

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

12 APRIL 2012

SUBJECT	'ROOTS AND WINGS' CHILD POVERTY BUDGET OPTION
WARD/S AFFECTED	ALL
REPORT OF	CHIEF EXECUTIVE
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER	COUNCILLOR SHEILA CLARKE
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 The discussions of Wirral's Child and Family Poverty Working Group have informed the development of a draft 'Roots and Wings' strategy and action plan which was approved by Cabinet on 13th October 2011 as the basis for further consultation and engagement. Central to the discussions of the independent Working Group has 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 report provides an update on the development of the action plan, and highlights some of the work that is already being taking forward within the scope of the draft 'Roots and Wings' strategy.
- 1.3 The Council's budget resolution of the 1st March set out a commitment to tackling intergenerational poverty in Wirral and agreed an investment of £400,000 to take forward the 'Roots and Wings' strategy. Council also agreed that the independent Working Group is best placed to determine and prioritise where this investment should be made to best effect in local communities. This report therefore provides initial views from the Working Group as to the allocation of the funding.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 On the 13th October 2011, Cabinet considered a report relating to the draft Wirral Child Poverty Strategy and action plan and:
 - 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;
 - Authorised 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.

- 2.2 Further consultation has been undertaken via the Local Strategic Partnership's Executive Board and the Children's Trust and will continue to be undertaken with a number of other key forums through attendance at partnership meetings. Mapping of partnership activity against the workstreams identified in the draft strategy continues to be undertaken by a core officer group working with departments and partner organisations. It is evident from this further consultation and ongoing mapping activity that the draft strategy has already provided a focus for partnership working and increased engagement, as well as informing key plans and strategies, including the Council's Corporate Plan and budget for 2012-13 and the draft Child and Young People's Plan. In addition to the £400,000 funding, which is the subject of this report, a further £100,000 has been allocated in the Council's 2012/2013 budget to support research and subsequent development of school readiness measures. The research element is being undertaken by the University of Cambridge and it is intended that the outcomes from the research will be of benefit nationally as well as supporting Wirral young people. It is proposed that the detailed allocation of this £100,000 be the subject of a further report to Cabinet.
- 2.3 The draft strategy has also initiated a number of projects led by the voluntary, community and faith sector, including the development of a child poverty training module which will be rolled out initially across the children's workforce.
- 2.4 The work to develop Wirral's strategy and action plan is linked to a wider approach being undertaken by the Liverpool City Region (LCR). Wirral is working with colleagues across the Liverpool City Region to deliver the actions identified in the recently launched Liverpool City Region Child Poverty and Life Chances Strategy, with a focus on sharing learning and best practice across the sub-region. One of the key areas in which Wirral will be working with the City Region is on developing consistent performance management approaches to measure the impact of new approaches to tackling poverty.
- 2.5 The allocation of the budget option referred to in 1.3 above represents a further milestone in finalising the strategy and putting in an action plan for delivery in 2012-13. As indicated in 1.3, the Council's budget resolution of the 1st March set out a commitment to tackling intergenerational poverty in Wirral and agreed an investment of £400,000 to take forward the 'Roots and Wings' strategy. Council also agreed that the independent Working Group is best placed to determine and prioritise where this investment should be made to best effect in local communities.
- 2.5 The Working Group met on the 21st March 2012 with the principal objective of discussing the approach to determining the allocation of the £400,000 investment. The Working Group discussed a number of key principles in relation to allocating the funding:
- That the focus for the investment should be an innovative programme of activity which is focused on engaging communities and transforming services to reduce the impact of poverty now and for future generations;
 - That the investment could be targeted at a specific geographical area, subject to further consideration by the Working Group;

- That the targeting of the investment is based on the latest available evidence;
- That a key factor in targeting the investment should be ensuring that we avoid duplication and/or add value to existing project activity and resources available;
- That a commissioning process is undertaken with regards to the funding based on a detailed proposal to be developed in conjunction with the Working Group which identifies the expected outcomes for the programme of activity;
- That any conflict of interest relating to the commissioning process is identified at the earliest possible opportunity.

2.6 The Working Group requested that the evidence base for developing the 'Roots and Wings' strategy is revisited and refreshed to enable it to make recommendations in accordance with the above principles. It is therefore proposed that:

- More detailed profiles of the areas with the highest levels of child poverty are developed using existing and new statistics and information, including relevant Neighbourhood Plan consultation findings and the report of the 'what works' project previously commissioned to evaluate the impact of local initiatives and programmes on families in poverty which will be finalised in April 2012;
- These profiles are considered by the Working Group alongside options for commissioning and delivering the programme of activity and that the Working Group makes recommendations to Cabinet with regard to the how the investment should be targeted and a preferred approach to delivering the programme;
- Previous work undertaken with regard to identifying best practice and the key drivers for tackling poverty is integrated as appropriate in the preferred approach;
- Commissioning is undertaken with due regard to procurement procedures further to Cabinet's consideration of the Working Group's recommendations;
- A clear protocol is put in place with regard to any conflict of interest related to the membership of the Working Group and the commissioning process to ensure transparency.

2.7 As mentioned above, discussions of the Working Group to date have placed an emphasis on the importance of innovation in tackling the complex issue of poverty and deprivation and on the need to build on existing community assets to provide sustainable transformation. It is therefore anticipated that the investment will include outcomes linked to the use of existing community facilities, making information and support available to communities at a local level and proactively involving the community in activities aimed at raising aspirations and addressing areas of need for example through developing social enterprise models.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 3.1 The development of a risk register 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.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 A range of options will be considered as set out elsewhere in this report to ensure that the investment is addressing need and that it will add value to existing activity.

5.0 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 A targeted approach to consultation and engagement with local partners, families and communities about child poverty issues can be evidenced in respect of the development of the draft 'Roots and Wings' strategy and the 'what works' evaluation project which will be finalised in April.
- 5.2 Ongoing consultation has taken place with key partnership forums and relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

- 6.1 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 chaired by a representative from the voluntary, community and faith sector. The sector continues to be a key partner in developing and delivering Wirral's strategy and action plan.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

- 7.1 The development activities described in this report are being progressed using existing staff resources from a number of departments.
- 7.2 Detailed resource implications will be set out in relation to the delivery of £400,000 budget option in a future report aligned to the preferred approach recommended by the Working Group.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 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.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 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 profiles referred to in 2.6 will furthermore include available information about protected groups in specific areas where this is available.

10.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 This report has no specific carbon reduction implications.

11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

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

12.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

12.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- Agrees the principles and approach set out in 2.5 and 2.6 of this report as the basis for the Working Group to determine and prioritise where the £400,000 investment identified in the Council's budget for 2012-13 should be made to best effect in local communities;
- Requests that the Working Group develops collaborative working strategies using their skills and attributes.

13.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

13.1 The Council's budget for 2012-13 agreed an investment of £400,000 to take forward the 'Roots and Wings' strategy. This report proposes an approach for identifying how this investment should be prioritised.

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SUBJECT HISTORY

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
COUNCIL: COUNCIL BUDGET 2012/13	1st March 2012