



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Monday, 26 October 2020 at 3.30 pm

Present: M Sherwood (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C R Doyle
K M Roberts

Councillor(s)

P K Jones
L V Walton

Councillor(s)

C Richards

Officer(s)

Aled Gruffydd
Amy Hawkins
Allison Lowe
Joanne Portwood
Anthony Richards

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

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): D Phillips
Independent Member(s): Andrew Davies

4 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

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

5 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee held on 28 September 2020 and 1 October 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record.

6 Terms of Reference. (For Information)

The Terms of Reference for the 5 Policy Development Committees was provided for information.

Resolved that the Terms of Reference be noted.

7 Co-option of Andrew Davies.

The Chair reminded the Committee that Andrew Davies had been co-opted to the Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee during 2019-2020 and had made an invaluable contribution.

Resolved that Andrew Davies be co-opted to the Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee for the Municipal Year 2020-2021.

8 Dates and Times of Future Meetings. (Discussion)

The Chair stated that usually the Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee meet at 3.30 on the last Monday of the month. She proposed that the Committee look to re-organise those meetings that fall within the school holidays.

In addition, she felt that Working Group meetings would be required on a monthly basis in addition to the formal Committee meetings in order to consider "Draft" reports and to ensure that the work during the year be completed on time. Several options were discussed and it was felt that Working Group meetings should take place immediately following the formal Policy Development Committee. Members requested that if the Working Group was not required, that they be advised accordingly.

Resolved that:

- 1) Democratic Services re-schedule any meetings that fall within school holiday periods;
- 2) Working Groups take place on a monthly basis immediately following the formal Policy Development Committee.

9 Presentation - Policies Under Development Update.

Jo Portwood, Policy & Strategy Officer provided an update via a presentation on the policies under development. These topics had been considered by the Poverty Reduction Policy Development Committee during 2019-2020:

- **Promoting Affordable Credit Policy**

The Policy aims to end the targeting of high cost credit, prevent high cost borrowing and promote access to more equitable and affordable credit. She stated that it has been signed off by the Cabinet Member in advance of consultation with the Corporate Management Team. It was hoped that it would then be presented to Cabinet in January 2021.

The Committee expressed their disappointment that this Policy had not been implemented prior to the Christmas period, a time when families were most at need and might be considering some form of credit. They discussed various ways of promoting affordable credit and savings options to help people maximise income and entitlements such as advertising on staff pay slips, staff Intranet and Chief Executives Blog. Externally it could be promoted via the Council website, Council

Tax letters and the various social media platforms. It was noted that the Welsh Government Tenancy Saver Loan Scheme would also be available until 31 March 2021 to private rented sector tenants in rent arrears and those who might struggle to pay future months' rent as a result of coronavirus.

- **Corporate Debt Policy**

The Policy aims to make it easy to pay bills, encourage early contact, offer help when needed, avoid further action and ensure fair and consistent practice to collecting debt. The Revenue & Benefits Manager had developed a draft Policy and a shorter policy statement had also been drafted. Further development was required by a working group.

The Chair and Councillors Ryland Doyle, Christine Richards and Lesley Walton would meet to consider the outstanding issues prior to a full Working Group discussion on this Policy.

- **Green Fairness Policy**

The Policy aims to improve green fairness by increasing opportunities for people to benefit from contact with nature and reduce health inequalities. A draft policy has been developed by a working group and others partners and there was a link with the Public Services Board Working with Nature working group. A final draft would be reviewed before recommendations to Cabinet Member(s).

There had been a query how the outcomes would be measured and who would be responsible for them. The Chair stated that this would need to be considered and built into the action planning stage.

Resolved that the update be noted.

10 Swansea Food Poverty Network.

Anthony Richards, Poverty and Prevention Strategy Development Manager provided a "for information" report which outlined the establishment of a Swansea Food Poverty Network.

He provided the background as to why the Network had been required, the process undertaken and information on the responses received from the members of the Network to the following 2 questions:

- 1) How the Swansea Food Poverty Network could support their work;
- 2) How the Swansea Food Poverty Network could benefit the City of Swansea.

The first meeting of the network took place remotely on 6 October 2020 and a set of priorities and actions had been identified which were outlined in the report.

The Network would meet on a monthly basis and be co-ordinated and facilitated by the Tackling Poverty Service.

The Chair thanked the Poverty and Prevention Strategy Development Manager for the update. She would circulate the report to the Local Area Co-Ordinator to consider any additional organisations / individuals to the Facebook group who could support the Network. She would also ask the Cabinet Member to ask all Councillors for similar information.

Resolved that the update be noted.

11 **Work Plan Discussion 2020-2021.**

The Chair outlined the proposed topics for the Committee to consider during the 2020-2021 Municipal Year. Detailed discussions regarding the Work Plan followed and included:

- Poverty proofing emerging policies / programmes

Currently undertaken via Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's) in Swansea. The Committee could familiarise itself with the Council's socio-economic duty as part of the Equalities Act which had not yet been enacted via a presentation from relevant officers.
- Public Transport (Access to affordable transport/Community Transport Schemes)

Receive information from officers about the limitations with the current offer / the role of community transport in other countries / community cars (consider Reading's Redibus system & Exeter's Ring & Ride Scheme).
- Community food growing

To include garden sharing by matching those unused large gardens with those with no access for growing. Consider "Room to Grow" scheme. How shared spaces in housing developments including Housing Association spaces could be utilised.
- Credit Unions

Receive updates on action plan, etc. Promotion of credit unions and encourage people to save and manage their money.
- Benefit Uptake

Ensure work to date is completed and investigate why take-up was low. Free School Meals was discussed and an additional session on welfare rights was also required.

In addition, the Interim Head of Adult Services highlighted work linked to the recovery plan in respect of unexpected / sudden poverty. She asked if the Committee would link this in with the agreed work plan.

Resolved that

- 1) The above items form the Work Plan for 2020-2021;
- 2) A Working Group on Corporate Debt be arranged as soon as possible;
- 3) Further Working Group meetings also be timetabled.

The meeting ended at 5.11 pm

Chair