

**Report to: Health and Wellbeing Committee, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

**Report of: Corporate Director – Operations, Homes and 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**

**1.2 Note that recommendation H has been completed, with a further update report to be presented in January 2024.**

**2. Background**

2.1 This is the fourth update report on this subject presented to this Committee with previous reports having been presented in November 2021, June 2022, and January 2023.

2.2 As stated in previous reports, it is important to note 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 who are vulnerable) is a statutory responsibility of Worcestershire County Council as the Upper Tier Authority and not the District Council.

2.3 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.

2.4 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.

2.5 This current report provides a further six-month update of progress against the recommendations and sets out the work that is planned for 2023/24.

**3. Information**

**Recommendation 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***

- 3.1 To progress this recommendation two actions are proposed. Firstly, it is considered worthwhile to bring this recommendation and the work of the Task & Finish Group to the attention of all plot holders through a short survey. The survey would seek to establish the level of food production currently undertaken that benefits the wider community.
- 3.2 In doing so the Council would be able to understand better any existing level of community provision in place whilst at the same time encouraging additional activity whether that be through existing plots or underutilised space.
- 3.3 Secondly, interest has been shown from a Site Representative on one of the Council's allotment sites about trialling a community garden scheme. This particular site does have potential for such a scheme but would require negotiation with some plot holders about relinquishing sites that could be put to better use than they are currently.
- 3.4 To manage expectations, the Council has 24 allotment sites within its ownership and management, providing almost 1000 plots. The Council employs a single dedicated Allotment Officer whose day-to-day role is to ensure that allotment sites are being used in accordance with site rules, that letting and reletting of plots is undertaken in a fair and equitable way and that the Council are undertaking all necessary repairs and maintenance to elements it is responsible for.
- 3.5 The Council's role in being able to progress this recommendation will therefore be focussed around 'enabling' activity through potential provision of and access to land, access to community grants and community building work that links interested parties together.
- 3.6 This recommendation remains in progress.

***Recommendation G – To review the relationship of the Worcester City Discretionary Welfare Assistance Scheme (DWAS) with food poverty along with other similar schemes being delivered by partners across the City***

- 3.7 A report that presents a root and branch review of the DWAS scheme is scheduled to be presented to this Committee in July 2023. This report will provide Members with an opportunity to debate how they would wish any proposed DWAS budget to be used in light of competing priorities exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis.
- 3.8 As a non-statutory service, it will be necessary in light of the financial challenge presented by the medium-term financial plan, to review the level of financial support currently provided through this scheme.
- 3.9 It is important to note however that between 2021-22 – 2022-23 the Council provided over £460,000 of support in respect of food provision to residents of the City, not including £206,000 of financial support in order to increase the DWAS budget for which people can obtain support in order to purchase food.
- 3.10 This recommendation remains in progress.

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

3.11 At the previous two meetings of this Committee, use of the £50,000 budget has been approved as set out below:

<b>Approved use of Spend</b>	<b>Approved allocation (£000's)</b>
Provision of a Community Fridge at Dines Green Community Hub	3.2
DWAS 'Top Up' for Childhood Essentials	40
Action for Children – Crisis Fund	6.8
Total	50

3.12 This recommendation is considered to have been completed.

3.13 This report confirms that 2 of the 8 recommendations remain in progress with 6 completed. The 2 remaining recommendations will be the subject of future update reports that will continue to be presented to this committee at 6 monthly intervals.

**Ward(s):** All  
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**Background Papers:** None