

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Poverty Working Group (Task and Finish)

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Shah,

Officer Contact: Various

Report Author: Lori Hughes, Constitutional Services Officer
Ext. 4716

16th June 2020

Reason for Decision

The Overview and Scrutiny Board members are requested to help to update the Council's Poverty Strategy.

Executive Summary

The aim of the Poverty Working Group is to help to update the Council's Poverty Strategy which has been in place since 2010. The Board is requested to take into account four main points as detailed in the report.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Board assist in the update of the Strategy.

Poverty Working Group

The aim of the group to look at helping to update the Council's Poverty Strategy (from 2010), taking into account the four main points that are suggested by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the UK Poverty report 2019/20, information from the Local Government Association (LGA), what the Council itself is doing and how the Council can work with partners in the clusters. The report is attached at Appendix 1.

Members of the group will include one or two Council members per cluster.

A. Joseph Rowntree Foundation

1. We need as many people as possible to be in good jobs.
2. We need to improve earnings for low income working families, helping people in the lowest paid jobs or working part time. In work poverty must be seen as a critical issue for our economy.
3. We need to strengthen the benefits system so it provides the anchor that people need in tough times. We also need to offer a better service for people using it, and to shift public thinking so that a poverty fighting social security system is seen as an essential public service.
4. We need to increase the amount of low cost housing available to families on low incomes and increase support for people with high housing costs. We also need to address the sense of insecurity felt by many people living in the private rented sector.

B. LGA Response to the JRF Report

Responding to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Report on poverty across the UK, which reveals that it has risen among children and pensioners over the last five years Cllr Richard Watts, Chairman of the Local Government Association's Resources Board, said:

"Today's report shows that in order to tackle poverty and promote social mobility, policies cutting across a wide range of areas – such as education, employment support, welfare, health and affordable housing – need to be considered together.

Councils understand the challenges and opportunities of their communities best and want every resident to have a good quality of life and to be able to improve their circumstances regardless of their background or where they live. With the right funding and flexibilities, councils can better support low-income and disadvantaged households, lift thousands out of poverty and help the Government realise its commitment to level up communities across the country.

This includes the ability for councils to resume their historic role as major builders of affordable homes and handing control of national employment schemes to local areas who can target skills, careers advice and employment support more effectively to help people get on in life and progress their careers."

Also look at '100 more innovations of Labour in Power' LGA.

C. What happens in the Local Authority

The group could also look at how each department of the Council can improve how they deal with people going through poverty, i.e.:

- a. Education – effect of poverty on results and children’s education experience;
- b. Finance - council tax payments, pupil premium;
- c. Environment – cost of moving rubbish;
- d. Lifelong Learning – courses;
- e. Housing – homelessness, cost of furnishing a house
- f. Leisure
- g. Get Oldham Working
- h. Warm Homes

D. What is available in our clusters via our partners and voluntary groups?

To do this, the group could take information from local groups, who are already working in different areas, like the foodbank, Real Change activity, Action Together and others.

Appendix 1: Joseph Rowntree Poverty Report and Talking about Poverty Toolkit