

Item

ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY 2020/21-2020/23

To:

Councillor Anna Smith, Executive Councillor for Communities
Environment & Community Scrutiny Committee 03/07/20

Report by:

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Wards affected:

All

Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council has produced two previous Anti-Poverty Strategies covering the periods from 2014-2017 and 2017-2020. This report provides an update on delivery of key actions included in the 2017-2020 Strategy.
- 1.2 The report also presents a revised Anti-Poverty Strategy for the 2020-2023 period for approval. This strategy reflects an evolution of the Council's approach, based on the learning gained from implementing the previous strategies and updated evidence on the nature of poverty in Cambridge. The revised strategy sets out 5 revised objectives and a range of activities that will help deliver them.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- Approve the revised Anti-Poverty Strategy for 2020-2023 and the accompanying action plan

3. Background

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- 3.1 The Council has previously produced two Anti-Poverty Strategies for the periods from April 2014 to March 2017 and April 2017 to March 2020. Both strategies aimed 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 second Anti-Poverty Strategy set 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. Anti-Poverty Strategy actions delivered during 2017-2020

4.1 Many of the actions in the first two Anti-Poverty Strategies have been delivered by the Council's mainstream services. Since 2014, the Council has also provided over £1.86 million funding for more than 30 additional projects to address poverty, which have collectively supported a significant number of those in greatest need in the city.

4.2 A summary of key activities delivered as part of the second strategy from 2017/18 to 2019/20 is provided in this section of the report.

4.3 Objective 1 - Key activities which helped people on low incomes to maximise their income and minimise their costs included:

- Running a campaign to encourage local employers to pay their staff the **Real Living Wage**. The number of Cambridge employers accredited with the Living Wage Foundation increased from 16 in 2014 to 74 in March 2020. The Council provided direct support to 40 of these employers.
- Supporting benefits claimants to receive their full benefits entitlement. In 2019/20, the Council awarded £31.8m in **Housing Benefit** to 5,388 households, provided £6.6 million in **Council Tax Support** to 6,349 households, and provided over £234,000 in **Discretionary Housing Payments** to more than 500 financially vulnerable households.
- Funding voluntary and community groups to provide a range of activities to help reduce social or economic inequality. In 2019-20, the Council provided a total of £1,000,000 through its **Community Grants** to over 100 groups to deliver over 150 activities.
- Funding Citizen's Advice annually as part of the Community Grants to provide **debt advice** services. In 2019/20, the Council provided £278,450 funding to Citizen's Advice to provide free legal, debt and money advice to 17,575 people, financial capability support to 900 people, outreach advice to 600 people, and specialist welfare rights casework to 400 people.
- Providing a dedicated **Advice Hub** in the Council's Customer Service Centre (CSC), where residents can access debt, financial and rent

advice and help to access the internet from Citizens Advice, Cambridge Online and Council officers.

- Funding Citizen's Advice from October 2018 onwards to provide a specialist adviser at Cambridge Jobcentre to deliver **Personal Budgeting Support** for Universal Credit claimants. The average take-up rate by clients of referrals from Job Centre Advisors to the specialist Citizen's Advice adviser in 2019/20 was 70%.
- Employing a **Financial Inclusion Officer** to support Council tenants and other low income residents in financial crisis to access financial support, benefits and budgeting and debt advice. From 2017/18 to 2019/20 the officer supported 568 residents in crisis.
- Employing a **Fuel and Water Poverty Officer** to assist low income residents to reduce their fuel and water costs. From 2017/18 to 2019/20, a total of 618 low income residents were supported to install energy or water saving measures in their homes.

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

- 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.
- Engaging 743 pupils, parents and siblings at 4 Cambridge schools and 2 East Cambridgeshire schools to use a prototype of the Cambridgeshire **Culture Card** digital infrastructure and repurposed library card. The Culture Card will build on the existing Library Card to promote arts and cultural activities to children and young people, with a

specific focus on those from low income backgrounds, and help raise educational attainment and skills.

- Working with North Cambridge Community Partnership and Raspberry Pi to set up a **Code Club** in Kings Hedges. In 2019/20, 25 children and young people from low income families have regularly attended sessions and developed coding skills. NCCP are aiming to establish a second club and a further club is currently being developed with local partners in Abbey ward.
- Supporting 13 volunteer **digital champions** to deliver a total of 446 digital inclusion sessions from 2017/18 to 2019/20 in City Council for older people in sheltered housing schemes.
- Funding Cambridge Online through the Sharing Prosperity Fund to provide 1,230 drop-in 'Microhub' **digital inclusion sessions** from 2017/18 to 2019/20 at City Council community centres and other community venues, which were attended by a total of 727 people.
- Funding Tempo 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. From 2017/18 to 2019/20, a total 23 community groups were provided with support, 265 time credit volunteers were signed up by community groups and 5,745 time credits were earned by volunteers.
- Holding successful **Volunteer for Cambridge Fairs** in October 2018 and October 2019 at the Guildhall, each of which were attended by more than 80 voluntary and community organisations and more than 800 people each year.
- Providing 6 **community days** each year 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.

4.5 Objective 3 - Key activities which have helped improve health outcomes for people on low incomes included:

- 205,028 total entries to Council-owned **sports and swimming facilities** from April 2017 to December 2019 by 7,482 people holding concession memberships for receiving means-tested benefits.
- Providing other **concessionary offers** at Council-owned swimming pools. From April to December 2019 there were 1,711 swims by junior card holders took at free sessions between 4pm-6pm on weekdays. There were a further 4,088 swims at the discounted £1 entry sessions from April-December 2019.
- Supporting a **free exercise referral scheme** for patients in areas of the city with higher levels of deprivation. From 2017/18 to 2019/20, a total of 663 residents were referred from 10 GP practices and completed 12-week exercise programmes at local gyms and sports centres.
- Funding Cambridge Sustainable Food to provide a total of 102 **cooking skills sessions** from 2017/18 to 2019/20 in areas of the city with higher levels of deprivation. The sessions were attended by a total of 520 people.
- Funding CAB 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. From April 2017 to September 2019 the adviser supported a total of 979 clients, and generated £1,617,000 in financial gain for them (including additional income and debt write-offs).

4.6 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:

- Building 189 **new Council homes** from 2017/18 to 2019/20. A further 507 **new affordable homes** were completed in Cambridge from 2017/18 to 2019/20 by developers and housing associations.
- Providing support through the **Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency** to enable older, disabled and low income residents across all tenures to access support to repair, maintain or adapt their homes. The time taken to complete Disabled Facilities Grant adaptations has reduced by half from 2017/18 to 2019/20.

- Supporting 220 **single homeless people** who do not need supported housing to move into private rented accommodation from 2017/18 to 2018/19.
- Attracting over £100,000 in donations to **Cambridge Street Aid** and making small grants to 175 homeless people to help them engage in training or employment opportunities.

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

- Providing 2,251 universal, open access **play sessions for children** in neighbourhoods across the city, including low income neighbourhoods, from April 2017 to December 2019. There were a total of 76,694 child visits to these universal sessions.
- Commissioning a theatre company to develop and deliver a play focussing on **financial literacy** issues. In 2017/18 and 2018/19 a total of 21 performances of 'Money Matters' were delivered in schools, which reached a total of 2,960 students. 'Reality Cheque', a financial literacy board game was developed and distributed to 16 schools.
- Providing a programme of **free swimming sessions** for low income families with young children at the Kings Hedges and Abbey swimming pools, which had 8,200 attendances from 2017/18-2019/20.
- **Top-up swimming teachers** were also provided for 6 Primary schools within the City to support school swimming lessons to pupils from low income households at Abbey Pool, Kings Hedges Learner Pool and Parkside Pool.
- Working with local churches and community organisations to provide a total of 9,500 **free lunches for families** during the school holidays from 2017/18 to 2019/20. Lunches were served in a variety of venues including city council community centres and local churches.
- Providing 2,814 **older people with support** from 2017/18 to 2019/20, in our sheltered housing schemes, through our visiting support service, or with a community alarm.
- Providing 30 **free health sessions** per year for women, including BAME women, with an average of 20 women attending each session

5. Revised Anti-Poverty Strategy for 2020-2023

- 5.1 A revised Anti-Poverty Strategy has been produced for April 2020 - March 2023, which is presented for approval at Appendix B. A summary of the strategy is provided at Appendix A.
- 5.2 The revised strategy sets out an evolution of the Council's broad strategic approach to tackling poverty. This takes account of changes in the national and local context over the past 6 years and reflects learning from implementing the previous two strategies. The revised strategy sets out three underpinning themes for the Council's future approach:
1. Combining our ongoing efforts to address the effects of poverty, with a further focus on preventative work (often in partnership with other organisations) to address some of the root causes of poverty.
 2. Balancing direct Council service delivery, with partnership-working and influencing and lobbying activity where this will have greater impact
 3. Building the capacity and resilience of residents and communities and facilitating community action
- 5.3 The three themes set out above are woven through the five revised strategic objectives for the Anti-Poverty Strategy, which are:
- 1 Helping people on low incomes to maximise their income and minimise their costs
 - 2 Strengthening families and communities, including supporting groups of people that are more likely to experience poverty
 - 3 Promoting an inclusive economy, by raising skills and improving access to a range of employment opportunities for people on low incomes
 - 4 Addressing the high cost of housing, improve housing conditions, and reduce homelessness
 - 5 Improving health outcomes for people on low incomes
- 5.4 The evidence and rationale for each objective are set out in detail in the

strategy. The Action Plan at Appendix C sets out the key activities that the Council currently plans to undertake to help achieve each of the objectives.

- 5.5 The action plan is intended to be a 'living document' that will be regularly reviewed and updated. It is anticipated that new activities may be identified over the course of the next three years to respond to emerging issues relating to poverty in the city. For example, the Council has taken a range of action in partnership with local partners and communities to address the short-term impact of Covid-19, but the long-term economic impacts of the pandemic on individuals, families and communities in Cambridge are likely to become clearer over time and new anti-poverty actions may be identified in due course.

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. The actions in Anti-Poverty Strategy will be delivered by:

- the Council's mainstream services, either directly or in partnership with other organisations. This activity will be funded through mainstream service budgets.
- providing funding grant funding through the Council's Community Grants and Homelessness Prevention Grants to support activity by voluntary and community organisations

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 second

Anti-Poverty Strategy prior to it being approved in October 2017. An updated and revised EqIA has been produced and 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 and other Council strategies will have a medium positive environmental impact. For example work to improve the energy efficiency of existing Council homes, build new Council homes to high sustainability standards, and enforcement action against private landlords whose properties do not meet nationally-set Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES).

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.

7. Consultation and communication considerations

- 7.1 The Council's first two Anti-Poverty Strategies were informed by available data and evidence and extensive consultation with partner organisations, stakeholders and local residents. In developing this revised strategy, we have built on this evidence base using updated data and further consultation with residents, stakeholders and Council staff. This has included:

- Engagement with residents at a range of community groups in Abbey, Arbury, Kings Hedges, and Trumpington (facilitated by Abbey People, North Cambridge Community Partnership, Hands on the Circle, and the City Council’s community development team).
- Workshops with Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum staff who support BAME people on low incomes.
- A stakeholder workshop attended by representatives from 18 public, private and voluntary sector organisations that support people in poverty.
- Meetings with key partner organisations (including Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Constabulary, JobCentre Plus and Healthwatch)
- Presentations to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Financial Capability Forum and Cambridge Commons.
- Two workshops for City Council frontline staff who support residents in poverty and engagement with management teams in key Council services (Community Services, Environmental Services, Housing Services, Planning, Repairs and Maintenance, and Revenues and Benefits)

8. Background papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

9. Appendices

Appendix A – Anti-Poverty Strategy Summary document

Appendix B – Anti-Poverty Strategy 2020-2023

Appendix C – Anti-Poverty Strategy Action plan 2020-2023

10. 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