



Report of the Head of Adult Services & Tackling Poverty

Safeguarding People & Tackling Poverty Corporate Delivery Committee -
27 June 2022

Annual Review of Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee Work Programme 2021-22

Purpose:	To provide the new Safeguarding People & Tackling Poverty Corporate Delivery Committee, with an overview of the progress made to date by the Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee, in relation to the work programme for 2021-22, any work still outstanding and to identify recommendations to the appropriate Cabinet Members for future development work in the new Corporate Delivery Committee To provide the Safeguarding People & Tackling Poverty Corporate Delivery Committee
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For Information	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of the Corporate Delivery Committee is to develop corporate strategies, policies or policy direction for consideration and adoption by Cabinet and / or Council as appropriate. The work programme links to policy commitments and corporate priorities agreed by Council. The specific role of the previous Policy Development Committees (PDCs) was to focus on policy development & delivery by in depth analysis of policy issues and consider future policy. The PDCs were also charged with considering mechanisms to encourage and enhance public participation in development of policy and policy

options and consider where appropriate to invite relevant organisations / individuals to contribute to policy development discussions.

- 1.2 This annual review report covers the Municipal Year 2021-22 and the work of the Poverty Prevention PDC. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Poverty Reduction Policy Development (PDC) were selected in May 2020 and a work programme was subsequently agreed shortly thereafter.
- 1.3 The Committee explored the following items as part of its work plan; Promoting Affordable Credit Draft Policy, a revision of the Tackling Poverty Strategy, Corporate Personal Debt Recovery Policy, Benefits Take-up, Fairness in Green Health Policy, a Community Food Growing Policy and the work of the Swansea Poverty Truth Commission. The Committee also held two workshops on the Promoting Affordable Credit Policy and the Corporate Personal Debt Policy.

2. Outcomes from the Poverty Reduction PDC

2.1 Promoting Affordable Credit Policy

The Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee (PDC) began to explore the issue of High Cost Lending during the Municipal Year 2018-19 and agreed to develop a Promoting Affordable Credit Policy. The purpose of the Policy was to end the targeting of High Cost Credit, prevent High Cost Lending and promote access to equitable and Affordable Credit for all residents of Swansea and to ensure that the approach is embedded in the Council's policy framework.

A draft of the Promoting Affordable Credit Policy was presented to Corporate Management Team on the 4th November 2020 where it was agreed that the development of the policy could progress to public consultation prior to progressing to Cabinet and being adopted as policy. The Draft Promoting Affordable Credit Policy Public Consultation launched on the 26th April 2021 and ran for a period of four weeks, closing on the 23rd May 2021. The consultation responses were considered and further action taken to engage with the Credit Union in Swansea. The report was agreed by the Cabinet Member and the policy was adopted by Cabinet on 17 February 2022.

2.2 Revision of the Tackling Poverty Strategy

The Poverty and Prevention Strategy and Development Manager presented a report about proposed revisions to the Swansea Council Tackling Poverty Strategy 2017-2020 in July 2021. He outlined the current basis and vision for the strategy across the Council and suggested that revisions were necessary to take into account the learning from the Covid-19 response and the current social, economic and environmental context. The subsequent discussion and questions from Members of the PDC provision focused on the role of higher

education and vocational training, cross departmental working on poverty matters, the impact of Covid-19 on service provision and the successes and lessons learnt during the lifetime of the strategy. As a result of the presentation and discussion the draft strategy priorities were revised to include reference to higher education and vocational training, environmental issues and support for people experiencing poverty during the wider Covid-19 recovery process. The PDC informed an early draft of the revised Tackling Poverty Strategy with a view to undertaking a wider co-productive approach to the development of the Strategy going forward.

2.3 Corporate Personal Debt Policy

The Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee (PDC) began to explore the issue of Corporate Personal Debt during the Municipal Year 2019-20 and agreed to develop a Corporate Personal Debt Policy. The purpose was to outline how Swansea Council could work with its customers and partners to collect personal debt and what it would do to help those who are in debt. A draft Corporate Personal Debt Policy was presented to Committee in July 2021. 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 reviewed. The Committee also recommended establishing a working group of Members and relevant officers to look into the issue and refine the Policy. The working group reviewed the draft Policy and engagement work with services continued regarding the collection of outstanding personal debt for service areas to align it with their working practices. A draft Policy is near completion and the next step will be to gain approval from Corporate Management Team for the draft policy to go out to public consultation.

2.4 Benefits Take-up

The Senior Welfare Rights Advisor presented a report about the problems with claiming benefits, the reasons for under-claiming, example of work undertaken in the past to increase benefit take up, current campaigns and the identification of future priorities in terms of increasing benefit take up and how the Committee could support this work in the future. The subsequent discussion and questions from Members of the PDC provision focused on effective communication and promoting awareness of benefits entitlement, supporting people to claim benefits and the current focus of the work undertaken by the Welfare Rights Unit. Suggestions from the Committee included highlighting the issues with local organisations, Town and Community Councils, encouraging Local Area Co-ordinators (LAC) to support or sign post people to organisations with benefit take up and highlighting Pension Credit information with annual Council Tax bills.

2.5 Fairness in Green Health

The Nature Conservation Team Leader presented a report which sought to consider the options in relation to the next steps of developing a Fairness in Green Health policy to the Committee in September 2021. The main aim of the Policy was 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.

The Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee (PDC) had developed a Fairness in Green Health Policy (formerly known as a Green Health Policy) in the Municipal Year 2019-20, however it was unclear as to whether 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. The subsequent discussion and questions from Members of the PDC focused on the differences in life expectancy in deprived areas, inequality across Swansea, the need to involve and include local people in any new policies going forward to achieve 'buy-in' and resources to proceed with and continue to manage the policy long term. The Committee recommended the development of a hybrid policy option.

2.6 Community Food Growing Policy

The Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee (PDC) began to explore the issue of Community Food Growing in the Municipal Year 2018-19 and agreed to develop a Community Food Growing Policy. The aim of a Community Food Growing Policy is to ensure that suitable and underutilised land owned by the Council is made available for community food growing for individuals and groups to grow food in local communities for community and social benefit. A draft Community Food Growing Policy was developed by a Poverty Reduction Working Group and a workshop with representatives from the Third sector and other partners in the Swansea Community Food Growing network. It was agreed by the Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee that a working group of Members and relevant Officers was established to consider how the Policy could be implemented, prior to the next stage of formal Policy development.

2.7 Swansea Poverty Truth Commission

The Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee were given a presentation about Swansea's Poverty Truth Commission by the facilitators of Swansea's Poverty Truth Commission. The aim of the Poverty Truth Commission is bring about change and attitudes towards poverty and take action to tackle it by bringing together key decision makers with people who have direct lived experience of poverty. Although the Covid-19 pandemic presented challenges for the facilitation team in terms of face to face meetings, the facilitators have

adapted and used other alternatives to connect with potential Commissioners and build up trusting relationships. All twelve of the Commissioners including those with direct lived experience of poverty are in place and are working to identify potential priority themes such as Mental Health, Housing and Homelessness, Stigma, Family Justice, Policing, Person Centred Approaches, Education, Class and Social Mobility, Caring responsibilities, Rural and Hidden Poverty. Subsequent discussion and questions focused on agreeing key issues, the timescale, funding, the impact of Covid-19, communication, the diverse range of participants involved and issues faced within communities, working people, unemployed families, asylum seekers and refugees.

3. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 3.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, 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.
- 3.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 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'.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 An IIA screening has been undertaken (Appendix A) with the outcome that a full IAA is required as this report is for information only. Specific projects will be subject to their own IAA process in due course.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications.

Background papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A - IIA screening form