

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	CORPORATE POLICY & PERFORMANCE
DATE	25 th November 2010
DIRECTOR	Stewart Carruth
TITLE OF REPORT	Achieving Our Potential – Tackling Poverty and Income Inequality in Aberdeen City
REPORT NUMBER:	CG/10/196

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report sets out for consideration and approval “Achieving Our Potential: Tackling Poverty and Income Inequality in Aberdeen City”.

The report has been produced in response to the motion by Councillor Kiddie agreed at the Council meeting of the 11th February 2009 that, “Aberdeen City Council agrees to produce an Anti-poverty Strategy.”

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Consider and approve as final Achieving Our Potential: Tackling Poverty and Income Inequality in Aberdeen City (Appendix 1).
2. Agree that a 6 month review of the Anti – Poverty Strategy be carried out and reported back to the Policy & Performance Committee.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The strategy will require consideration of resources for the delivery of proposals to tackle poverty. The preparation of the strategy has identified areas where there is service fragmentation, gaps and separate commissioning arrangements which would benefit from further cross service work to improve coherence, customer service and deliver more efficient services. It is recognized that the implementation of the anti-poverty strategy needs to ensure value for money from the existing funding invested in anti poverty interventions and action by the Council and our partners.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Legal – None arising from this report; initiatives such as support for Credit Unions, whilst permitted in terms of support from public funds, needs to be registered for State Aid compliance.

Resources – Consideration will need to be given by the Council in conjunction with The Aberdeen City Alliance through the budget setting process to how funding can be aligned to support our commitments within the Single Outcome Agreement in relation to tackling poverty.

Personnel – none arising directly from this report however as a major employer and contractor in the city the Council can play a key role in the recruitment of people from the regeneration areas and to consider setting an example of best practice for other employers.

Sustainability and Environment – successfully addressing poverty requires a balanced approach to tackling social, economic and environmental aspects that contribute to achieving sustainable communities.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

5.1 *National Context*

In November 2008 the Scottish Government published “Achieving Our Potential: A Framework to tackle poverty and income inequality in Scotland.” The objective of this national framework is to narrow the gap between rich and poor in Scotland and build stronger communities.

The main focus is to build a Scotland where we can say that “we have tackled the major inequalities in Scottish Society”. A ‘Solidarity’ target has been set: “to increase the overall income and proportion earned by the lowest 30% of people as a group by 2017.”

The Scottish Government’s framework for tackling poverty and income inequality links to other key Government policies in relation to early years and tackling health inequalities recognising that: “the best possible start in life, a good education, good health and enough money can all help make society more equal.”

The approach to tackling poverty being taken nationally is one, which recognises the role of local authorities and the importance of working collaboratively at local and national levels.

5.2 *Local Context*

As the energy capital of Europe, Aberdeen is perceived as an affluent city, however this perception masks the growing poverty and disadvantage that exists in our communities. This was evidenced by the relatively large increase in the share of data zones in the 15% most deprived between SIMD 2004 (18 datazones) and SIMD 2006 (27 datazones). The publication of SIMD 2009 reflects no significant change in the overall situation (27 datazones). However, the SIMD 2009 has recently been revised to take account of a factual error within the Income Domain relating to tax credit data. This has affected the overall Index and Aberdeen now has 28 datazones in the worst 15%.

5.3 *Development of the Anti-poverty Strategy*

The Strategic Research and Information Team were asked to prepare a Poverty Profile that would inform the development of, and provide an initial baseline for, the Anti-poverty Strategy. The Profile provides an analysis of the key indicators of poverty in the city. The profile draws extensively on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2009, and covers key areas including unemployment rates, earnings levels, number of benefit claimants, school leaver destinations, free school meal entitlements, lone parent households and educational attainment levels.

Given the complex and cross cutting nature of poverty across all policy and service delivery areas, a short life Officers Working Group was established to provide a service orientated perspective on poverty and income inequality issues. The group conducted an initial audit of current and planned Aberdeen City Council activities which impact on the poverty agenda. The Officers Working Group reviewed the audit material, identified gaps in provision and explored opportunities for service action and development to improve the outcomes achieved.

A further research study was conducted over a 4 week period between the 24th of June and the 24th of July 2009. The central aim of this element of the strategy preparation was to provide qualitative information from individuals who had direct and indirect experience of poverty and/or social exclusion. The study called 'Talking About Poverty: Discussing Poverty and Social Exclusion With Aberdeen Residents' was carried out on behalf of the Council by James Simpson, a 3rd year sociology student at Aberdeen University.

The poverty profile, the audit of service activity and the 'Talking about poverty' research study identified key themes that have assisted in developing a framework for the Anti-poverty strategy. These themes reflect the complex and multi-faceted nature of poverty in our

communities, and the necessity to target investment on the root causes of deprivation and inequality.

On 10th September 2009 Corporate Policy and Performance Committee agreed to remit the draft strategy to the other Council committee's for detailed consideration and comment. The final draft strategy incorporates feed back received from those consultations.

6. IMPACT

Corporate - The development of the Single Outcome Agreement between the City Council and the Scottish Government has provided a basis for setting poverty and inequality as a strategic priority. Critical to the delivery of this commitment is the development of an Anti-poverty Strategy that is cross cutting across all policy areas.

Public - Failure to tackle poverty not only has a major implication on the quality of life of the individuals and families concerned but also in relation to the direct costs to public expenditure associated with responding to and tackling poverty related issues.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Achieving Our Potential: A Framework to Tackle Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland, Scottish Government, 2008

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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