



**Report to: Health and Wellbeing Committee, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

**Report of: Corporate Director – Operations, Homes & Communities**

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**Subject: UPDATE ON THE DELIVERY OF THE CHILD POVERTY TASK & FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1. Recommendation**

**That the Committee:**

- 1.1 Note the contents of this report, and in particular the completion of the Worcester City Child Poverty Joint Strategic Needs Assessment by Worcestershire County Council's Public Health Service, attached at Appendix 1; and**
- 1.2 Note that a further update report will be presented to this Committee in January 2023.**

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The Council's Health & Wellbeing Committee became responsible for the oversight of progress against the Child Poverty Task & Finish Group Recommendations in May 2022 on its inception as a Committee. The Committee received its first six monthly update report in [November 2021](#).
- 2.2 Prior to this the Council's Communities Committee in [July 2019](#) approved the setting up of a Task & Finish Group to investigate ways in which the City Council in collaboration with its partners could reduce child poverty within the City.
- 2.3 The Communities Committee also received the Child Poverty Task and Finish Group Findings & Recommendation Report in [March 2021](#) and approved its recommendations. A link to the Task & Finish Groups Final Report is included within the 'background documents' section of this report.
- 2.4 This current report provides a further six-month update of progress against the recommendations and sets out the work that is planned during 2022/2023.
- 2.5 It is important to remind Members that whilst every effort is being made to progress the recommendations of the Task & Finish group in a timely fashion, the work of safeguarding, protecting and supporting children (particularly those in need or whom are vulnerable) is a statutory responsibility of Worcestershire County Council as the Upper Tier Authority and not the District Council.
- 2.6 As such this work is deemed as discretionary and is undertaken across a number of services including Community Services, Strategic Housing Service, Finance and Environmental Operations.

It is delivered alongside the range of statutory services the Council must deliver and a number of other discretionary pieces of work that feature on Service Plans that have been deemed as priorities by various Committees.

### **3. Information**

#### ***A. The City Council work in partnership with the Worcestershire Health and Wellbeing Board to address the health inequalities resulting from child poverty.***

- 3.1 The new Herefordshire & Worcestershire Integrated Care System provides a real opportunity for district level multi-agency working on health inequality issues through District Collaboratives. The collaboratives will develop and deliver services and projects working together on local footprints and agree joint priorities for action. The health and wellbeing of residents across all age groups in our most deprived communities will be high on the Worcester City Collaborative agenda and in particular children.
- 3.2 The emerging Worcestershire Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022 – 2027 identified that children in particular had been impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic and the importance of supporting children and people was reinforced by way of this Councils response to the Strategy Consultation.
- 3.3 There are indications that new governance arrangements that will support the transition to an Integrated Care System will aim to align where possible the work of the Integrated Care Partnership and the Health & Wellbeing Board. It is hoped that District Councils will have a seat on both groups at a senior level which will enable the importance of child poverty in particular to be discussed.

#### ***B. To seek agreement with the Health and Wellbeing Board to consider child poverty within the established health inequalities groups and or create a specific countywide group to address child poverty.***

- 3.4 As discussed above the implementation of a Worcester City District Collaborative is the preferred option for multi-agency working to tackle some of the root causes of child poverty. This group will include District Council, County Council Public Health, Primary Care Network, South Worcestershire Health Alliance, key partners such as Worcester Community Trust, Onside Advocacy, Action as well as VCS representation.

#### ***C. To work in partnership with the Health and Wellbeing Board to complete a food poverty Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNA) with a focus on children.***

- 3.5 This piece of work has now been completed by Worcestershire County Council Public Health colleagues and is attached at **Appendix 1**. Officers have only very recently received the JSNA and will now review its findings and conclusions with the aim of targeting what available resource we have as a District Council (officer time and funding) at this area of work.
- 3.6 It should be noted that a further tranche of Household Support Funding from the Government has been provided to cover the period April 2022 – September 2027. Worcestershire County Council has deployed the bulk of this money ensuring that it meets the criteria of benefitting

- 3.7 The Council received £180,000 to deploy more locally and in respect of food poverty, £50,000 has been grant funded to the Worcester Foodbank (this being in addition to the £45,000 for 2022/2023 approved by Council in February 2022), and £37,000 has been used to top-up the Council's Discretionary Welfare Assistance Scheme which can provide food vouchers for those families in financial hardship.

***D. A local multi-agency Worcester City Child Food Poverty Group to be set up to monitor the situation post Covid 19 and co-ordinate the delivery of support to tackle food poverty in the city.***

- 3.8 As referred to in previous paragraphs the Worcester City District Collaborative is now considered to be the most appropriate local group to tackle this area of work rather than the setting up of a different group that risks duplication.
- 3.9 It should be noted however that with the recent decision to create a Task & Finish Group to look at how the Council can support residents with the cost-of-living crisis, it has been agreed that the Council will look to host a 'Cost of Living Crisis' Conference during July 2022 that will bring partners from across agencies and sectors together to understand the current extent of local support provision and where gaps may exist. It is this gap analysis that will be helpful in developing plans for what the local system needs to do further to support families and particular children who are suffering with poverty.
- 3.10 It will be critical that this group ensure that the impact of the crisis on children is kept in focus, as COVID-19 has shown that the impact of crisis is often worse in children and young people.

***E. To support the Foodbank in finding a new location and a new service model (hub and spoke model) so that it can operate to its best ability.***

- 3.11 Officers of the Council and representatives of the Worcester City Food bank maintain regular dialogue and at present there is no request for support with identifying or securing a new location to operate from.
- 3.12 As mentioned previously in the report the Council continues to financially support the Foodbank in 2022/2023 with a grant of £95,000 made up of a core budget allocation (£45,000) and Household Support Funding of £45,000 to cover the period April 2022 – September 2022.

***F. To consider if any suitable council land and/or allotment space can be used e.g., for community vegetable patches to help address food poverty etc***

- 3.13 The Allotment Review has now been completed and there was some constructive feedback received around the potential for raised beds to be provided. This was linked to providing better opportunities for those with accessibility and mobility issues (who may find it difficult to manage a full or half plot), and to provide an option for 'try before you buy' in order to manage the growing waiting list.
- 3.14 With an Allotment Officer now in post the potential provision of space for raised beds is something which can be looked at during 2022/2023 and this will be an opportunity to work with schools and community organisations who will already be focussed on food poverty in particular.

***G. To review the relationship of Worcester Discretionary Welfare Assistance Scheme with food poverty along with other similar schemes being delivered by partners across the city.***

- 3.15 More recently, the Council has been able to top up its DWAS budget through receiving Household Support Funding from the Government, via Worcestershire County Council. The scope of DWAS has broadened to include 'other' essential items and this will include food, energy, housing and any other costs deemed as essential.
- 3.16 The specific piece of work to review how DWAS impacts food poverty and links in with other similar offers has not yet been undertaken but is planned to do so during 2022.
- 3.17 One of the outputs from an initial meeting to discuss the Worcester City District Collaborative was the importance that a good start in life can have on future indicators such as education, employment, health and life expectancy. The meeting revealed the existing activity in place for children being delivered by organisations such as Action for Children, Worcester Community Trust, Onside Advocacy, Freedom Leisure and Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire to name a few.

***H. To make the best use of the £50,000 corporate funding to address food poverty***

- 3.18 With the implementation of the Worcester City District Collaborative Group, the completion of the Worcester City JSNA in respect of Child Food Poverty and the forthcoming Worcester City 'Cost of Living Crisis' Conference, the Council will be in a better position to think about how the funding should be utilised during July onwards.
- 3.19 It is therefore recommended that working in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee and Political Group Leaders that a plan of action is developed during July. Given the size of the overall pot of funding approved (£50,000) then it is likely that officers could utilise Managing Director Urgency Powers to approve such plans and associated expenditure in consultation with those Members referred to above.

**Ward(s):** All

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**Background Papers:** [Child Poverty Task Finish Group Report Final.pdf \(worcester.gov.uk\)](#)

**Appendix 1 - Food Poverty in Worcester City April 2022**