

Constituency Committee - Wallasey
Wednesday, 12 December 2018

REPORT TITLE:	WALLASEY CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE BUDGET AND SPEND: TACKLING FOOD POVERTY
REPORT OF:	Corporate Director for Strategy and Partnerships

REPORT SUMMARY

This report proposes an approach to, and seeks a decision for, the spend of the Committee's budget of £59,565 which was set aside to develop a proposal to tackle food poverty across the Constituency.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee decides whether to adopt the proposal outlined to help tackle food poverty across Wallasey Constituency.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To enable the full spend of the budget devolved by Council.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Committee has adopted various approaches to the spend of its core budget since commencement of operation in 2013. Members have reflected on the previous approaches to determine a way forward for the allocation of the budget currently available and discussed and debated various options at its last meeting.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 At Wallasey Constituency Committee on 26 September 2018 (minute 15 refers) it was agreed for the Constituency Manager to make further enquiries to develop a proposal regarding the best approach to tackle food poverty across the Constituency (within its available budget of £59,565) and arrange a further special meeting of Wallasey Constituency Committee for decision.
- 3.2 Discussion has taken place with the Constituency Manager for Birkenhead regarding the operation of the 'Feeding Birkenhead' project, which was established by the Rt Hon Frank Field MP in 2014; together with associated projects funded by the Constituency Committee. Discussions have also taken place with Wirral Council's Assistant Director for Early Help & Prevention.
- 3.3 Published data (up to November 2015) suggests that 13,675 children in Wirral are living in poverty (up to the age of 20 years); this equates to 19.9% of all children in Wirral living in poverty (HMRC, 2018). Whilst this is a year-on-year reduction from 2011, this is higher than the 2015 average for England at 16.6%. Seven of twenty-two wards compared were above the Wirral threshold; including Seacombe (36.6%, 1,570 children), Leasowe & Moreton East (26.5%, 955 children) and Liscard (24.7%, 885 children), within Wallasey Constituency. Whilst the Constituency's three remaining wards are below the threshold, there are still children living in low income households within those areas – New Brighton (18.7%, 565 children), Moreton West & Saughall Massie (14.2%, 400 children) and Wallasey (8.7%, 235 children).
- 3.4 Food poverty means that an individual or household is not able to obtain healthy, nutritious food, or cannot access the food they would like to eat. This often results in people eating poor diets, which can lead to heart disease, obesity, diabetes and cancer, as well as inadequate levels of many vitamins and minerals. Obesity is now as much a sign of poverty in wealthier rich countries, as hunger is in poorer countries. Food poverty and economic poverty are linked. Rent, tax and debts are fixed costs; food is often the 'flexible' budget item. Poor children can suffer from lower nutrient intake, bad dietary patterns, hunger, low fruit and vegetable consumption and problems accessing food in school holidays.

- 3.5 Activity to tackle food poverty will help contribute to the Wirral 2020 pledges to ensure *Children are ready for school*; *Young people are ready for work and adulthood* and *Vulnerable children reach their full potential*. Considerable work in contribution to these pledges is led by Wirral Council's Early Help & Prevention Service. The Service has recently commissioned three contracts to support its Early Help offer (branded as 'Community Matters') and to create the right conditions for community-based early help to thrive. This includes:
- Revitalising the voluntary, community and faith sector by creating a vibrant and visible network of providers;
 - Providing support to children and families which is straight-forward and effective, easy to engage with and not constrained by overwhelming processes;
 - Engaging all stakeholders in the process of developing a long-term approach to early help which is sustainable, responsive to need, proactive in delivery, and is owned by communities.

4.0 PROPOSAL

4.1 It is proposed that a commissioning exercise takes place, as an additional phase of 'Community Matters', to identify a provider to improve the response to tackling food poverty across Wallasey Constituency (i.e. the six wards of Leasowe & Moreton East, Liscard, Moreton West & Saughall Massie, Seacombe, New Brighton and Wallasey). This is with the purpose of co-ordinating activity across the Constituency, addressing any gaps in provision and implementing an infrastructure that is joined up and sustainable following the conclusion of the contract. The contract will run for 12 months from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

4.2 The key tasks for the provider will be to:

- Identify current provision to tackle food poverty within each of the six wards of Wallasey Constituency;
- Identify gaps in provision to tackle food poverty within each of the six wards of Wallasey Constituency;
- Identify six central points/hubs (one within each of the Constituency's six wards – more than one if sub-divisions within wards are appropriate) to support children and families within each respective ward with access to low cost food and healthy/balanced meals; ensuring that these hubs work with, support and build upon existing provision and address the gaps identified;
- Seek added value where possible with the central points/hubs and wider providers tackling other poverty in particular period poverty, encouraging volunteering and reducing social isolation;
- Co-ordinate a mechanism for the sharing of good practice across the central points/hubs and wider providers and identification of blockages etc.;

- Engage and work with existing statutory and voluntary, community & faith sector provision (including but not exclusively, Wirral's Children's Centres, Family Hubs, Schools, Community Cafes, Social Supermarkets, Food Banks and Seacombe's Improving Life Chances Steering Group) and support new provision where required to address gaps in provision;
- Facilitate partnerships (across the public, private and voluntary, community & faith sectors) and processes to take advantage of economies of scale, access to continued funding, etc. across the Constituency;
- Ensure linkages with the new Early Help providers' network (being developed through the first Community Matters commission referred to in 3.5 above);
- Develop and implement plans to ensure the sustainability of the provision and ongoing linkages between the central points/hubs from 1 April 2020 (following the end of this contract).

4.3 To ensure consistency and strategic integration, it is proposed that the commissioning process is overseen through Wirral's Children's Services Contract Team. The Contract Manager for this commission will be the same officer managing the Community Matters contracts referred to in 3.5 above and the evaluation of this contract will be undertaken through the work commissioned via Community Matters. It is proposed that the contract value is rounded down to £59,000 and the remaining £565 is transferred to Children's Services as a gesture of goodwill in overseeing the monitoring and evaluation of this Committee project. By working with the Service, this approach also ensures that the Committee's funding is spent upon delivery rather than infrastructure.

4.4 **RECOMMENDATION:** The Committee decides whether to adopt the proposal outlined to help tackle food poverty across Wallasey Constituency.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This proposal relates to the Committee's remaining budget of £59,565.

5.2 This proposal is consistent with the Council's Procurement Rules.

5.3 Regular budget monitoring with the finance department takes place to ensure that the expenditure incurred is accurate and complies with what has been agreed by the Committee.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The arrangements help the Council to deliver on the Localism Act 2011 and Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

7.1 This contract will assist in making greater use of and/or access to community assets.

8.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 8.1 Failure to agree the distribution of funding limits the Committee's ability to effectively tackle its priorities and may result in a loss of funding allocation. This is particularly pertinent given the new approach for community engagement and abolition of Constituency Committees recently agreed by Cabinet (26 November 2018, minute 41 refers), making it likely that any underspends within the Committee's budget from 1 April 2019 will be returned to the Council.

9.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 9.1 Elected members have had the opportunity to participate in all Constituency Committees and Working Group meetings dealing with budget and spend.

10.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 An impact review relating to neighbourhood working can be found at the link below:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments/equality-impact-assessments-2010-14/chief>

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APPENDICES

None.

REFERENCE MATERIAL

JSNA: Child and Family Poverty. Wirral Intelligence Service (November 2018).

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet	18 July 2016
Wallasey Constituency Committee – Constituency Budget and Spend	28 September 2016
Budget Council	6 March 2017
Wallasey Constituency Committee Budget and Spend	6 July 2017
Wallasey Constituency Committee Budget and Spend	28 September 2018
Cabinet – Wirral Together: Getting the Basics Right - A New Model for Community Engagement.	26 November 2018