy has had some initial impact, but this is fairly limited at this time, as many of the actions won't see significant changes in just 12 – 18 months. It also takes time to change cultures, re-orientate resources and embed much of this thinking. The majority of the actions are being progressed through the development of proposals either within Poverty & Prevention and/or across the Council. For more information on progress see the updated action plan in Appendix 3.
- 8.2 A significant challenge for the review of the poverty strategy is aligning the processes of the tackling poverty scrutiny inquiry with the role of the Cabinet Advisory Committee and the rewriting of the strategy lead by Poverty & Prevention.
- 8.3 In conclusion a good start has been made in delivering the tackling poverty strategy, with the review assisting in its on-going development.

### Background Papers:

Appendix 1: Poverty strategy, performance framework,  
Appendix 2: Corporate Priority – tackling poverty  
Appendix 3: Updated Poverty strategy action plan  
Appendix 4: Integrated Impact Assessment - recommendations

Contact: Sarah Crawley, Head of Poverty & Prevention

Date: 01/06/2016