

Cabinet Response to Poverty Task and Finish Group Interim Report and Next Steps

For Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Monday 24 January 2022.

Summary

Lead Member: Councillor Hugo Pound – Chairman of the Poverty Task and Finish Group

Lead Director: Lee Colyer – Director of Finance, Policy and Development

Head of Service: Jane Clarke – Head of Policy and Governance

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

Classification: Public document

Wards Affected: All

Approval Timetable	Date
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	24 January 2022

Recommendations

Officer recommendations:

1. That the Committee consider the report and determine next steps, which may include one of the options set out in section 2 of the report.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Cabinet formally considered the interim report of the Poverty Task and Finish Group (TFG) at its meeting on 2 December 2021. This report sets out the Cabinet's response and options for further consideration.
- 1.2 The process undertaken by the TFG was summarised in the report to Cabinet, a copy of which can be viewed on the Council's website:
<https://democracy.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=118&MId=4957&Ver=4>
- 1.3 The Poverty TFG prepared its interim report following a series of interviews with stakeholders which resulted in four recommendations to the Cabinet:
1. That a senior officer be designated to co-ordinate the Council's responses across all departments for those functions whose actions have an impact on income, education & training and access to housing and services.
 2. That the Cabinet determine and publicise metrics relating to these three elements of IMD with clear accountabilities to officers for their delivery.
 3. That the Council initiates community-based surveys, group discussions and public displays in each of the six wards listed in the original motion to ascertain our residents' expectations and needs and their ability to access services currently.
 4. That the Working Group continues to meet and gather evidence which will lead to a discrete number of multi-agency Community Action Plans, co-ordinated and facilitated by TWBC in 2022.

Communities and Economic Development C.A.B.

- 1.4 Councillor Pound attended the meeting of the Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board on 14 November 2021 to speak to the report on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. At the meeting the Portfolio Holder presented a draft response on behalf of the Cabinet.
- 1.5 Full details of the proposed response can be viewed on the Council's website:
<https://democracy.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=357&MId=4982&Ver=4>. In summary:
1. Stephen McGinnes (Mid Kent Services Director) be nominated as the Council's lead on poverty.

2. The Council already gathered a wide range of information but recognised that some services were delivered by other organisations. The TFG was asked to suggest which metrics should be reported.
 3. Ward councillors were best placed to undertake a community liaison role.
 4. That the continuation of the TFG and any further recommendations be welcomed.
- 1.6 Following a debate, the Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board supported the proposed response subject to the following issues being taken into account by the Cabinet:
- Stephen McGinnes should be tasked with responsibility for co-ordinating education and training factors within his remit.
 - An All-Member Briefing be provided explaining the county-wide tool and suite of measures available to indicate people in need used by Stephen McGinnes.
 - The Council should undertake community-based surveys on the needs of residents (in the prescribed areas) rather than it being the responsibility of ward councillors.
 - If the Cabinet was minded to keep Response 3, the response should be expanded to explain of the reasons why the Cabinet was not proposing to undertake community-based surveys (i.e. cost, lack of effectiveness, existing measures, partnership working and better ways of targeting individuals).

Cabinet

- 1.7 Councillor Pound further attended the meeting of Cabinet on 2 December 2021. At the meeting, the Portfolio Holder provided an amended response having taken account of the recommendations from the Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board.
- 1.8 Following a debate, the Cabinet resolved as follows:
1. That the Council's point of contact for coordinating a cross organisational working group to focus on poverty, including income, education & training and housing as Steve McGinnes be approved.
 2. That the Council's recently introduced new dashboard will be presented as part of an All Members Briefing.
 3. That the Council will engage with residents experiencing difficulties in a targeted and meaningful way.
 4. That the continuation of the Task and Finish Group be supported.

- 1.9 The All-Member Briefing (resolution 2) was provided on 10 December 2021.
- 1.10 It was noted that Stephen McGinnes was due to leave the Council shortly and a decision would be made as to who would be his successor, both in post and in responsibility for tackling poverty.

2. Next Steps

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee must now decide what, if anything, it wishes to do next. Options include, but are not limited to:
- 2.2 **No further action** – The Committee may conclude the TFG and take no further action on this matter.
- 2.3 **Review in 6 – 12 months** – The Committee may request an update from the Portfolio Holder on progress made against resolutions 1 and 3 (resolution 2 having been discharged and resolution 4 being at the discretion of the Committee). The TFG could be concluded or may continue to consider further issues as defined by the Committee.
- 2.4 **Resume the Poverty TFG** – The original scope agreed by the TFG stated:
1. To identify actions and measures by the Council and also take account of what other organisations/agencies are doing to address the Indices of Multiple Deprivation;
 2. To understand the Council's role in co-ordination; and
 3. To develop recommendations around a qualitative public consultation to determine if there are further roles that the Council can undertake.

The TFG could be tasked to continue its work within this scope.

- 2.5 **Revise the Poverty TFG** – A new direction may be given for the Poverty TFG. A scope and terms of reference will need to be agreed for any new issues considered.

3. Preferred Option and Reason

- 2.1 This is a matter for the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to decide and no recommendation is provided by this report. The Committee should have regard to the available resources and prioritising its work streams.

4. Consultation on Options

- 4.1 No public consultation has taken place on this matter but all documents referred to and including this report are publicly available. The public are encouraged to comment on any matter under consideration by the Committee.

5. Implementation

- 5.1 The decision of the Committee will be communicated to relevant persons and published through the minutes.
- 5.2 If the Committee was to request a review or instruct the Poverty TFG, this should include expected timelines.

6. Appendices and Background Documents

Appendices:

- None

Exempt appendices (if any):

- None

Background Papers:

- Report to Cabinet Advisory Board, 14 November 2021:
<https://democracy.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=357&MId=4982&Ver=4>
- Report to Cabinet, 2 December 2021:
<https://democracy.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=118&MId=4957&Ver=4>

7. Cross Cutting Issues

A. Legal (including the Human Rights Act)

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the power to establish a task and finish group on any matter that it feels is affecting residents of the borough, without Cabinet approval, but does not have decision making powers in terms of staffing or resources. As such any recommendations it makes will ultimately need to be referred to the relevant decision maker for approval.

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report, however further reports will be required to give effect to the option adopted and legal input will be provided at the appropriate time in respect of such reports.

There are no consequences arising from this report that adversely affect or interfere with individuals' rights and freedoms as set out in the Human Rights Act 1998.

Claudette Valmond, Interim Head of Legal Partnership, 14 January 2022

B. Finance and Other Resources

There are no direct financial implications as a result of the options within this report. There is no specific budget for the Committee. However, the Committee is resourced to undertake a maximum of two concurrent Task and Finish Groups. If the Poverty TFG was continued this would reduce the available resource to other areas. Any further recommendations of the Poverty TFG would be subject to separate consideration of any financial implications.

Mark O'Callaghan, Scrutiny and Engagement Officer, 5 January 2022.

C. Other implications (Staffing, Risk Management, Environment and Sustainability, Community Safety, Equalities, Data Protection, Health and Safety, Health and Wellbeing)

There are no direct, significant implications as a result of the options within this report

Mark O'Callaghan, Scrutiny and Engagement Officer, 5 January 2022.