

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

27TH SEPTEMBER 2012

SUBJECT:	CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY BUDGET OPTION
WARD/S AFFECTED:	All wards (particular emphasis on Birkenhead)
REPORT OF:	ACTING DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER	Cllr Tony Smith
KEY DECISION:	No

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to make recommendations to Cabinet in respect of allocating the £400,000 identified for tackling intergenerational poverty in the Council's budget for 2012-13, further to the Cabinet resolution of the 12th April 2012.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 On 14th April 2011, Cabinet received a report setting out the approach that had been put in place to deliver the Council's statutory duty in relation to child poverty. This included the establishment of a local advisory group, the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group, which would act as a focal point for engagement with stakeholders across the borough and make recommendations to the Council and its partners about a local Child Poverty Strategy and Action Plan.

2.2 Membership of the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group was based on the need to harness expertise from organisations and individuals external to the Council, and has also benefited from representation from all political groups. It includes Wirral members of the Liverpool City Region Poverty and Life Chances Commission to ensure links are maintained to this sub-regional work. It has representation from the voluntary, community and faith sector as well as local partners in health, housing and education and skills. The Working Group is chaired by a representative from the voluntary, community and faith sector.

2.3 The discussions of the Wirral's Child and Family Poverty Working Group 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. This report:

- 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.

2.4 The Council's budget resolution of the 1st March 2012 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. The minute of the Council budget meeting is as follows:

- We are committed to tackling inter generational child poverty in Wirral, and congratulate the 'Roots and Wings' group for the work they have completed to develop our strategy. We will now make a significant investment to deliver on this work.
- We believe that the Roots & Wings group made up, as it is, of Voluntary, Community and Faith Group representatives is best placed to determine & prioritise where investments should be made to best effect in local communities. **£400,000**

2.5 Cabinet is asked to note that the 'Roots and Wings' group referred to in the Council minute in respect of work undertaken to develop the strategy is in fact the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group. Cabinet is also asked to note, for the purpose of clarity, that a separate 'Roots and Wings' consortia was established by voluntary, community and faith sector organisations further to the development of the draft strategy. The consortia had the initial purpose of developing a bid for the Lottery's Improving Futures programme. The bid was unsuccessful, but the 'Roots and Wings' consortia has continued to meet to develop joint working across the sector.

2.6 Further to the Council resolution of the 1st March, work was undertaken in conjunction with the Working Group to develop an approach to identifying priorities for investment with due regard to conflict of interest and transparency. A report was subsequently presented to Cabinet on the 12th April 2012 outlining the approach developed with the Working Group in respect of the £400,000 investment, with recommendations for taking this forward through commissioning of activity in line with reviewing the data and priorities identified in the draft Child Poverty Strategy and action plan. Frank Field MP was in attendance at the meeting and presented proposals for utilising £300,000 of the funding to support the proposed 'Springboard' initiative, a free school from twelve weeks of pregnancy aimed at breaking the intergenerational inheritance of poverty.

2.7 At its meeting on the 12th April 2012, Cabinet resolved that:

- (1) Frank Field MP be thanked for his attendance at the meeting and for his informative presentation;

- (2) Cabinet wishes to express its thanks to all members of Wirral's Child and Family Poverty Working Group for their work so far on this initiative and welcomes the close involvement of voluntary, community and faith organisations in this Group;
- (3) Cabinet welcomes the radical and innovative approach described in the establishment of 'Springboard' a free school specifically aimed at breaking decisively the intergenerational inheritance of poverty;
- (4) Cabinet therefore, recommends to the Working Group that £300,000 of the £400,000 budget be allocated to assist in the establishment of this initiative; and
- (5) The Acting Director of Children's Services be requested to provide any help needed in respect of this project.

2.8 Following the Cabinet resolution of the 12th April 2012, the allocation of the budget option has not been further progressed. This delay has resulted from the need to clarify the decision-making process and the role of the Working Group in respect of the allocation of funding.

2.9 As indicated in 2.1 of this report, the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group was established with a specific remit as set out in the Terms of Reference agreed with the Group. This remit was to;

- Consider information about local needs and issues to identify priorities for Wirral's Child Poverty Strategy and develop potential options for delivering these priorities;
- Oversee a programme of consultation and engagement with partners and the wider public to explore the views of local stakeholders and communities on these priorities and options for delivery;
- Further to reviewing the outcomes of the consultation and engagement programme, make recommendations to the Council (as the statutory lead for child poverty) and partners by Autumn 2011 with regard to priorities for the Council and partners in tackling child and family poverty and how these might be achieved through local action.

2.10 The original Terms of Reference agreed with the Working Group also made clear that the group was not a decision-making body. The Council's budget resolution of March 1st 2012 stated that the Working Group was best placed to determine and prioritise where the £400,000 investment, identified by the Council, should be made. Recognising the Group's status as a non decision-making body, the report to Cabinet on the 12th April 2012 proposed that the Working Group should review the evidence and make recommendations to Cabinet with regard to how the £400,000 investment should be targeted prior to a commissioning process to be undertaken in line with best practice. The Working Group was keen to ensure that any conflict of interest in developing these recommendations for Cabinet

would be appropriately identified at the outset of the process and that the group's Terms of Reference would need to be refreshed accordingly.

- 2.11 Cabinet's request for the Working Group to consider the allocation of £300,000 of the budget option to the 'Springboard' project was addressed through a dedicated meeting of the Working Group which took place on the 14th August 2012. The views of the Working Group in respect of allocating £300,000 to the 'Springboard' project were collected as part of the meeting and the relevant extract of the minutes is attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.12 In addition to seeking the views of the Working Group, work has also been undertaken by the Acting Director of Children's Services to assess the proposed aims of the 'Springboard' initiative and the establishment of its umbrella organisation, the Foundation Years Trust, in respect of current needs and existing activity. The Foundation Years Trust will be an independent body, which will draw together relevant partners and stakeholders with the shared goal of eliminating intergenerational poverty, supports the following commitment set out in the Council's Corporate Plan for 2012-13:
- We will work with our partners to reduce the numbers of children and young people living in poverty and support them and their families to build the foundations for prosperous, healthy and happy lives.

The establishment of the Trust also provides wider potential opportunities in respect of supporting the development of schools and other services for young people as local and national structures develop and evolve. There is a commitment to develop this project and the work of the Trust in partnership with all other local preventative services to ensure that services are "connected and self reinforcing" and that there is a coherent approach to work with children and their families.

- 2.13 The proposals for 'Springboard' and the establishment of the Trust are at a relatively early stage and the intention is to release a sum of £50,000 with immediate effect to the Foundation Years Trust to develop a comprehensive business plan, and also to undertake a pre pilot phase of work. This will involve engaging volunteers to work with thirty families to begin to test out and develop the model. The £50,000 sum will be released for these specific purposes and the Foundation Years Trust shall be under an obligation to demonstrate value for money in expending this sum for the purposes permitted. It is proposed that the further £250,000 will only be released if Cabinet determines that the business plan produced by the Foundation Years Trust is comprehensive, satisfactory and sufficiently robust. The business plan will need to set out clearly: the expected outcomes of the Trust's work; how the outcomes will be achieved; demonstrate value for money, and include monitoring and performance management arrangements that accurately measure the outcomes. It is proposed, at this stage, that phase two of the pilot will involve a further hundred families being engaged with volunteers for an eighteen month period. It is proposed that during phase 2 there will also be research into what the best service looks like, sustainable development of the volunteer training scheme and that provision will be made for an independent evaluation of the project.

2.14 In respect of the future work of the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group, Cabinet are asked to note the positive contribution of the Group to date and the expressed desire of members to continue. It is proposed that the Working Group continues to meet with a refreshed focus and a clear role in shaping and challenging partner activity in tackling issues of child and family poverty. As part of this role, it is further proposed that the Working Group considers priorities for the remaining £100,000 of the budget option and that this is commissioned in line with the process established through the Children's Trust in respect of Early Intervention Grant funding. To ensure that the Working Group can fulfil its role, it is proposed that Governance arrangements are put in place via the partnership infrastructure provided by the Children's Trust. Details of these arrangements will be presented to a future meeting of Cabinet, alongside a refreshed Terms of Reference for the Working Group and a final Child Poverty Strategy and action plan for the remainder of 2012-13.

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

3.1 The recommendation to release an initial grant of £50,000 to the Foundation Years Trust mitigates the financial risk to the local authority and will ensure that a robust plan is in place before any further expenditure is made. The recommendation to commission activity with the remaining £100,000 in line with the process established through the Children's Trust also mitigates financial and project delivery risks. It addresses any potential conflict of interest identified by Group members, since any organisation submitting a bid would not be represented in the commissioning process.

3.2 The proposed governance arrangements provided by the Children's Trust will afford a clear structure to regularly monitor activity funded through the £400,000 to ensure that value for money is being provided.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 This expenditure is a preventive 'spend to save' investment which it is anticipated will result in improving outcomes for children and families in the longer-term, with associated savings in respect of demand on local services.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Group with regard to the 'Springboard' project. The views of the group are presented at Appendix 1.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

6.1 Voluntary, community and faith groups are represented on the Working Group and initial views have been gathered (see Appendix 1) as to the implications of the project for the local VCF sector. Voluntary sector organisations represented on the Working Group will be directly involved in the further development of the Foundation Trust and the 'Springboard' initiative.

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

- 7.1 This report progresses the expenditure of the £400,000 identified in the Council's budget for 2012-13 for addressing child poverty.
- 7.2 As detailed in previous reports to Cabinet, ongoing review of all 2012/13 spending decisions is being made in the context of the significant deficit financial predictions for the Council in 2012/13. As indicated in 4.1, this expenditure is a preventive investment with anticipated improvements in outcomes for children and families in the longer-term and associated savings in respect of demand on local services.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The purpose of the report is to make recommendations to Cabinet in respect of a decision to allocate the £400,000 identified for tackling intergenerational poverty in the Council's budget for 2012-13. The background set out in the report seeks to provide a clear and unambiguous position in respect of the proposed allocation of this expenditure.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 It is anticipated that the projects and activity which will be funded through the budget option will have an impact on inequalities in the areas affected. The Council expects that the Foundation Years Trust would give due regard to the Equality Act 2010 in its establishment and in respect of project delivery.

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

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 12.1 Recognises the contribution of the Working Group and notes the views expressed in relation to the proposed Foundation Years Trust 'Springboard' initiative at Appendix 1 of the report.
- 12.2 Agrees to release an initial sum of £50,000 of the Child Poverty budget allocation to the Foundation Years Trust to develop a comprehensive business case for the 'Springboard' project, and that at the same time a pre pilot phase of work is undertaken which will involve engaging thirty families with volunteers to begin to test out and develop the model. The Foundation Years Trust shall be under an

obligation to demonstrate value for money in expending the initial sum for the purposes permitted.

- 12.3 Agrees to consider the business case at a future Cabinet meeting, and subject to being satisfied that the business case is satisfactory, robust, clear about the expected outcomes of the Trust's work, that the activity represents value for money and that the monitoring and performance management arrangements will accurately measure the outcomes, take a further decision as to the release of a further £250,000 to deliver the 'Springboard' project;
- 12.4 Agrees that the Wirral Child and Family Group considers priorities for the remaining £100,000 of the budget allocation and makes recommendations to the Children's Trust in order for this to be commissioned in line with the process established through the Trust in respect of Early Intervention Grant funding.

13.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 13.1 Following the Cabinet resolution of the 12th April 2012, the allocation of the budget option has not been further progressed. This delay has resulted from the need to clarify the decision-making process and the role of the Working Group in respect of the allocation of funding. This report therefore clarifies the Council's position and makes recommendations to Cabinet in respect of allocating the £400,000 identified in the Council's budget, further to the Cabinet resolution of the 12th April 2012.

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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
CABINET: 'ROOTS AND WINGS' CHILD POVERTY BUDGET OPTION	12th April 2012