



THE ROTHER ALLIANCE

# ANTI- POVERTY PROPOSALS

PROPOSALS FOR THE ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL  
ANTI-POVERTY TASK & FINISH GROUP

## WRITTEN BY

CLLR SAM COLEMAN

## WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM

CLLR TERRY BYRNE  
CLLR VIKKI COOK  
CLLR POLLY GRAY  
CLLR HAZEL TIMPE

  
Rother District Council  
Town Hall Bexhill

Community Help Point Opening Hours  
Monday to Thursday 8.30am - 5.00pm  
Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm

[www.rother.gov.uk](http://www.rother.gov.uk) 01424 787000

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# AIMS AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

**Aims of the Task and Finish Group** according to Terms of Reference agreed at Overview and Scrutiny, January 27th 2020.

- Contribute to the development of an anti-poverty strategy for Rother
- Identify new ways of working to reduce poverty and hardship within the district

## **Agreed objectives of the Task and Finish Group**

- To undertake a review of the accessibility of appropriate financial products, including an analysis of the forms of less appropriate forms of credit and the extent of their use.
- To assess how residents are educated about finances and consider what improvements can be made to financial literacy in the district.
- To consider the impact of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme policy and the accessibility to the scheme by those experiencing financial hardship.
- To consider the impact of Council administered discretionary housing benefit payments (DHP), its accessibility and the processes used to allocate DHP to those at risk of homelessness.
- To investigate the availability of financial advice, homelessness advice, employment and training advice and the role of the Council in supporting these.
- To investigate the availability of affordable fuel, food and other provisions and to consider if the Council has a role in supporting these.

## **The purpose of this document**

This document establishes a set of proposals from the Rother Alliance to feed into the eventual report of the Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group. The proposals are set out in two parts.

- 'Research and evidence gathering' in order to determine the situation across the district and establish best practice.
- 'Strategy and actions' in order to fulfil the aims and objectives of the terms of reference.



The background of the entire page is a grayscale photograph of a paved road curving to the left, bordered by dense trees and foliage. A green rectangular banner is positioned across the upper portion of the image, containing the main title in white text.

# RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE GATHERING

## AIMS OF THIS SECTION

- **Collect** evidence from residents, outside bodies and organisations on the levels of poverty in key user groups, especially within lower socio-economic areas.
- **Assess** restrictions and possibilities surrounding the council tax reduction scheme.
- **Identify** best practice and areas for improvement in relation to combating and dealing with poverty.



# RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE GATHERING

- Assess those currently on 80% council tax reduction to see how many would qualify for 100% council tax reduction under the previous scheme.
- Assess whether it is possible to increase council tax reduction by more than 80% without being outweighed by collection cost and if so, by how much.
- Assess whether any of the council tax reduction measures put in place as a result of COVID-19 could be sustainable going forward.
- Assess the levels of poverty and deprivation within the following key user groups.
  - Black and Minority Ethnicities (BAME), migrants and asylum seekers
  - LGBTQIA+
  - The disabled and neuro-diverse
  - Children and young people
  - The elderly and those in receipt of social care
  - Self employed, unemployed and those in precarious employment such as zero-hour contracts
  - Recipients of Universal Credit, Jobseekers Allowance and Housing Benefits
  - Residents living in the private rental sector
- Identify where council departments and cabinet portfolios might do more to alleviate poverty and deprivation.
- Identify best practice in terms of helping residents increase income and limit outgoings (especially where those outgoings are something we control).
- Look at whether the council's KPIs factor in the council's performance at alleviating poverty and deprivation and where extra KPIs could be considered.
- Gather evidence from the following on the extent of poverty and deprivation within Rother and the activities which could be or already are being undertaken to alleviate it.
  - Ward councillors, officers and cabinet portfolio holders
  - Citizens Advice Bureau, Shelter, HARC and Brighton Housing Trust
  - H.U.G, Homeless Support Group and Warming up the Homeless
  - Trade Unions, Neighbouring Councils (Hastings, Eastbourne, Wealden, ESCC, social services), Parish Councils
  - Foodbanks, family support workers and charities such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation
  - Housing Associations (Optivo & Orbit)





# STRATEGY AND ACTION

## AIMS OF THIS SECTION

- **Improve** how the council's existing services and responsibilities are carried out to further deliver on the aims set out in the Terms of Reference.
- **Implement** new schemes and initiatives to improve the council's ability to deliver on the aims set out in the Terms of Reference.
- **Establish** an effective anti-poverty strategy that addresses the major themes and issues surrounding poverty in Rother and deliver on the aims set out in the Terms of Reference.



# STRATEGY AND ACTIONS

- Open up a discretionary fund for parish councils to access in order to target those in the community who most need financial assistance.
- Restructure the council tax reduction scheme and revert to a 100% maximum reduction, balancing the previous qualifications for 100% CTR with current budgetary restraints as a way to ensure those at the very lowest of income can receive a 100% reduction even if some who would have previously qualified don't.
- For those who no longer qualify for 100% CTR, assess the viability of reductions between 80% and 100% taking into account the cost of collections.
- Make Hardship fund more accessible and ensure the hardship fund can be topped up, from reserves if needed.
- Make the collection process for council tax debts more compassionate and encompassing of individual circumstance.
- Introduce a Voluntary Accreditation Scheme for landlords to encourage better property conditions.
- Produce an Anti-Poverty Strategy which aims to dispel myths about poverty and end the stigma around it, help people to manage and escape from poverty, help prevent and minimise poverty and limit the damage of COVID-19 and any economic fallout.
- Focus on four key areas in order to achieve the aims of the Anti-Poverty Strategy:
  - **Education and employment opportunities and inequalities**
    - *Improve access to education for those in poverty*
    - *Improve access to extra-curricular opportunities for those in poverty*
    - *Improve access to employment and increase employment opportunities for those out of work or in poverty*
    - *Promote fair employment practices*
    - *Improve employment opportunities for residents in rural areas*
  - **Health inequalities**
    - *Improve access to physical and mental health support for those in poverty*
    - *Aim to increase the quality of life for those in poverty*
  - **Housing inequality and homelessness**
    - *Incentivise good landlords, liveable properties and fairer private rents*
    - *Improve access to the private rental sector for benefit recipients and aim to lessen the disparity between Housing Benefit and Private Rents*
    - *Ensure that housing deemed "affordable" is actually affordable in practical terms*
    - *Encourage an increase in the number of social rent properties in the area to reduce the size of the local housing waiting list*
  - **Rural poverty and deprivation**
    - *Look at improving transport links and access to amenities for rural residents*
    - *Provide more outreach to residents in rural poverty*
    - *Examine the Council's housing policies to help prevent rural isolation*







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