

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Anti-Poverty and Inequality
DATE	12 June 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Citizens' Assembly
REPORT NUMBER	CORS/24/150
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	-
REPORT AUTHOR	Paul Tytler
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents a proposal for delivering a citizens' assembly approach on poverty and gender inequality.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Approves the proposal outlined in this report for delivering a citizens' assembly approach on poverty and gender inequality; and
- 2.2 Instructs the Executive Director of Corporate Services to, in accordance with the Council's Procurement Regulations, commission the Scottish Women's Budget Group to deliver the proposal.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The Committee has previously considered reports on the approach to be taken to deliver a citizen's assembly on poverty and gender inequality.
- 3.2 Officers have been working with Scottish Women's Budget Group (registered charity number SC050221) in order to achieve the aims and aspirations of the Committee.
- 3.3 The [Scottish Women's Budget Group](#) (SWBG) have been identified by officers as having particular expertise, including the ability to professionally facilitate, inform and enable the participation of diverse, seldom heard groups, develop their knowledge and identify issues and recommendations for consideration. SWBG have expertise in gender budgeting, national and local government financing and powers, as well as knowledge of the impact assessment of policies, ensuring that recommendations developed from the assembly will be competent for consideration by the Committee.

3.4 SWBG is an independent analysis and campaign group that promotes gender analysis in public policy and public finance decisions through budgetary processes. SWBG brings together a wide range of women from across Scotland who have an interest in women's equality and want to achieve better gender equality in our society. They have encouraged active gender analysis in the Scottish Budget process since 2000. Most recently they have been using participative approaches to identify the issues affecting women across Scotland and working with them to identify solutions.

3.5 **Proposed Approach**

3.5.1 Using the principles that underpin a citizens' assembly, SWBG will use mixed method tools to explore the impact of poverty and gender inequality on women and their families in Aberdeen and identify with participants solutions that could address these issues for individuals, families and the wider community.

3.5.2 **Steering Group**

SWBG will develop a non-extractive (an approach that empowers collaborating participants to utilise research methods and findings in ways that are meaningful to them) community research project that takes an intersectional lens to gender inequality. This will involve recruiting a steering group of 6-10 women who would work with SWBG over the period of the project to identify overarching themes, develop research questions and tools, help analyse the findings and develop suggested actions.

3.5.3 SWBG will work with community groups in Aberdeen to recruit a diverse range of women to be part of this group. Participants will be provided with individualised support to help them take part; this will include an initial meeting to identify support needs and how these can be supported. This individualised support will be provided throughout the project to help participants develop new skills, gain new experiences and get the most from their participation.

3.5.4 The work with the steering group will include the following:

- Initial group session to agree how we will work together, to explore gender inequality and how this links to poverty. During this session we will explore what we already know about gender inequality and poverty so that the steering group is well informed about the issues.
- Session to provide information about what community research is and to explore different tools and approaches to help the group feel informed and supported to develop and use the tools.
- Support to develop a community session to hear from the wider community about the issues they are experiencing to help identify themes/issues that the research can explore.

- Session to agree the issues/themes to explore and support to develop the tools and questions to be used as part of the data gathering phase.
- Session to analyse data collected and identify themes arising from this. Support to consider what the information gathered tells us and develop initial actions/solutions using gender budgeting approaches and agree how we will present findings.
- Support to develop wider community session to present initial findings and further develop the suggested actions/solutions ensuring that these are informed by the community.
- Support to launch the findings and the actions/solutions needed to address the issues identified.

3.5.5 Data Gathering

The steering group will help decide on the issues/themes that will be explored and identify the data needed and tools for gathering this. SWBG envisage this will include a survey and focus group questions. The steering group will be supported to use these tools in their local communities and networks to gather data.

- 3.5.6 SWBG will design a survey with the steering group, that will provide quantitative as well as qualitative data on women's experiences and through this suggestions for actions/solutions will be gathered. The aim is to gather responses from 200 women. SWBG aim to get responses from a cross-section so that results can be disaggregated on the basis of socio-economic status, disability, race/ethnicity, age, household make up etc.

3.5.7 Community Sessions

SWBG envisage running up to six smaller community sessions to gather views from seldom heard groups, this could include working with:

- Minority Ethnic Carers of People Project (MECOPP)
- Grampian Women's Aid
- Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC)
- Aberdeen Cyrenians
- Community Food Initiatives North East (CFINE)
- Aberdeen Foyer
- Rape Crisis Grampian
- Station House Media Unit (SHMU)
- Alcohol & Drugs Action
- Home-Start Aberdeen
- Action for Children

- 3.5.8 By working with a wide variety of community groups already working in Aberdeen and who have the trust of the communities they support, SWBG will hear from a diverse range of women including those from seldom heard groups. The approach will be tailored to ensure the needs of the groups we are working with are met - this could include using

creative measures including journalling, storytelling and/or animation, as well as more traditional focus group or survey approaches.

3.5.9 Data Analysis

The steering group will be supported to analyse the data collected and identify what this tells us about the issues. The analysis of the data will take an intersectional approach, using disaggregated data wherever possible. They will spend time considering the solutions required, based on the information collected from those who took part in the survey and other sessions and what they have told us will help. These initial findings will be presented at a wider participatory community event to sense check what has been found and to help further inform actions/solutions. All those who took part in the data gathering phase will be invited to attend this. To ensure that the solutions take an intersectional approach we will sense check these with specific groups, e.g. disabled women.

3.5.10 Sharing Findings

SWBG will work with the steering group to agree how the findings and recommendations should be communicated (over and above a written report to Committee) - this could include using video/animation, use of infographics etc. SWBG will engage with the Committee in the most appropriate way to share the findings and the evaluation of the process. SWBG would want to report back to participants a response from the Committee/Council within 6 months of the findings being presented. Being kept informed about any impact the research has had is an important part of the community research process.

3.5.11 Evaluation of Process

Facilitators and steering group members will keep a journal of their involvement to capture their thoughts and feelings about the process, including any difference the skills building element of the process along with providing vouchers made to involvement. SWBG will also gather feedback from those who attend the events and from the community groups worked with. SWBG will reach out to steering group members and others who ask to be kept informed after the response from the Committee/Council has been received to gather feedback from them on their thoughts/feelings about their involvement.

3.5.12 Timeline of key steps

Steps	Timeframe
Preparatory work with community groups	June/July 2024
Recruitment of steering group	July/Aug
Initial sessions with steering group	Sept

Community Session	Oct
Data gathering (community groups & Survey)	Oct-Jan 2025
Data Analysis	Jan/Feb
Community Session	Feb
Develop report & findings	Feb/March
Present findings	March
Response from Committee/Council	Sept
Evaluation report	Nov

3.5.13 Key Deliverables

As part of this process SWBG will provide/undertake:

- Written report on the key findings of the research, along with more user-friendly resources.
- Attendance at Committee or other relevant meetings to share findings
- Sharing with participants the response from Committee/Council.
- Evaluation report on the process.

In addition, the engagement will align as far as possible with the 2025/26 budget engagement work under the budget protocol.

3.6 A previous paper to the Anti-Poverty and Inequality Committee - [Citizen Assemblies January 2023](#) - set out the key principles for a citizen assembly approach as follows:

- **Diverse:** They resemble the wider population in all its diversity, having been selected at random from that community to match the demographic characteristics of the population. The process of random selection would reflect the demography of the area, to ensure a representative participants identified.
- **Deliberative:** Citizens' Assemblies don't aggregate top-of-the-head opinions, but harvest deeper, more considered judgements.
- **Lengthy:** Lasting at least four days, they give participants the chance to get under the skin of a problem, developing their understanding and challenging their assumptions as they go, before arriving at a series of recommendations.

- Informed: Participants leave as experts in their own right, having heard from ‘witnesses’ with professional, lived and academic experience of the topic at hand.
- ‘By the people, for the people’: Recommendations are made by assembly members, not by politicians or officers. They are published without revision, caveat or manipulation and responded to by decision makers.
- Professionally facilitated: They are painstakingly designed and impartially facilitated to enable rich and meaningful participation by all assembly members, ensuring that everyone is given the space to express themselves freely

3.7 The proposals detailed in paragraph 3.5 fulfil these requirements.

3.8 The proposal also reflects the three phases of a citizen assembly approach described in that paper to Committee:

- Learning phase: participants get to know each other, how the assembly works and what its aims are. Relevant facts about the issue at hand are presented to the participants, who get to ask questions of experts and access background and contextual information.
- Consultation phase: campaigners from each side get to present their arguments and be questioned on them. Sometimes, the assembly might run a public consultation during this phase to understand what the broader public thinks about an issue.
- Deliberation and discussion phase: the participants deliberate amongst themselves. Generally, assembly members will make recommendations to the Council at the end of this phase.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 SWBG direct costs are as follows:

SWBG Costs		
Staff Time	17 days steering group 12 days data gathering 3 days community events 6 days analysis & write up 8 days project management 46 days @£488	£22,448
Design & publishing costs	Design of report/infographics/video	£3,000
Total SWBG Costs		£25,488

- 4.2 In addition to SWBG’s staff costs, the organisations and participants will receive the following compensation to acknowledge participation and reduce barriers. Vouchers are seen as increasingly important in breaking down barriers alongside paid participants and the [Citizens' Assemblies - an international comparison \(parliament.scot\)](#) highlights that “Efforts should be made to ensure inclusiveness, such as through remuneration, covering expenses, and/or providing/paying for childcare or eldercare”. In addition, such remuneration is being considered locally by the Health Determinants Research Collaborative, ensuring it is in line with best practice.

While the amount will depend on the numbers attending, it will not exceed the maximum amount stated in the following table:

		Maximum Amount
Organisation Costs - this will go to local organisations who support this work through holding sessions with their service users	£400 per community group x six = £2400	£2400
Participation vouchers	20 x £10 vouchers (survey) 6 x 12 x £15 (community group sessions)	£200 £1080
Steering Group Costs vouchers to local participants	£30 x 12 sessions x 10 people	£3600
Travel/Device costs	12 sessions x 10 x £10 6 sessions x 12 x £10	£1200 £720
Childcare costs		£2500
Food Costs	12 sessions x 10 x £5 6 sessions x 12 x £5	£600 £360
Room Hire	12 sessions x £200	£2400
Event Costs	2 events 40 people at each £2920 per event for room hire, food, childcare, travel costs etc	£5840
Resources	Journals and Materials	£500
Total Participation Costs		£21400

- 4.3 The financial requirements arising from this paper will be met from the budget approved by Council on 1st March 2023 to allocate £50,000 to the Anti-Poverty

and Inequality Committee for the provision of Citizen Assemblies and poverty mitigation measures

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The commissioning proposed in this report will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Procurement Regulations.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Not fulfilling the commitment to undertake Citizens' assemblies	Approval of the report recommendations	L	Yes
Compliance	Failing to comply with procurement law	Compliance with the Council's Procurement Regulations	L	Yes
Operational	Insufficient resources to undertake the assembly approach	Identification of third sector partner to deliver	L	Yes
Financial	Insufficient funding to cover the costs	Funding allocation approved and proposal within approved budget	L	Yes
Reputational	Not responding to or implementing the outcomes from the assembly approach	Participants will be advised that the assembly approach is advisory, but a commitment will be in place to feedback to participants the consideration of their recommendations	L	Yes

Environment / Climate	No environmental risks identified	n/a	n/a	n/a
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8. OUTCOMES

<u>Council Delivery Plan 2024</u>	
	Impact of Report
<p>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</p> <p><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></p>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following aspects of the policy statement within the context of tackling poverty:-</p> <p>A Transparent, Accessible and Accountable Council</p> <p>Aberdeen City Council works for the people of Aberdeen, and it is important that people can access, understand, and take part in the Council's democratic processes. To make Aberdeen City Council more transparent, accessible, and accountable we will</p> <p>'Explore options to establish local Citizens' Assemblies – with the first remit of a Citizens' Assembly being to advise the council on what's needed to tackle gender inequality in Aberdeen'</p>
<u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 1 – 1. 20% reduction in the percentage of people who report they have been worried they would not have enough food to eat and/or not be able to heat their home by 2026, with the key driver being - Mitigating the causes of poverty and supporting those experiencing poverty.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<p>The proposals will contribute to tackling the key drivers of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that families receive the parenting and family support they need. • Improving health and reducing child poverty inequalities • Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people, families and groups

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	n/a

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 [Citizen Assemblies CUS/23/012](#)

10.2 [Citizen Assemblies CUS/23/252](#)

10.3 Examples of SWBG work can be found [here](#).

11. APPENDICES

11.1 none

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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