

WIRRAL COUNCIL

ECONOMY & REGENERATION SCRUTINY MEETING

7TH NOVEMBER 2011

SUBJECT:	CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN – PROGRESS REPORT
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	CLLR ANN MCLACHLAN
KEY DECISION:	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The local authority has a statutory duty to work with partners to develop a Wirral Child Poverty Strategy as set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010.
- 1.2 This report sets out the work that has been undertaken to date, in accordance with the report to Cabinet on the 14th April 2011, 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 includes the contribution of the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group, which was established to make recommendations to the Council and its partners about a local Child Poverty Strategy and action plan.
- 1.3 The report further provides a progress report on the £10,000 policy option agreed by Cabinet and Council in February 2010 to invest in targeted engagement with Wirral organisations and local communities and sets out the proposed next steps in relation to the further development of the action plan.
- 1.4 The report also sets out the links between Wirral's local approach and the development of a strategy for the Liverpool City Region, which has been shaped by the City Region Commission on Poverty and Life Chances, chaired by Frank Field MP.
- 1.5 At its meeting of the 13th October 2011, Cabinet:
 - Noted the progress that has been made to date in relation to the development of a child and family poverty strategy for Wirral, including the excellent contribution of the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group, and approves the draft strategy and initial action plan at **Appendix 1**;

- Authorised the Chief Executive to undertake further consultation on the draft strategy and prepare a final version for approval and adoption by the Council and partners;
- Authorises the Chief Executive (and any other officer nominated by him) to undertake any other steps and action incidental and conducive to finalising the strategy and progressing the action plan, including working with relevant partners and stakeholders as considered necessary and appropriate;
- Agreed that the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group should continue to meet to oversee the further development of the strategy.

1.6 Cabinet further resolved to make tackling child poverty a key priority for 2012/13 and to make sure that all Council strategies and plans are properly amended to include this as a major priority for the Council, with subsequent referral to Council as appropriate.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that:

- Economy & Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the progress made to date and make comments on the draft child poverty strategy as appropriate, with particular reference to the remit of the Committee;
- Identify any additional activities that the Committee would wish to be included in the child poverty action plan;
- Request regular updates on progress on the implementation of the recommendations as agreed by Cabinet on the 13th October 2011.

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 At its meeting of 17th October 2011, Council requested that regular updates on progress in implementing the recommendations in the report to Cabinet are provided to the Children & Young People and Economy & Regeneration Scrutiny Committees.

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 The Rt Hon 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 strategy 'A New Approach to Child Poverty: Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families' Lives'. The national policy context is set out in more detail in **Appendix 1** to this report.

- 4.3 The Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances Commission, which has also been led by the Rt Hon Frank Field MP, has overseen the development of a City Region strategy and action plan. This is being considered through City Region governance arrangements during October.
- 4.4 As set out in the Cabinet report of the 14th April 2011, it was evident at the outset of developing a Wirral response to the Child Poverty Act that this should recognise the expertise and experience across the public and voluntary, community and faith sectors in the borough and harness this within the context of current financial challenges. In light of this, the local authority established a local advisory group to review the evidence and make recommendations to the Council and its partners about local action to tackle child poverty. Representation on this group (the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group) is drawn from the voluntary, community and faith, housing, health, and education, employment and skills sectors. It is chaired by a representative from the voluntary, community and faith sector. It has Elected Member representatives from all parties. The current membership of the Working Group is detailed in **Appendix 2** to this report.
- 4.5 The discussions of the Working Group have informed the development of the draft 'Roots and Wings' strategy which is set out at **Appendix 1**. Central to these discussions have been the need for all partners to work with each other to add value to existing provision and the need to utilise the positive assets of local communities in raising the aspirations of children and families. This is reflected in the 'Roots and Wings' title which places a positive focus on aspiration and achievement.
- 4.6 The Working Group took a lead role in developing a consultation event for local stakeholders, which took place in June 2011 at the Floral Pavilion and was aimed at gathering knowledge and ideas. This event was attended by approximately 100 providers and practitioners from a range of organisations working with children and families in Wirral.
- 4.7 The outcomes of the consultation event described in 4.6 have informed the initial action plan (included in **Appendix 1**) alongside the draft strategy. It is proposed that further work is undertaken to develop this action plan as outlined in paragraphs 4.8 and 4.9 below and that a more detailed action plan, including resource implications, is presented to a future meeting of Cabinet alongside a final draft of the strategy. This report will also include:
- Proposed performance management and governance arrangements for delivering the strategy and action plan, Proposed performance management and governance arrangements for delivering the strategy and action plan, setting out clearly accountability for the action plan and how it will be delivered and monitored through local partnerships;
 - Details about how the delivery of the strategy and action plan will link to other strategies and plans including the Council's Corporate Plan, the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Children and Young People's Plan and local Neighbourhood Plans;

- An Equality Impact Assessment.

4.8 It is therefore proposed that the draft strategy and initial action plan (at **Appendix 1**) provides a framework for further discussions with partners through a series of dedicated planning meetings which will be scheduled during November. It is also intended that further engagement with partners on the strategy and action plan is undertaken through key partnership forums including the Local Strategic Partnership's Executive Board and Children's Trust Board. An element of this work, as highlighted in the initial action plan, will be to ensure that Wirral is responding appropriately to the priorities identified in the Liverpool City Region strategy; it is proposed that City Region colleagues are invited to planning meetings as appropriate in order to facilitate this.

4.9 The final action plan will also be informed by the following activities:

- The Council's budget for 2011-12 includes £10,000 to support targeted engagement in respect of developing the strategy. This is being used to evaluate the impact of existing local initiatives and programmes on families in poverty with a particular focus on identifying what interventions have been most successful in supporting parents into sustainable employment.
- The current consultation to develop Neighbourhood Plans for Wirral's Area Forum areas (set out in a report to Cabinet of the 23rd June 2011) includes questions which will supplement evidence about child poverty issues. The information will help us to better understand the services and characteristics local neighbourhoods should have in terms of successfully supporting family life and addressing issues of poverty within communities.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

5.1 The development of a risk register for the child poverty and action plan will be included as part of performance management and governance arrangements. Failure to develop and implement a child poverty strategy and action plan will expose the Council to risk of challenge for failing to discharge a statutory duty.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 This report sets out the approach being undertaken to identify options for action by the Council and its partners in relation to eliminating child poverty in Wirral.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 The approach set out in this report has been developed to incorporate a targeted approach to consultation and engagement with local partners, families and communities about child poverty issues.

7.2 To ensure that interested parties and stakeholders continue to be engaged, information relating to the meetings and discussions of the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group is published on the Council's website, alongside the findings of the consultation event held in June 2011.

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. The sector will be a key partner developing and delivering 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 as proposed in 4.7.

9.2 The costs of developing the final strategy and action plan will be met from within existing resources.

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 final strategy and action plan will have a full equalities impact assessment attached, the initial stage of which will inform consultation and engagement activities relating to the draft strategy.

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

Appendix 1 – Draft Child Poverty Strategy and Initial Action Plan

Appendix 2 – Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group Membership

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)

Council Meeting	Date
CABINET: CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN	14th April 2011
CABINET: CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN – PROGRESS REPORT	13th October 2011