

ANTI-POVERTY TASK AND FINISH GROUP

18 August 2020

Minutes of the Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group meeting held remotely on Tuesday 18 August 2020 at 10:00am.

Members of the Task and Finish Group Present:

S.J. Coleman

Mrs V. Cook

Mrs D.C. Earl-Williams

P.J. Gray

C.A. Madeley

Other Members Present:

C.A. Bayliss, C.A. Clark, P.C. Courtel, D.G. Oliver, G.F. Stevens and H.L. Timpe.

Officers Present:

Malcolm Johnston - Executive Director

Joe Powell - Head of Service – Housing and Community

Lisa Cooper – Democratic Services Manager

Also present: 4 members of the public via the YouTube live broadcast.

AP20/1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

(1)

RESOLVED: Councillor Coleman was appointed as Chairman of the Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group.

AP20/2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Barnes and Mrs M.L. Barnes.

AP20/3 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

(3)

There were no declarations of interest.

AP20/4 ANTI-POVERTY TASK AND FINISH GROUP: NEXT STEPS

(4)

The Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group (APT&FG) had been established and its Terms of Reference (ToR) agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2019. As a result of the impact of COVID-19 the previously approved timetable for the APT&FG had not been followed and a revised timetable was included at Appendix A to the report for agreement.

The Rother Alliance had developed a series of proposals for consideration by the APT&FG which were set out at Appendix B to the report. The proposals had a two-phased approach; research and evidence gathering and strategy and action resulting from the research, which might be included in a final Anti-Poverty Strategy.

At this meeting, the APT&FG were asked to consider and agree the research and evidence gathering stage and the Chairman led Members through the proposed approach as outlined at Appendix B. It was proposed that officers developed a series of evidence gathering sessions to be held virtually with relevant partner agencies and services to establish the impact of poverty on a range of key user groups. Members would need to assess and understand the levels of poverty and deprivation within the key user groups identified. It was agreed that the evidence gathering sessions would be held in private to enable full and frank discussion between Members and participants. During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- Members would need to be mindful of resources and time constraints and gather evidence from a focussed and relevant set of key partner agencies / services;
- A number of methods could be used to gather evidence; email / questionnaire with only the key partner agencies / services invited to present evidence;
- Christians Against Poverty be added to the list of partner agencies / services to be invited to give evidence;
- the cost and access to reliable public transport had an impact on poverty;
- there were a number of issues that impacted on poverty that were outside the direct control of RDC;
- at the strategy and action stage Members would like to consider an holistic approach to helping those in poverty, whilst recognising constraints;
- private sector rent levels were an issue in Rye and had a direct impact on poverty – the Council's Homelessness and Housing Strategies may be updated as a result of this work; the Housing Cabinet Portfolio Holder was also aware and was actively looking at ways to tackle this issue;
- the criteria for an award under the Council's Hardship Fund was considered difficult to meet;
- the regeneration agenda across the district to create more jobs and opportunities should have a positive impact on the poverty levels;
- the information on the Council's website could be improved in terms of signposting residents to appropriate agencies / support networks;
- the CAB had seen an increase in support required for residents with Council Tax arrears;
- Rough sleepers, victims of domestic abuse and violence and those in sudden unexpected poverty (loss of employment) be added to the key user groups;

- it would be useful for Members to define what was meant by poverty – it need not necessarily just mean financial;
- there was no officer resources to go into schools and colleges and talk about money management; in the past high street banks had played an educational role and this could be a recommended outcome;
- mental health issues were an integral issue to poverty (ESCC mental health services would be contacted to take part).

It was anticipated that a lot of information could be gathered by way of a desk-top exercise and provided to Members. Agencies and stakeholders would be contacted to see whether they could meet with the APT&FG within the timeframe and appropriate sessions arranged. Others would be invited to submit written evidence only; the Chairman agreed to work with officers on identifying the agencies / stakeholders to invite.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the amendments to the timeframes for the Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group in Appendix A to the report be agreed;
- 2) the proposed approach to research and evidence gathering proposed in Appendix B to the report be agreed, as amended; and
- 3) the strategy and action proposals outlined in Appendix B to the report be noted.

AP20/5
(5)

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no any other business items.

AP20/6
(6)

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next formal meeting of the APT&FG was likely to be held in November 2020 and a date would be organised in due course, once the programme of evidence gathering sessions had been arranged.

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 11:20am

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