

Rother District Council

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 28 March 2022

Title: Draft Anti-Poverty Strategy

Report of: Joe Powell – Head of Housing and Community

Cabinet Spokesperson: Councillor Sam Coleman

Ward(s): All

Purpose of Report: To consider the recommendation arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14 March 2022, that the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy be approved for consultation purposes. The report and recommendations arising are reproduced below and the Minutes of that meeting (Appendix C) should be read in conjunction with this report.

Decision Type: Key

Officer

Recommendation(s): It be **RESOLVED**: That the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy be approved for consultation with key stakeholders and the wider population of Rother.

Reasons for

Recommendations: To enable the draft Strategy to be approved for consultation purposes.

Introduction

1. The Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2027 includes several objectives that aspire to improve the economic, housing, health and wellbeing outcomes of its residents; therefore, adopting measures and supporting local initiatives that address some of the causes of income, health and housing poverty (and alleviate its effects) will support the Council in its wider corporate ambitions.
2. In January 2020, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved the formation of an Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group (APT&FG) and set its Terms of Reference (Minute OSC19/48 refers). The aim of the APT&FG was to investigate the effects of income, health and housing poverty on local people and the local services that support them. The original timetable for the activity of the APT&FG has been revised due to the impact of COVID-19.
3. In June 2021, the APT&FG made recommendations to Cabinet that an Anti-Poverty Strategy be developed for Council approval (Minute CB21/18 refers). The recommended aim of the strategy was for statutory and community services operating in the Rother district to work together to reduce levels of poverty. The main objectives of the strategy were recommended as follows:

- **Coordination:** develop local strategic commissioning and operational structures to coordinate services designed to alleviate poverty.
 - **Access:** maximise the accessibility of services so that those in the greatest need can be reached.
 - **Promotion:** promote information, advice and support to service users and professionals.
4. It was also recommended that the development and delivery of the strategy be coordinated through existing partnership structures such as the Local Strategic Partnership.

Strategy Development

5. On 4 November 2021, a multi-agency event was held at The Pelham, led by the Council in partnership with Rother Voluntary Action (RVA). The purpose of the event was to review the recommended objectives and identify the high level aims and actions that would support us to achieve these.
6. The event was well attended and productive. Attendees were presented with feedback and case studies that had been secured by RVA following a series of consultations with local community groups from urban and rural areas of the district. We also presented the findings of the APT&FG based on the evidence gathering sessions it had undertaken. The objectives were reviewed and supported by those present at the event with a series of high level aims and actions also identified. These actions have been captured within the draft Action Plan appended to the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy at Appendix A.
7. The group also identified that the aims and actions identified within the strategy and its action plan need to be delivered by a multi-agency Anti-Poverty Strategy Steering Group (APSSG) to ensure objectives remain achievable. Progress reports on the action plan will also be fed to the Rother Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The LSP will support and monitor the progress of the strategy action plan through the promotion of its objectives through the East Sussex Strategy Partnership. The LSP will also support the coordination of existing resources and influence future service commissioning through its networks.

Consultation

8. The consultation plan, as attached at Appendix B, sets out the groups we intend to consult and the methods we intend to use. The majority of the consultation will take place via an online questionnaire; however, telephone and written consultation responses will be accepted.
9. The consultation questionnaire, as attached at the end of Appendix B, sets out several questions related to the draft document and proposed strategy objectives and action plan.

Conclusion

10. It is clear from the strategy development that the causes of poverty are multiple and complex and its symptoms wide ranging. The effects of poverty are felt by

a range of different sectors of the community across different demographic groups and geographic locations. Many of the causes of poverty cannot be influenced effectively at a local level and the Council cannot effectively tackle the symptoms of poverty on its own.

11. The strategy proposed has been developed between key local partners to ensure that the objectives identified are relevant and that the actions proposed ambitious, while being achievable within the resources available locally. The priority is to form the APSSG and begin to deliver the high level aims and actions that have been identified. The APSSG will develop and refine its objectives as it establishes itself. It will identify gaps in service provision and areas where greater collaboration and coordination between services can support improved outcomes for our residents. The Strategy should therefore be regarded as an important first step towards developing a more comprehensive response to tackling poverty locally.
12. The APSSG will provide periodic progress updates to the LSP in its role as the governing body responsible for monitoring the strategy and reporting progress to the East Sussex Strategic Partnership.

Legal Implications

13. An Equalities Impact Assessment will need to be completed before a final Strategy is adopted.

Environmental Implications

14. Current and future district environmental strategies and interventions will need to consider the needs of those experiencing poverty of access to adequate income, health, housing and education and ensure these needs are met.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	External Consultation	Yes
Environmental	Yes	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	No	Exempt from publication	No

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Appendices:	A – Draft Anti-Poverty Strategy B – Consultation Plan and Questionnaire C – Minute Extract from OSC
Relevant previous Minutes:	OSC19/48 CB21/18
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	None

OSC21/53. DRAFT ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY**(8)**

It was agreed by the Chairman to vary the order of the Agenda and for Members to discuss Item 8 after Item 5.

Members received the report of the Head of Housing and Community which gave details of the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy to go out to consultation with key stakeholders and the wider population of Rother. The Chairman welcomed Claire Cordell, Chief Executive Officer Rother Voluntary Action (RVA), to the meeting.

In January 2020, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved the formation of an Anti-Poverty Task and Finish Group (APT&FG), with the aim to investigate the effects of income, health and housing poverty on local people and the local services that support them. In June 2021, the APT&FG made recommendations to Cabinet that an Anti-Poverty Strategy be developed for Council approval, for statutory and community services operating in the Rother district to work together to reduce levels of poverty. It was also recommended that the development and delivery of the strategy be coordinated through existing partnership structures such as the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

On 4 November 2021, a multi-agency event was held at The Pelham, led by the Council in partnership with RVA. The purpose of the event was to review the recommended objectives and identify the high level aims and actions that would support the Council to achieve these. Attendees were presented with feedback and case studies that had been secured by RVA, in addition to the findings of the APT&FG based on the evidence gathering sessions it had undertaken. The objectives were reviewed and supported by those present at the event with a series of high level aims and actions also identified. The actions had been captured within the draft Action Plan appended to the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy at Appendix A to the report.

The group also identified that the aims and actions identified within the strategy and its action plan need to be delivered by a multi-agency Anti-Poverty Strategy Steering Group (APSSG) to ensure objectives remain achievable, with progress reports on the action plan fed to the Rother LSP who would support and monitor progress.

The consultation plan was attached at Appendix B to the report which set out the groups to be consulted with and the methods to be used. The majority of the consultation would take place via an online questionnaire; however, telephone and written consultation responses would be accepted. The consultation questionnaire was attached at the end of Appendix B to the report which related to the draft document and proposed strategy objectives and action plan.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and the following points were noted during the discussions:

- Members thanked the APT&FG, the Head of Housing and Community, officers and the RVA for their work in creating the Strategy;
- Members acknowledged that poverty was difficult to resolve at a local level;
- the APSSG would report regularly to the LSP as well as to this Committee;
- any future comments from Members could be fed through Councillor Coleman as the Council's spokesperson for Young Persons and Child Poverty; and
- Members were invited to contact the Head of Housing and Community with details of any charities to be included in the consultation who were not already on the list.

The strategy proposed had been developed between key local partners to ensure that the objectives identified were relevant and that the actions proposed ambitious, while being achievable within the resources available locally. The Strategy would be regarded as an important first step towards developing a more comprehensive response to tackling poverty locally.

The Chairman thanked Claire Cordell for attending the meeting and praised the work of the RVA.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet be requested to approve the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy for consultation with key stakeholders and the wider population of Rother.