

# **WIRRAL COUNCIL**

## **CABINET**

**14<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2011**

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE DESIGNATE</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>CLLR SHEILA CLARKE</b>
<b>KEY DECISION:</b>	<b>NO</b>

### **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The local authority has a statutory duty to develop a Wirral Child Poverty Strategy as set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010. Following the general election, the national coalition government expressed its commitment to maintaining the goal of ending child poverty in the UK by 2020 and a national strategy has now been launched further to the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances led by Frank Field MP.
- 1.2 This report sets out the approach that the Council has put in place to develop a Wirral Child Poverty Strategy and action plan in partnership with local organisations and agencies, including the voluntary, community and faith sector. This approach will deliver the £10,000 policy option agreed by Cabinet and Council in February 2010 to invest in targeted engagement with Wirral organisations and local communities to develop an action plan for Wirral with the aim of lifting children and families out of poverty.
- 1.3 The Council has already taken action to develop and publish information which sets out the characteristics and needs of our local population in line with the statutory duty to develop a needs assessment set out in the Child Poverty Act. This evidence will underpin the development of the strategy and action plan and help us to understand where and how we need to focus activities in partnership with others to tackle the often complex problems faced by children and families.
- 1.4 The approach that the Council has put in place includes the establishment of a local advisory group, the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group. This group will act as a focal point for engagement with stakeholders across the borough and make recommendations to the Council its partners about a local Child Poverty Strategy and action plan. This strategy will inform the future priorities of the Council and its partners in respect of delivering services

and commissioning activity from others, including from the voluntary, community and faith sector.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet notes the approach set out in this report to develop a strategy and action plan and agrees to receive recommendations in due course from the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group.

## **3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The local authority has a statutory duty to develop a local strategy to tackle child poverty in line with the Child Poverty Act 2010. This report sets out the approach that has been put in place to deliver the statutory duty and requests Cabinet to agree that it will receive the resulting recommendations.

## **4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 The Child Poverty Bill 2010 received Royal Assent and became an Act of Parliament prior to the General Election. The Act established national targets for the reduction of child poverty and placed duties on local authorities and other local delivery partners to work together to tackle child poverty.
- 4.2 Following the general election, the coalition government set out its commitment to maintain the goal of ending child poverty in the UK by 2020 and emphasised the importance of action at national and local levels. The coalition government also indicated that it would issue no statutory guidance relating the production of local needs assessments and strategies.
- 4.3 Frank Field MP was asked by the coalition government to lead a National Review of Poverty and Life Chances to study the extent of poverty in the UK and making recommendations to help less affluent families. The report of this review was published in December 2010, followed by a national consultation exercise. A national strategy has now been launched: 'A New Approach to Child Poverty: Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families' Lives'. The national strategy has also been informed by an independent review of early intervention undertaken by Graham Allen MP. A national Strategy for Social Mobility was launched simultaneously.
- 4.4 Frank Field MP is also acting as Chair of the Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission. Wirral has a number of representatives on the Commission, including the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning and from the local voluntary, community and faith sector. The Commission is overseeing the development of a sub-regional strategy and action plan, which will be also linked as appropriate to activity at the local level.
- 4.5 Wirral has worked closely with Liverpool City Region colleagues to develop a common approach to developing an evidence base which sets out the characteristics and needs of our local population in relation to child and family poverty. A summary of this evidence has now been published alongside a full

City Region needs assessment. This evidence will underpin the development of Wirral's strategy and action plan and help us to understand where and how we need to focus activities in partnership with others.

- 4.6 It is evident that there are many examples of good practice in Wirral and significant strengths in the public and voluntary, community and faith sectors with which to underpin a more co-ordinated approach. In a time when it has never been more critical to harness and build on such strengths, it is clear that Wirral's approach should engage as wide a range of stakeholders as possible to capture local knowledge about what works and potential innovation across organisations and sectors both borough wide and in local neighbourhoods.
- 4.7 To develop a local Child Poverty Strategy and action plan, Wirral has therefore put in place the following approach:
  - 4.7.1 An independent advisory forum, the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group, has been initiated by the Council to progress our local approach. The Terms of Reference for the group are to consider the local evidence and potential options for Wirral's local child poverty strategy and to make recommendations to the Council and its partners about Wirral's strategy and action plan, including options for governance and delivery.
  - 4.7.2 The group has representation from all political groups, including the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning. It includes Wirral members of the LCR Commission to ensure continued links to sub-regional activity. It has representation from the voluntary, community and faith sector and those that use services as well as partners including Job Centre Plus and Wirral Metropolitan College. It is chaired by a representative from the voluntary, community and faith sector.
  - 4.7.3 The considerations of the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group will inform a broader programme of consultation and engagement, as referenced in section 7 of this report. This programme will include engagement with local partners via Wirral's Local Strategic Partnership arrangements and a consultation event in June, which will bring together front line service providers with a range of stakeholders and the voluntary, community and faith sector to discuss emerging proposals. The programme will also include targeted engagement with local communities, families and children, and an online questionnaire, linked where appropriate to other consultation activities to avoid duplication.
  - 4.7.4 Following consideration of the outcomes of the consultation and engagement programme, the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group will make recommendations to the Council (as the statutory lead for child poverty) and partners by Autumn 2011.
- 4.8 All papers relating to the meetings and discussions of the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group, including Terms of Reference and membership, will be published on the Council's website, alongside background information.

## **5.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 5.1 Project and risk planning is in place in relation to the approach set out in this report and will be regularly reviewed to ensure that key risks are addressed through mitigating action.

## **6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 6.1 Not applicable

## **7.0 CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 The approach set out in this report has been developed to initiate the widest possible consultation and engagement with local partners and communities. Activities will include a consultation event for partners and front line service providers and a targeted programme of engagement with local communities. These activities will build on the initial findings of the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Group to develop recommendations for a local strategy and action plan.

## **8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

- 8.1 The role of the voluntary, community and faith sector in tackling the complex problems faced by children and families living in poverty and in identifying those at risk is recognised through appropriate representation on the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group. In addition, the group is being chaired by a representative from the voluntary, community and faith sector.
- 8.2 It is anticipated that the outcomes of the work will include recommendations relating to the role of the voluntary, community and faith sector in tackling child and family poverty in Wirral. The sector will be a key partner in Wirral's strategy and action plan.

## **9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

- 9.1 The activities described in this report are being progressed using existing staff resources from a number of departments. Resource implications of Wirral's Child Poverty Strategy and action plan will be considered as appropriate by the Council and partners. The Cabinet and Council budget resolution earlier in 2011 identified a policy option of £10,000 to support targeted engagement with Wirral organisations and local communities in respect of developing a strategy.

## **10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The local authority has statutory duties in relation to the Child Poverty Act 2010, which will be progressed through the delivery of the activities set out in this report.

## **11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The Child Poverty Strategy will have a clear focus on supporting those who are disadvantaged, including the delivery of specific services and through

ensuring that all of Wirral's diverse communities are equally able to access services. The strategy and action plan will have an equalities assessment informed by the consultation programme referred to in this report. The consultation will include targeted actions to engage minority communities and target groups.

## **12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 This report has no specific carbon reduction implications.

## **13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 This report has no specific planning and community safety implications.

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## **APPENDICES**

None

## **REFERENCE MATERIAL**

'A New Approach to Child Poverty: Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families' Lives; Government's Child Poverty Strategy (Department of Work and Pensions and Department of Education, April 2011)

'Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers: A Strategy for Social Mobility (ODPM, April 2011)

'The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults'; the report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances (Frank Field MP, December 2010)

'Early intervention: the next steps'; an independent report to HM Government (Graham Allen MP, 2011)

<http://www.liverpoolcitystrategyces.org.uk/> for information about City Region child poverty needs assessment, including Wirral summary

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>No previous reports</b>	