

## Minute Extract – Council 7 December 2020

### Minute 49

Councillor Kate Cannon moved and Councillor Paul Stuart seconded the following motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13:

“Poverty is devastating and deeply destabilising to families and communities, and residents from Wirral suffer from poverty at a higher rate than they did ten years ago, and at a higher rate than the national average. (Wirral children in low-income poverty has seen a 23.3% increase since 2015/16.)

It is particularly damaging during crucial stages of development, and the lasting effects that poverty has on physical and psychological processes are now well documented and long-lasting.

Child poverty is not simply about struggling to make ends meet financially but are linked with a wide range of deprivation issues such as poor-quality housing, poor health and low levels of educational attainment. Children in poverty are also more likely to go missing and have increased risk of exploitation and grooming.

Late interventions can be effective, but those made in the first five years of a child’s life are by far the most effective. The early interventions are also the most cost-effective.

With the social problems in our borough getting worse over the last decade – not better – and with the complex and varied nature of the causes and effects of poverty, Council recognises the significant work that has already been done to establish a poverty profile in the borough. It endorses the workstreams already going on to reduce child poverty, and asks that Children, Young People and Education Committee considers this motion and requests it begins to lead on compiling a comprehensive child poverty strategy for the borough.”

Councillor Moira McLaughlin moved and Councillor Mike Sullivan seconded the following amendment, submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.3:

*“Delete everything in the original Notice of Motion after 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph ending in “Children in poverty are also more likely to go missing and have increased risk of exploitation and grooming”*

*And insert the following:*

‘A strategy to eradicate child poverty needs to address family poverty and should have a national, as well as a local dimension which encompasses policies to lift families out of poverty, alongside action to reduce the impact of inadequate income by providing help at community level.

Wirral has been at the forefront of this approach through the work of the community based organisation Feeding Birkenhead Supporting Wirral one of a number of 15 pilot areas across the country that forms Feeding Britain.

To date examples of how this approach has been successful are:

- (1) Using locally gathered evidence, Feeding Britain highlighted to Government that serious delays in payment of Tax Credits was resulting in families being left without income for long periods. This brought about an improvement at national level to the administration of Tax Credits.
- (2) Feeding Britain raised issues of additional charges for people using pre-paid meters for their fuel. These are often people on low income and it was able to negotiate with Ofgen that a cap on pre-payment be introduced.
- (3) The model for school holiday provision developed in Wirral, was presented to MPs by Feeding Britain, got cross party support and was the basis of the School Holiday (and Activity) Bill.
- (4) Feeding Britain developed the scheme which has become Kick Start, aimed at providing employment opportunities for young people.

Any local strategy needs to be comprehensive and work across all Council Departments and with community and voluntary sector, health, business and private sector partners.

Wirral has a well-established network of community and voluntary sector organisation which have a strong history of co-operation to address food and fuel poverty and offer help with debt and other factors which reduce disposable income.

It is 4 years since the Council's strategy "Improving Life Chances" was developed by the then Director of Public Health and though there are several other very good initiatives aimed at reducing poverty, it is clear that there is a need for a more integrated approach which uses the learning from research and builds on the recent activity to alleviate food poverty.

Council therefore requests that:

- (A) The Policy and Resources Committee undertake to pull together the different policies and strategies aimed at alleviating the problems which lead to poverty into a comprehensive Anti-Poverty Strategy and recommends that the expertise and experience of organisations involved in this area of work are used to inform that strategy.
- (B) That a set of performance indicators are developed which can monitor any improvement in poverty rates.
- (C) That these are reported on an annual basis, or as appropriate, to Policy and Resources Committee and the policy is updated as required.' "

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 9.1, the Council did not debate this matter.

The amendment was put and lost on the Mayor's casting vote (29:29) (One abstention).

The substantive motion was then put, and it was –

**Resolved (58:0) (One abstention) -**

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**Late interventions can be effective, but those made in the first five years of a child's life are by far the most effective. The early interventions are also the most cost-effective.**

**With the social problems in our borough getting worse over the last decade – not better – and with the complex and varied nature of the causes and effects of poverty, Council recognises the significant work that has already been done to establish a poverty profile in the borough. It endorses the workstreams already going on to reduce child poverty, and asks that Children, Young People and Education Committee considers this motion and requests it begins to lead on compiling a comprehensive child poverty strategy for the borough.**