

Anti-Poverty Strategy 2018 – 2022

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 received Royal Assent on 18th December 2017. The aim is to eradicate child poverty in Scotland. Targets are set for achievement by 1 April 2030 with interim targets to be achieved by 1 April 2023. These are stretching given that Scotland has been going backwards against such targets in recent years.

The Act requires Scottish Ministers to prepare 4 yearly delivery plans, the first covering 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2022. Local authorities are required, along with the local Health Board, to publish jointly an annual local child poverty action report. This must set out the measures taken by each during the preceding year to contribute towards the targets and the measures proposed for the future.

Officers have prepared a draft Anti-poverty strategy and associated plan that covers the required factors and looks to demonstrate that poverty is being addressed in Argyll and Bute. The strategy sets out our vision as:

“We want an Argyll and Bute where no-one lives in poverty. Everyone should be able to achieve their potential and feel healthy, happy and valued. We want to be a place where everyone understands that tackling poverty is everyone’s responsibility. We believe that if we act locally, and in partnership, we can make a real difference.”

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Policy & Resources Committee is asked to approve the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy and Plan attached at Appendix 1.
- The Committee notes that the strategy and plan, once approved, will be shared with community and participation groups, that mechanisms will be set up to monitor targets and milestones, and that a report will be brought back annually reviewing actions achieved at the end of each reporting year.

Anti-Poverty Strategy 2018 – 2022

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 received Royal Assent on 18th December 2017. The aim is to eradicate child poverty in Scotland. Targets are set for achievement by 1 April 2030 with interim targets to be achieved by 1 April 2023. These are stretching given that Scotland has been going backwards against such targets in recent years.
- 2.2 The Act requires Scottish Ministers to prepare 4 yearly delivery plans, the first covering 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2022. Local authorities are required, along with the local Health Board, to publish jointly an annual local child poverty action report. This must set out the measures taken by each during the preceding year to contribute towards the targets and the measures proposed for the future. Officers have prepared a draft Anti-poverty strategy and associated plan that covers the required factors and will facilitate the production of the required annual report. The draft strategy is now presented for consideration.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Policy & Resources Committee is asked to approve the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy and Plan attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 The Committee notes that the strategy and plan, once approved, will be shared with community and participation groups, that mechanisms will be set up to monitor targets and milestones, and that a report will be brought back annually reviewing actions achieved at the end of each reporting year.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 requires Scottish Ministers to prepare 4 yearly delivery plans, the first covering 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2022. Amongst other matters these must set out the measures they propose to take to support local authorities to consider the automatic payment of benefits and support, and for setting the amount of revenue support grant payable to each local authority to ensure that resources are directed for the purpose of contributing to the meeting of child poverty targets. The first plan is due to be published before 1 April 2018.
- 4.2 Local authorities are required, along with the local Health Board, to publish jointly an annual local child poverty action report. This must set out the measures taken by each during the preceding year to contribute towards the targets and the measures proposed for the future. In particular, it has to cover measures taken to

provide income maximisation assistance for pregnant women and families with children, and measures to assist households where a member has protected characteristics and their income is adversely affected or expenditure increased as a result. In order to do this, we need to have a clear strategy and action plan relating to child poverty. As children are part of families and the wider community, officers have prepared a broader Anti-poverty strategy covering all these matters.

4.3 Poverty is an issue for our area. We are a relatively low wage economy with average gross weekly pay in Feb 2018 of £464.70 – 15% below the Scottish average of £547.70. The latest statistics for child poverty in Argyll and Bute (Source: End Child Poverty) show that 20.4% of children in our area are in low income households – a total of 3,176 in 2015. In addition, the Scottish Housing Condition Survey 2017 estimates that 48% of households in our area are in fuel poverty – well above the Scottish average of 30.7%. So there are a number of important drivers for bringing together a cohesive anti-poverty strategy in addition to the new legal requirement.

4.4 Officers have prepared a draft Anti-poverty strategy and associated plan that covers the required factors and looks to demonstrate that poverty is being addressed in Argyll and Bute. The strategy details the issues that we face, relating to geography, demographics and our economic base. It lists the current situation, our challenges and advantages. It emphasizes that despite challenges, we are able to demonstrate an organised approach in our council policies and plans that tackles the issues of poverty and deprivation. Key to this is our close working with community bodies, the Third Sector, The Strategic Housing Forum, The Department of Work and Pensions, Employers and Education establishments.

4.5 The strategy sets out our vision as:

“We want an Argyll and Bute where no-one lives in poverty. Everyone should be able to achieve their potential and feel healthy, happy and valued. We want to be a place where everyone understands that tackling poverty is everyone’s responsibility. We believe that if we act locally, and in partnership, we can make a real difference.”

4.6 To achieve this vision we have identified 6 key areas in which we feel our anti-poverty services and strategies should be focused:

- Children and Families
- Employment
- Finance
- Health and Wellbeing
- Home Energy and Fuel
- Travel and Transport

4.7 We believe that our current plans and strategies (for example: Local Housing Strategy 2016 - 2021; Children and Young Peoples Services Plan; Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan; Education Services Plan 2017 – 2020; Customer and Support Services Plan 2017- 2020 and the Employability Team Plan) fit well with the chosen 6 areas and readily provide the measurable benchmarks and targets required for an effective Anti-Poverty Strategy. It is anticipated that the WRWG will provide leadership in this area and produce an

annual review plan that demonstrates our success with the targets already set and sets new ones as we move forward.

4.8 In order to organise our plan, we have set out 4 objectives as follows:

1. To listen to people and families experiencing poverty and make sure their voice is heard.
2. To support people experiencing poverty to move from dependence to independence.
3. To ensure our information and services are easy to access.
4. To provide services that meet the needs of people experiencing poverty.

4.9 These objectives are in line with those pursued by other Argyll and Bute Council bodies and our community and Third Sector partners. Namely to ensure participation and engagement, to empower our people. Also to make sure our services are fit for purpose and readily accessed and meet the needs of those in poverty and deprivation.

4.10 The strategy and plan reflects all 6 of the Outcomes identified in the Corporate Plan 2018 – 2022.

- Our Economy is diverse and thriving
- We have an infrastructure that supports sustainable growth
- Education skills and training maximise opportunities for all
- Children and young people have the best possible start
- People live active, healthier and independent lives
- People will live in safer and stronger communities

4.11 The Anti-Poverty Strategy and Plan is the product of involvement with a wide number of organisations within Argyll and Bute and the Third Sector. It is hoped that it will provide a starting point for good communication and concerted action to address the issues of poverty and deprivation within Argyll and Bute. It is acknowledged that this area faces particular problems, relating to being a low wage economy with marked housing and fuel poverty. Opportunities can be limited for our young people, particularly those who are care experienced. We have the additional challenges posed by being a large rural area, with more islands than any other authority, 23 of which are populated, and a sparse population of only 13 people per square kilometre.

4.12 It is acknowledged that some changes and additions to the strategy and action plan may be necessary when they are shared with the wider community. Updated versions will be brought back for further approval as required in addition to the required annual reports under the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS:

5.1 A draft Anti-poverty strategy and action plan is presented for consideration. The strategy will facilitate meeting the new legal requirement to present an annual report jointly with the health board on local child poverty actions. It does however have a broader focus on anti-poverty generally as opposed to exclusively targeting child poverty, recognising that children are part of families and the wider community.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy: This sets out our policy for Anti-Poverty and is in line with the Council's Corporate Plan and Local Outcome Improvement Plan.
- 6.2 Financial: The draft strategy proposes actions solely from existing resources, with the intention of co-ordinating these better.
- 6.3 Legal: The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 requires the Council to produce its first local child poverty action report as soon as practical after 31 March 2019. The strategy and associated action plan will facilitate this requirement.
- 6.4 HR: No additional staff, or staffing changes proposed at this point
- 6.5 Equalities: The strategy strongly supports equality and diversity and respects the Protected Characteristics of: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation (Sec 149 (7) Equality Act 2010).
- 6.6 Risk: These proposals reduce the risk of lack of communication and integrated working between the relevant agencies, which could lead to a waste of resources and a failure to make progress.
- 6.7 Customer Service: These targeted interventions provide a focus to identify service delivery and support to people experiencing poverty and deprivation.

Appendix

1. Draft Anti-Poverty Strategy

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16 May 2018

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