

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 7
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Report of the Tackling Poverty Task and Finish Group

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TACKLING POVERTY IN PETERBOROUGH

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the redrafted ‘Peterborough Child and Family Poverty Strategy’ and progress made towards tackling poverty in Peterborough.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to:

- (i) scrutinise the new ‘Peterborough Child and Family Poverty Strategy’, which is a reworked version following scrutiny and debate at committee in 2012
- (ii) scrutinise progress made towards tackling poverty in Peterborough since the report and action plan came to committee in 2012
- (iii) suggest new ideas and initiatives that will actively contribute towards tackling poverty in the future
- (iv) agree that the work to tackle poverty is driven forward through new partnership arrangements set out in section 10 of the Peterborough Child and Family Poverty Strategy
- (v) agree that the work to tackle poverty in Peterborough is scrutinised by this committee overall at least annually, and that the partnerships, rather than lead councillors, drive the work forward between scrutiny meetings
- (vi) agree to include an agenda item at a future scrutiny committee meeting on the work of the Welfare Reform Action Group early in the new municipal year

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1 The ambition of the Sustainable Community Strategy is to deliver a bigger and better Peterborough, taking advantage of the inherent opportunities we have and at the same time tackling the challenges we face in order to deliver a better quality of life for all. Tackling poverty in Peterborough is fundamental to achieving this ambition, and so this report underpins all aspects of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 At its June 2012 meeting, the Scrutiny Committee debated the draft Tackling Poverty report and associated action plan. This draft report was the culmination of work following an inaugural tackling poverty conference in 2011 during which a series of strategic outcomes were identified. These were:
- (i) **Partners using their influence to embed systems and processes within their organisations that can really make a difference** – for example, by ensuring that anybody from any public or voluntary sector organisation that deals with the public understands and can identify indicators to spot those at risk of poverty

- (ii) **Excellence at first point of contact** – for example, by ensuring that somebody who is in poverty can access the right services and support the first time they make contact with an agency
- (iii) **Models of work that identify risk factors, intervene early and enable communities to develop resilience** – for example, by training local groups to be able to support vulnerable households or communities
- (iv) **Improved education and personal development of all children and young people to narrow the gap in achievement between the poorest children and the rest** – for example, by introducing opportunities for NEET young people to engage in vocational learning opportunities
- (v) **Increased financial capability, employability and take-up of benefits amongst families** – for example, by ensuring there is sufficient accredited debt and financial capability advice available to those who need it
- (vi) **Improved mental health within the local population to reduce the gap in health inequalities and promote healthy lifestyles** – for example, by investing in healthy living programmes to mitigate the heightened risk of mental and physical health issues caused by poverty
- (vii) **Creation of inspirational places to live and cohesive communities** – for example, by tackling rogue landlords to ensure that people have somewhere safe, warm and affordable to live

4.2 A project lead for each of the strategic outcomes was identified, and collectively formed the Tackling Poverty Task and Finish group, whose role was to establish more detailed action points and to ensure relevant workstreams were introduced.

4.3 Since the report was presented to the scrutiny committee in 2012, and following feedback during the meeting itself, the overarching strategy document has been redrafted to better reflect the conditions which we are trying to address. The redrafted version has also been written to be more accessible and reader-friendly, and to be more explicit about the scale of the challenges we face and the solutions being driven forward. The new draft 'Peterborough Child and Family Poverty Strategy' is included at **appendix 1**.

4.4 During the redrafting process, the Task and Finish Group has also been meeting regularly, and has overseen the implementation of a series of initial actions and programmes of work. The updated action plan overseen by the Tackling Poverty Task and Finish Group is included at **appendix 2**.

5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 Whilst progress is being made towards tackling poverty in Peterborough, it is clear that there is much more to do. Additionally, the impending changes to welfare benefits are likely to have an impact on many families, with some having to pay Council Tax for the first time from April 2013, and many more facing reductions in their benefits over the coming months.

5.2 Our proposed strategy document has been drafted to reflect the scale of the challenges we face but also to have longevity and currency for the next few years. We are confident that the strategic outcomes identified in section 4.1 above are specific enough to make a real difference but flexible enough to adapt to new conditions and circumstances.

5.3 When the Task and Finish Group was formed, it was important to identify a lead officer for each of the strategic outcomes from either within the council or amongst our partner organisations so that the more detailed workplans could be developed and initial workstreams launched. However, at the same time we have invested significant energy in establishing a range of partnership support structures that share the responsibility for tackling poverty more broadly. This has had two significant effects: (i) to share the burden of activity across more officers and more agencies than the Task and Finish Group alone; and (ii) to embed the tackling poverty strategy and approach within relevant decision making, policy setting and action planning processes.

5.4 Page 25 of the strategy at appendix 1 therefore shows each of the partnership boards or similar that have begun to take responsibility for driving forward the tackling poverty outcomes, firmly embedding them into their processes. In practice, each of the various partnership boards identified will focus their work on supporting the most vulnerable individuals, families and communities including those who are in poverty or are at risk of entering poverty.

5.5 Despite the responsibilities for delivering the strategic outcomes being shared by a number of different partnership boards, it will still be important to maintain a strategic overview of the tackling poverty agenda. Responsibility for this will rest with the Greater Peterborough Partnership through the Single Delivery Plan. The Single Delivery Plan contains those outcomes that the council and its partners have identified as priorities to contribute towards delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy ambitions. The work to tackle poverty underpins the Sustainable Community Strategy priorities and Single Delivery Plan workstreams as illustrated in figure 1 below:

Figure 1

Sustainable Community Strategy Priority	Single Delivery Plan Workstream
Creating Strong and Supportive Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowering people and creating cohesive communities • Reducing crime and tackling anti social behaviour • Enhancing our cultural offer, building on our heritage
Creating the UK's Environment Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering the Environment Capital Action Plan
Creating Opportunities – Tackling Inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving health and well-being • Safeguarding the most vulnerable • Raising educational attainment - Helping children to be their best
Delivering Strong and Sustainable Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating jobs through growth and improved skills • Building homes for a growing population

No single priority or workstream can be effectively delivered or sustainably achieved without addressing the issue of poverty.

5.6 It is further suggested that this committee as a whole scrutinises the approaches being taken to tackle poverty at least annually. Driving the agenda forward through partnership structures set out in 5.5 coupled with the committee overall taking responsibility for scrutinising and challenging progress replaces the need to identify lead councillors for each of the strategic outcomes. In addition, the work of the new Welfare Reform Action Group is far reaching and diverse, and it would be appropriate that this separately brought before the committee as part of its agenda plan early in the new municipal year.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 It is anticipated that the Scrutiny Committee will scrutinise and make recommendations relating to the updates provided in this report in order that delivery potential is maximised for the benefit of our communities. It is further anticipated that the approach we are taking to tackling poverty is scrutinised at least annually as part of the committee's work programme.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 Consultation relating to the development of the Peterborough Child and Family Poverty Strategy has been with the Tackling Poverty Task and Finish Group. This group comprises:

- Adrian Chapman – PCC Neighbourhood Services
- Wendi Ogle-Welbourn – PCC Children’s Services
- Mark Sandhu – PCC/Serco Partnership Customer Services
- Tim Bishop – PCC Adult Social Care
- John Cunningham – Peterborough Council for Voluntary Service
- Claire Rintoul – Peterborough and Fenland MIND
- Belinda Child – PCC Neighbourhood Services (Housing)
- Allison Sunley – PCC Children’s Services

8. NEXT STEPS

8.1 Comments and recommendations made by Scrutiny Committee members will be considered and implemented wherever possible. The draft strategy document will be finalised and taken to the Greater Peterborough Partnership Executive for discussion and approval. It will also be presented to the various partnership structures referred to above to ensure full understanding and compliance.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

9.1 None

10. APPENDICES

10.1 Appendix 1: Peterborough Child and Family Poverty Strategy
Appendix 2: Tackling Poverty Action Plan 2012/13 – Summary of Strategic Outcomes