

Poverty Task and Finish Group: Terms of Reference

For Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 November 2020

Summary

Members: Councillors Pound (Chairman) Atwood, Funnell, Thompson and Woodward.

Report Author: Mark O'Callaghan – Scrutiny and Engagement Officer

Classification: Public document (non-exempt)

Wards Affected: All

Approval Timetable	Date
Task and Finish Group	29 October 2020
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	23 November 2020

Recommendations

Committee recommendations:

1. That the Poverty Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference be agreed.

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 At its meeting on 26 February 2020, Full Council referred the Motion on Notice from Councillor Pound to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (FC95/19)

1.2 The text of the motion was as follows:

“That this Council, as part of its consideration of how it can play a greater role in addressing rising levels of poverty in Tunbridge Wells, undertakes a needs analysis and public engagement exercise to fully understand the extent of poverty in the top ten most deprived local areas in the Borough concentrated in Sherwood, Broadwater, High Brooms, Rusthall, Paddock Wood and Cranbrook (as identified in the 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation). This exercise and subsequent work will help to inform how the Council and its partners can lift more residents out of poverty and identify additional measures that will be undertaken to improve the life chances of over 1 in 5 children currently growing up in poverty in the Borough.”

1.3 The next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 6 April 2020 was cancelled and all non-essential work was suspended as the Council responded to the emerging Coronavirus pandemic.

1.4 Although the Council continues to focus on the response to, and preparing for the recovery from, Coronavirus a degree of normality has been restored and some non-emergency work may resume. Any work streams must bear in mind that resources continue to be restrained.

1.5 At its meeting on 12 October 2020, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish the Poverty Task and Finish Group in order to commence work to give effect to the Full Council resolution.

1.6 A meeting of the Task and Finish Group was held on 29 October 2020 attended by Councillors Pound, Funnell and Thomson with the intention of formulating Terms of Reference. The meeting was supported by Jane Clarke, Head of Policy and Governance and Mark O’Callaghan, Scrutiny and Engagement Officer. Notes of the meeting were subsequently distributed to the absent members for comment.

Considerations of the Task and Finish Group

1.7 The Task and Finish Group sought to agree a common definition of ‘poverty’ to be used and the following points were taken into account:

- The concept of poverty went beyond just financial considerations and included wellbeing and lifestyle aspects. Financial considerations were often primary however as it impacted so significantly on many of the other factors.
- Skinners Company defined poverty as poverty of Resource / Relationships / Aspiration.
- The government's Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) were a balance of 7 indicators including income. The IMD was consistent with the resolution of Full Council but also it would be a common point of reference between many of the agencies dealing with issues related to poverty and, as a generally accepted definition, would be less likely to be challenged.
- Certain aspects of the IMD were not necessarily the best measures and this needed to be taken into account.
- People's perception of poverty would be different and people's access to support varied by their circumstances and not least by their own pride.

1.8 The Task and Finish Group sought to establish what would, and would not, be within scope of the work to be undertaken. The following items were considered to be within scope:

- What TWBC is doing (key focus)
- What other agencies are doing – Government, NHS, Police, KCC
- What the voluntary and community sector are doing
- TWBC's role in coordinating others
- The portfolio holder's views (Carol Mackonochie as portfolio holder for Communities and Wellbeing)
- The director's views (Paul Taylor as Director of Change and Communities whose directorate included a number of services relating to poverty)
- A high-level analysis of what government and national agencies (including NHS and Police) were currently doing.
- A high-level analysis of what TWBC and KCC (particularly the Revenues and Benefits services and others in providing assistance for claiming benefits) were currently doing.
- A high-level analysis of the voluntary and community sector.
- A 'map' of how services were linked would be helpful.

1.9 Work on the high-level analysis has commenced for review at the next meeting of the Task and Finish Group.

2. Terms of Reference

Membership

2.1 Membership of the Task and Finish Group would consist of Councillors Pound (Chairman), Atwood, Funnell, Thomson and Woodward.

2.2 The Task and Finish Group may co-opt other members in a non-voting capacity.

- 2.3 The Task and Finished Group will be supported by the Head of Policy and Governance and the Scrutiny and Engagement Officer. It may also seek further support at its discretion but may not incur expenditure.

Meetings

- 2.4 Meetings will commence at the end of November and then fortnightly thereafter.
- 2.5 Additional meetings may be arranged as necessary.

Scope

- 2.6 The Task and Finish Group will focus on the top-ten Lower Layer Super Output Areas in the Borough and measure 'poverty' using the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Finance measures would be taken after housing costs considering the particularly high cost of Tunbridge Wells.
- 2.7 The Task and Finish Group will identify actions and measures taken by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and also take account of what other organisations/agencies are doing to address the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.
- 2.8 The Task and Finish Group will seek to understand Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's role in co-ordination.
- 2.9 The Task and Finish Group will develop recommendations around a public consultation and qualitative analysis to understand the causes behind poverty.

3. Options Considered

- 3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to endorse the Terms of Reference.
- 3.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is at liberty to disregard these recommendations and take no further action or to instruct the Task and Finish Group to pursue an alternative course.

4. Preferred Option and Reason

- 4.1 The Task and Finish Group believes that the Terms of Reference fulfils the brief set by Full Council and offer a practical and effective way forward.

5. Consultation on Options

- 5.1 This report is potentially the first step in a process and sets out the initial thoughts of the members of the Task and Finish Group. The report itself has not

been subject to outside consultation prior to presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

6. Implementation

6.1 Subject to approval by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Task and Finish Group will proceed with its next meeting and commence work.

7. Appendices and Background Documents

Appendices:

- None

Exempt appendices (if any):

- None

Background Papers:

- None

8. Cross Cutting Issues

A. Legal (including the Human Rights Act)

The Local Government Act 2000, section 21 enables an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to undertake the following functions:

- (a) Make reports and recommendations to the Executive or Council;
- (b) Review or scrutinise executive decisions;
- (c) Review or scrutinise non-executive decisions;
- (d) Report on any matter affecting the Council's area.

The arrangements outlined in this report are in accordance with functions permitted to be discharged by the Committee.

Patricia Narebor, Head of Legal Partnership, 13 November 2020.

B. Finance and Other Resources

No budget is assigned to the work of the Task and Finish Group. The Task and Finish Group may not incur expenditure, therefore there are no financial implications from this report.

Mark O'Callaghan, Scrutiny and Engagement Officer, 12 November 2020.

C. Staffing

Support to the Task and Finish Group is within existing establishments and therefore there are no staffing implications from this report.

Mark O'Callaghan, Scrutiny and Engagement Officer, 12 November 2020.

D. Risk Management

This report does not propose any policy changes and therefore there are no specific implications at this time.

Mark O'Callaghan, Scrutiny and Engagement Officer, 12 November 2020.

E. Environment and Sustainability

This report does not propose any policy changes and therefore there are no specific implications at this time.

Mark O'Callaghan, Scrutiny and Engagement Officer, 12 November 2020.

F. Community Safety

This report does not propose any policy changes and therefore there are no specific implications at this time.

Mark O'Callaghan, Scrutiny and Engagement Officer, 12 November 2020.

G. Equalities

This report does not propose any policy changes and therefore there are no specific implications at this time.

Mark O'Callaghan, Scrutiny and Engagement Officer, 12 November 2020.

H. Data Protection

This report does not propose any policy changes and therefore there are no specific implications at this time.

Mark O'Callaghan, Scrutiny and Engagement Officer, 12 November 2020.

I. Health and Safety

This report does not propose any policy changes and therefore there are no specific implications at this time.

Mark O'Callaghan, Scrutiny and Engagement Officer, 12 November 2020.

J. Health and Wellbeing

This report does not propose any policy changes and therefore there are no specific implications at this time.

Mark O'Callaghan, Scrutiny and Engagement Officer, 12 November 2020.