

Item

ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19



To:

Councillor Anna Smith, Executive Councillor for Communities

Community and Environment Scrutiny Committee [27/06/2018]

Report by:

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Wards affected:

Abbey, Arbury, Castle, Cherry Hinton, Coleridge, East Chesterton, King's Hedges, Market, Newnham, Petersfield, Queen Edith's, Romsey, Trumpington, West Chesterton

Not a Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council produced a revised and updated Anti-Poverty Strategy for the period from April 2017 to March 2020. The Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy aims to: improve the standard of living and daily lives of those residents in Cambridge who are currently experiencing poverty; and to help alleviate issues that can lead households on low incomes to experience financial pressures.
- 1.2 The revised Anti-Poverty Strategy sets out 5 key objectives and 57 associated actions to reduce poverty in Cambridge over the next three years. This report provides an update on progress in delivering key actions identified for 2018/19, with a particular focus on new areas of activity introduced in the strategy.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended to note the progress in delivering actions to reduce poverty in Cambridge during 2018/19

3. Background

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- 3.1 The Council produced a revised and updated Anti-Poverty Strategy for the period from April 2017 to March 2020. The revised strategy was approved by the Executive Councillor for Communities on 10 October 2017. The Council's revised Anti-Poverty Strategy aims to: improve the standard of living and daily lives of those residents in Cambridge who are currently experiencing poverty; and to help alleviate issues that can lead households on low incomes to experience financial pressures.
- 3.2 The revised Anti-Poverty Strategy sets out 5 key objectives for the Council's work to reduce poverty over three years and 57 associated actions. The key objectives are:
1. Helping people on low incomes to maximise their income and minimise their costs
 2. Increasing community pride, raising skills and aspirations, and improving access to higher value employment opportunities for people on low incomes
 3. Improving health outcomes for people on low incomes
 4. Helping people with high housing costs, increasing numbers of affordable homes, and improving the condition of people's homes
 5. Supporting groups of people that are more likely to experience poverty and social isolation, including children and young people, older people, women, people with disabilities, and BAME residents

4. Progress during 2018/19

- 4.1 A summary of key activities delivered during 2018/19 is provided in this report. Full details of progress made during 2018/19 against the 57 actions in the revised Anti-Poverty Strategy are provided in the background paper, which is available on the Council's website via the link in section 7 of this report.

4.2 Objective 1 - Key activities in 2018/19 which helped people on low incomes to maximise their income and minimise their costs included:

- Supporting 8 Cambridge employers to become accredited with the Living Wage Foundation as **Living Wage** employers. This helped to increase the number of accredited employers in the city from 58 in March 2018 to 70 in March 2019.
- Awarding £36.4m in **Housing Benefit** to 6403 households, providing £6.47 million in **Council Tax Support** to 6,252 households, and providing over £264,000 in **Discretionary Housing Payments** to more than 600 financially vulnerable households. The Council continues to support claimants to receive their full benefits entitlement by making claiming a simple process and providing advice from Customer Service Centre staff and benefit experts within the Benefits Team.
- Funding 97 voluntary and community groups through the Council's £900k **Community Grants** programme to deliver 137 services and activities to help reduce social or economic inequality among Cambridge residents with the greatest needs.
- Continuing to provide £285,000 funding to the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) through the Community Grants for **debt advice** for city residents, including free legal, debt and money advice to 22,200 city residents, financial capability support to 620 debt clients, specialist welfare rights casework for 300 cases, and outreach advice services to 350 residents in areas with higher levels of deprivation.
- Continuing to provide a dedicated **Advice Hub** in the Council's Customer Service Centre (CSC). In 2018/19, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) provided advice to 138 residents and helped a further 456 residents with quick enquiries or hands-on support with form-filling. Cambridge Online helped 186 people during 43 digital inclusion sessions at the Hub and the Council's rent advice officer has had approximately 125 meetings with tenants at the Hub since January 2018.
- Funding Cambridge CAB through the Sharing Prosperity Fund to provide a specialist adviser at Cambridge Jobcentre to deliver Personal Budgeting Support for **Universal Credit claimants**, following the full roll-out of Universal Credit in Cambridge in October 2018. The outreach

adviser provided support to 41 new referrals in Quarter 4 of 2018/2019, plus ongoing support to existing claimants.

- Continuing to employ a **Financial Inclusion** Officer through the Sharing Prosperity Fund to assist 350 residents to access financial support, benefits and budgeting and debt advice.
- Continuing to employ a **Fuel and Water Poverty** Officer through the Sharing Prosperity Fund to assist low income residents to reduce their fuel and water costs. A total of 81 home visits were completed through these projects, 228 low income residents were supported to install energy efficiency improvements, and estimated energy bill savings for residents of £52,000 were generated.
- Supporting residents to submit applications for **water debt relief** and working with South Staffordshire Water to give residents receiving Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) access to up to 80% reductions in their water bill, which has led to more than £57,000 savings for the most vulnerable residents.
- Continuing to provide grant funding to voluntary and community organisations to provide **low cost furniture** to 417 low income households.

4.3 Objective 2 - Key activities in 2018/19 to increase community pride, raise skills and aspirations, and improve access to higher value employment opportunities for people on low incomes included:

- Attracting over £57,000 in donations to **Cambridge Street Aid** and making small grants to 88 homeless people to help them engage in training or employment opportunities. The project also recruited 5 champions and 8 volunteers, and has developed a programme of 8 fundraising events, the first of which was held at Strawberry Fair in June 2019.
- Continuing to provide grant funding for a **learning and development service** for homeless people and an **employment worker** based in partner organisations. In total 142 people were supported to gain employment or access training, educational placements or learning and development activities.

- Funding through the Sharing Prosperity Fund to expand the existing **time-credit scheme** to support residents on low incomes in Abbey, Arbury, East Chesterton, Kings Hedges and Trumpington to volunteer and engage in community activities. As part of the scheme, residents earn time-credits for volunteering, which can then be redeemed at hundreds of entertainment and leisure venues, attractions and training courses locally and nationally. In total 25 community groups were provided with support, 214 time credit volunteers were signed up by community groups and 2,757 time credits were earned by volunteers
- Holding a successful **Volunteer for Cambridge Fair** in October 2018 at the Guildhall, which was attended by 81 organisations and 843 people. The event was shortlisted for the Better Society Awards 2019, in the 'Local Authority and Social Enterprise Award' category, alongside events held by major national and international companies and corporations.
- Supporting 13 volunteer **digital champions** through the Sharing Prosperity Fund to deliver a total of 169 digital inclusion sessions in City Council sheltered housing schemes, which were attended by 71 older people.
- Funding Cambridge Online through the Sharing Prosperity Fund to provide 385 drop-in 'Microhub' **digital inclusion sessions** at City Council community centres and other community venues, which were attended by 232 people who benefitted from a total of 1,540 individual learner sessions.
- Working with Raspberry Pi and local community groups to explore opportunities for **Code Clubs**, which will help children and young people from low income families to develop coding skills, and working with community groups to identify existing sessions and events where a digital inclusion element could be offered to residents.
- Engaging 399 children at 4 Cambridge schools and 2 East Cambridgeshire schools to use a prototype of the **Cambridgeshire Culture Card**. The Culture Card will build on the existing Library Card to promote arts and cultural activities to children and young people, and help raise educational attainment. A total of 30 cultural venues and arts organisations offered 375 activities as part of the prototype phase.

- Working with 5 local arts and cultural organisations to provide 41 young people on free school meals with a programme of **arts and cultural workshops** as part of the Activate project. In addition to developing resilience and leadership skills, the programme increased educational attainment for participants and enabled them to work towards nationally accredited Arts Awards.
- Funding Cambridge Junction to deliver the Act Up project, which worked with 19 young people who were having difficulty with education or anti-social behaviour to develop their **theatre and film skills** and create and perform a multi-media piece. The participants in the project worked towards the Bronze-level Arts Award.
- Providing 15 **community days**, including 6 in areas of the city with higher levels of deprivation, to save residents money from disposing of bulky waste and encourage a sense of pride and engagement in neighbourhoods. The bulky waste collected at the community days ranged from 7.14 tonnes collected at Queen Edith's (of which 4.36 tonnes was recycled) to 20.3 tonnes collected at Thorpe Way (of which 6.3 tonnes was recycled).

4.4 Objective 3 - Key activities in 2018/19 which have helped improve health outcomes for people on low incomes included:

- 113,023 entries to Council-owned **sports and swimming facilities** by 7,482 people holding concession memberships for receiving means-tested benefits. The number of entries in 2018/19 was 3.6 times the number of entries in 2017/18 (31,422). This followed a campaign during 2018/19 to increase usage of concession memberships.
- Supporting a **free exercise referral scheme** through the Sharing Prosperity Fund for patients in areas of the city with higher levels of deprivation, which resulted in a total of 142 residents undertaking the 12 week exercise scheme.
- Funding Cambridge Sustainable Food through the Sharing Prosperity Fund to provide 51 **cookery skills sessions** in areas of the city with higher levels of deprivation which were attended by 271 people. One of the groups of residents supported by the project has continued to meet and has run an additional 20 cookery skills sessions independently.

- Funding CAB through the Sharing Prosperity Fund to provide an **outreach advice service** at GP practices and community settings to support residents with mental health problems (such as anxiety or stress) resulting from debt, employment and welfare rights matters. In 2018/19, the adviser supported 396 patients, generated total income gains of more than £590,000 for 89 of these clients, and supported 8 clients with writing off debts worth a total of £103,000.

4.5 Objective 4 - Key activities which have helped people with high housing costs, increased numbers of affordable homes, and improved the condition of people's homes included:

- Starting construction of 132 **new City Council-owned homes** at a number of different sites across the city, including Uphall Road (Romsey), Nuns Way and Wiles Close (Kings Hedges), Anstey Way (Trumpington), and Mill Road (Petersfield).
- Working with developers through the planning process and with Registered Providers to help enable delivery of 127 **affordable homes** on strategic growth sites and other locations across the city.
- Increasing the number of units of **temporary accommodation for homeless people** from 83 in 2016/17 to 93 in 2018/19.
- Supporting 112 **single homeless people** who do not need supported housing to move into private rented accommodation.

4.6 Objective 5 - Key activities which have helped support groups of people that are more likely to experience poverty and social isolation, included:

- Providing 738 universal, open access **play sessions for children** in neighbourhoods across the city, including neighbourhoods with higher levels of deprivation. There were a total of 25,319 child visits to these universal sessions.
- Commissioning a theatre company through the Sharing Prosperity Fund to develop and deliver a play focussing on **financial literacy** issues. 8 performances of 'Money Matters' were delivered in 6 schools, which reached a total of 1,210 students. 'Reality Cheque', a financial literacy board game, has been developed and has been distributed to 16 schools.

- Providing a programme of **free swimming sessions** through the Sharing Prosperity Fund for children at the Kings Hedges and Abbey swimming pools, which attracted more than 2,300 total attendances. Top-up funding was also provided for 6 schools to support swimming by pupils from low income households at Abbey Pool, Kings Hedges Learner Pool and Parkside Pool.
- Working with local churches (including Barnwell Baptist Church, Church of the Good Shepherd, Christ the Redeemer, and St Thomas's) to provide a total of 2,737 **free lunches for families** during the school holidays in city council community centres and local churches.
- Providing over £700,000 through the **Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency** to enable more than 187 older, disabled and low income residents to access support to repair, maintain or adapt their homes.
- Supporting 954 **older people** in 2018/19 in our sheltered housing schemes and supporting a further 294 older people in other tenures through our visiting support service. Some of these older people have been supported to increase their non-housing related incomes by a total of over £127,000 per annum.
- Providing regular **free health sessions**, which were promoted to BAME communities and women on low incomes. 3 monthly sessions were held during 2018/19, with an average of 20 women attending each of the sessions.

6. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

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The Anti-Poverty Strategy primarily seeks to co-ordinate and refocus City Council activity so that it focuses on tackling poverty where possible. Many of the actions in Anti-Poverty Strategy are delivered by the Council's mainstream services and funded through mainstream service budgets.

However, some additional one-off, fixed term initiatives which contribute to the objectives of the Anti-Poverty Strategy have been supported. A total of £1,634,000 has been allocated to 29 projects through the SPF from 2014/15

to 2019/20. A number of these projects are highlighted in section 4 of this report.

New bids for 5 anti-poverty projects with a total value of £129,700 in 2019/20 were approved at Council on 19 February 2019 as part of the General Fund Budget Setting report. Bids for 8 new 'reducing poverty' projects with a total value of £99,000 were approved for funding from the Council's Community Grants in 2019/20 at Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee on 17 January 2019.

(b) Staffing Implications

Much of the work to deliver the Anti-Poverty Strategy is being achieved within existing staff resources. However, some of the initiatives being taken forward (e.g. Living Wage promotion, financial inclusion activity and fuel and water poverty activity) have involved the recruitment of a limited number of additional staff, usually on fixed-term contracts.

(c) Equality and Poverty Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was carried out for the revised Anti-Poverty Strategy prior to it being approved in October 2017. A revised EqIA was produced following comments from the Equalities Panel in November 2017. This revised EqIA is published for information on the Council's website here: <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/equality-impact-assessments>

(d) Environmental Implications

Some of the activities being delivered as part of the Anti-Poverty Strategy have a medium positive environmental impact. For example:

- Work to promote take-up of water meters and water efficiency measures to residents in areas of the city with higher levels of deprivation will reduce water consumption and associated carbon emissions.
- The additional promotion of energy efficiency measures to residents in areas of the City with higher levels of deprivation will reduce energy consumption and associated carbon emissions.

(e) Procurement Implications

The Council has achieved accreditation from the Living Wage Foundation as a Living Wage Employer. As part of this, the City Council has adopted a Living Wage policy in respect of contractors. This policy requires contractors to pay the Living Wage to Qualifying Staff unless it would be unlawful or inappropriate to do so. Officers are monitoring the Council's compliance with this policy on an ongoing basis.

(f) Community Safety Implications

There are no community safety implications associated with the updates provided in this report.

6. Consultation and communication considerations

This revised strategy was informed by consultation, including:

- Consultation with academics, statutory partners and voluntary and community groups through a half-day Anti-Poverty Summit, which was held on 30 June 2017 and was attended by more than 50 delegates.
- Consultation with City Council managers, including through a workshop held in November 2016 and subsequent meetings of the Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy Project Board in March and June 2017.
- Consultation with City Council frontline staff with experience of working with low income residents through workshops held on in August 2017.

7. Background papers

Full details of progress made during 2018/19 against the 57 actions in the Anti-Poverty Strategy is provided in Annual report available on the Council's website: <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/anti-poverty-strategy>

8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact David Kidston, Strategy and Partnerships Manager, tel: 01223 - 457043, email: david.kidston@cambridge.gov.uk.