

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL (BMBC)

This matter is not a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has not been included in the relevant Forward Plan.

Report of the Executive Director Adults & Communities

RESPONSE TO THE SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP (TFG) REPORT ON POVERTY

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To report to Cabinet the plans and progress against findings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) from the investigation undertaken on its behalf by the Poverty Task & Finish Group (TFG).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That Cabinet supports the progress made against each of the recommendations and supports the ongoing plans to implement them over the next 12 months**

3. Introduction/Background

- 3.1 As part of its work programme the OSC agreed to undertake a TFG investigation into Poverty in Barnsley. Given the heightened concerns regarding poverty both locally and nationally, the OSC felt it was an opportune time to undertake work in this area. The investigation sought to better understand the challenges in terms of poverty in Barnsley; to hear the views from a number of different key agencies; and consider what recommendations could be made for improvements.
- 3.2 In their report the TFG identified a number of areas for potential development which were felt to be timely in the context of the development of the Barnsley 2030 plan and also the progress towards a more Inclusive Economy in Barnsley. The TFG made 7 recommendations to support the continual improvement of services and support to local communities.

4. TFG Recommendations and Responses

4.1 **Recommendation 1: An updated Poverty Needs Assessment is undertaken for Barnsley**

As highlighted above, data and intelligence on poverty in Barnsley at a detailed local level is limited. It would be helpful to pull together intelligence from all our local agencies at Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA), to understand poverty in Barnsley, which will also be able to reflect the impact of the implementation of the recent welfare reforms, as it will be more timely than national datasets. It would be helpful to undertake both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the intelligence including an understanding of the income generated by our local support agencies by enabling residents to access the benefits they are entitled to. Additionally, the TFG feel it would be helpful to incorporate some specific poverty measures into quarterly corporate performance reporting, so that 'poverty' remains clearly on the agenda and is not lost amongst a variety of other measures.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported

The recommendation is accepted by the Service and would be facilitated through the Business Improvement and Intelligence team working closely with Adults and Communities, along with support from other services and partner agencies.

- An updated Poverty Needs Assessment would be vital in understanding the demographic spread and impact of poverty at a small geographical layer across the borough.
- The Covid-19 pandemic will have undoubtedly increased level of poverty in many ways as residents face uncertainly and hardship. This will have a greater impact people's ability to

live healthy lives. The extent of this cannot be understood until the needs assessment is undertaken.

When the recommendation will be implemented

- The production of a comprehensive impact assessment would require at least 3 months work to gather the required data and intelligence.
- Resources are currently limited due to the requirement to provide analytical support in combating Covid-19, so anticipated start date on the assessment would be from August 2020.
- To ensure that the report embraces the impact of Covid it is suggested that a first draft would be by March 2021.

How the recommendation will be implemented

- Various data sources would be gathered including BMBC data (council tax and benefits, vulnerable households, demographic segmentation data), partnership data (supplied by Berneslai Homes, Barnsley CVS, Barnsley and District Citizens Advice Bureau, DIAL).
- Data would be analysed at a smaller geographical level (LSOA) to provide a more comprehensive picture of the impact of poverty across the borough.
- We would also look to develop a key set of indicators using a life course approach that can be analysed at a lower geographical level and present this using the interactive capabilities such as the business intelligence tool Power BI. This would help in describing the real picture of poverty in Barnsley which can be supported with a short narrative report which turns the data into intelligence along with any insight and engagement to identify our key priorities.
- Qualitative data would be included to provide a richer picture, potentially through face-to-face interviews and surveys.
- The qualitative and quantitative analysis would be combined to produce an interactive needs assessment that reviews poverty across the borough at a small geography level and would provide an overall conclusion and recommendations.

4.2 **Recommendation 2: The Council and its partners consider their contracting, employment and recruitment practices**

The TFG are keen to ensure that the Council and its partners are exemplary employers locally: offering in-work progression such as provision of the increased use of career grades, not solely relying on qualifications; ensuring that both they and their contractors/supply chains pay the living wage and have exemplary employment practices such as offering in-work training. The TFG would also recommend that the Council and its partners place a focus on recruiting staff from our most deprived communities to support us having an inclusive economy.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported.

Career graded posts are contained within our business units in various professional areas such as planning, social care, finance and human resources. An increase in career graded posts is anticipated as part of the future apprentice strategy.

A policy is in place which enables jobs to be designed and evaluated on experience rather than qualifications and we will be seeking to build on this further to ensure we value experience alongside qualifications.

The Council has an employer pledge, where we share the ambition for Barnsley to develop “More and Better Jobs” to grow a thriving economy for local people and businesses. We believe that we can contribute by developing the skills needed to grow our businesses, and by giving Barnsley people the skills and opportunities they need to gain, secure and progress in and sustain employment.

We promise to actively help people:

- Get Ready for work – engage with the community, jobs fairs etc. work experience, placements and job application support
- Support into work – open days, apprenticeships, flexible working opportunities
- Develop and stay in work – job shadowing, secondments, training and development, inclusive and healthy workplace
- Review our job descriptions around essential qualification criteria

We have successfully implemented a recruitment process for individuals with Learning Disabilities (LD) to help services specifically for recruitment challenges in this specialist area.

Within the service we have defined and identified the barriers and complexity faced by the LD candidates. The organisation since the start of the journey 4 years ago has increased from 1.2% to 2.9% and now at 5.8% not only reaching national targets but now exceeding them. In people terms is from 7 people to 31 people.

This provides us with a business model that can be used for future cohorts such as care leavers. In terms of supply chains for agency staff, we promote local skills and employment, and instruct our supply chain to deliver the following outcomes:

- More local people in employment
- More opportunities for disadvantaged people
- Improved Skills
- Improved skills for disadvantaged people
- Improved employability of young people

Any commitments made by the supply chain will be actively contract managed to ensure the outcomes are measured and achieved.

Recovering our post covid economy will be a huge challenge and therefore we must look to supporting this by a range of interventions enabling some of our most disadvantaged communities gain both work experiences and employment via the council and other key public sector employers / anchor institutions.

4.3 **Recommendation 3: An All Member Information Briefing (AMIB) is held on Good Food Barnsley CiC and Area Councils/Ward Alliances support projects through this partnership working to enable delivery of sustainable solutions to poverty**

The TFG welcome the development of Good Food Barnsley CiC and recognise the potential for agencies to work together to provide sustainable solutions to poverty. The TFG appreciate the partnership is in the early stages of development; however, feel it is important that all Members and those on Ward Alliances understand more about this work and the opportunities to fund sustainable projects through it, such as Healthy Holidays and Incredible Edible Barnsley.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported.

During the COVID 19 pandemic we have been unable to hold partnership meetings but have taken steps to address food poverty by:

- Emergency food aid which has delivered and continues to deliver emergency food parcels to COVID related cases.
- BMBC has funded the Company Shop to supply the emergency food aid parcels (which they have match funded). This is through the COVID emergency hardship funds.
- Continue to support the Foodbank and referrals to it for non COVID related food aid.
- Deployed community responders to support people with essential shopping where they are unable to do so themselves.

Given the current pressures it is recommended that information on this area is fed into the Area Councils and Ward Alliances as part of the Recovery Planning activities.

4.4 **Recommendation 4: Additional investment is made available to provide externally procured outreach advice services to ensure basic local provision in every area**

Given the need for advice services and the evidence of their return on investment, TFG Members felt it was essential that all wards had provision of a basic local service (not just a core service delivered in the town centre). Members were keen to ensure that support around 'transitions' is available and promoted as a method of early intervention, to avoid people getting into financial difficulties. Also, provision of education and support on how to budget over prolonged periods of unstable employment as well as transitioning from benefits to being in employment and vice versa.

Service Response: This recommendation is noted.

As part of our recovery arrangements we are reviewing the advice services available within each locality area as part of the alignment of Area Councils recovery work. As part of this we will review whether there is scope to recommission as a borough-wide provision and whether the existing allocated resources can contain this service.

4.5 **Recommendation 5: Given the key role effective public transport services are to the poverty agenda, the TFG requested that Members are involved in the development of transport services locally and a specific AMIB is provided in Barnsley on the outcomes of the SCR bus review**

The TFG are cognisant of the importance of effective local transport services both to aid people in accessing employment but also to seek support services. Members welcome the SCR bus review and would like to be advised of the outcomes and implications of the recent review.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported.

The Bus Review is likely to be published on 15 June. The SCR are to prepare a brief for Council Leaders for each authority prior to this setting out the Operating Models available for review / comment / agreement and a discussion with the Mayor / Leaders will be held late June. An AMIB will be prepared for discussion and an Authority response sent to the SCR.

4.6 **Recommendation 6: The Council should identify an Executive Director and Cabinet Member Champion for Poverty to ensure it is considered in all the Council's decisions**

Members recognise the challenge of work on the poverty agenda given it is so multi-faceted. The TFG were keen that it does not get siloed; however, felt that it is important to ensure that the poverty rhetoric is not lost within the complexity of both specific initiatives to address poverty as well as the ongoing work of the Council and its partners.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported.

Given the significance of work as a route out of poverty it is recommended that the Executive Director – Place & Cabinet Member (Chair of the Stronger Communities Partnership). This agenda requires all of our leadership to affect changes across Barnsley.

Recommendation 7: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertakes further investigation specifically on Child Poverty as part of its future work programme

Given the complexity of poverty, the group focused their investigation on adults in poverty and support for them. However, the TFG are aware of the prevalence and impact of child poverty, which merits specific further investigation, building on this existing work.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported however it may be helpful for Recommendation 1 to be concluded which will provide a rich picture on poverty in the round / all ages.

Significant work is / has been undertaken by both Children's Social Care, the Trust and the Barnsley Safeguarding Children's Partnership (BSCP) however there remains system wide challenge across council, education, health and care services to enable clear pathways out of poverty in order to improve the circumstances, life experience and outcomes of families and children.

The Children and Young People's Trust receives regularly reports relating to the Troubled Families programme which underpins support and services in this area.

The All Age Early Strategy and the Early Help Delivery Group (Children and Families) provides a framework for an holistic family assessment and plan which includes income, skills, education, employment, access to food and money management; taking a whole family approach to mitigate and address the impact of poverty on families and on children's outcomes. This overseen by the Stronger Communities Partnership and the Barnsley Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

Children's Social Care have worked with both Sheffield and Huddersfield University's in respect of identifying, assessing and responding to children and families in poverty and have 'poverty proofed' our assessment processes.

The Barnsley Safeguarding Children's Partnership Board (BSCP) have also addressed childhood poverty through the Neglect Strategy, the Neglect Sub Group and within the BSCP training programme.

5. Implications for local people / service users

- 5.1 Responding to the recommendations within the OSC TFG report will help contribute to addressing the impact of poverty across the borough. The investigation and report however were written prior to the outbreak of the Coronavirus therefore we anticipate further challenges for individuals and families as a consequence of potential economic decline and job losses.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 Many of the recommendations relate to the overall impact assessment of Covid 19 including the financial impact both nationally, regionally and locally. Specific requests for financial support are being considered through the Covid 19 financial plan and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

7. Employee implications

- 7.1 No specific employee implications are noted.

8. Communications implications

- 8.1 In the context of Covid 19 performance measures are being reviewed accordingly.
- 8.2 We will continue to ensure that access to support services is marketed across the town and in neighbourhoods in order to prevent hardship for individuals and families.

9. Consultations

- 9.1 Consultations have taken place with Place, Public Health, Childrens & Core to respond to this report.

10. The Corporate Plan and the Council's Performance Management Framework

- 10.1 The recommendations will contribute to the three priorities for Barnsley of: a thriving and vibrant economy, citizens achieving their potential, and strong & resilient communities.

10.2 The development of the Barnsley 2030 plan will continue alongside developing our approach to achieving an Inclusive Economy. Whilst challenged by C19 this work will ensure we have comprehensive plan for the town that everyone has stake in.

11. Promoting equality & diversity and social inclusion

11.1 C19 has shown that those communities that have the greatest disadvantage have been more affected by the pandemic. Equalling up opportunities and Life Chances remains a significant priority for the council and its partners.

12. Tackling Health Inequalities

12.1 There are large health inequalities between Barnsley and England, and within Barnsley itself. Poverty and associated factors are recognised as wider determinants of health inequality; therefore, working to tackle poverty contributes to tackling health inequalities. The investigation undertaken by the TFG and recommendations made are in support of improving services across the borough; with recognition that additional work may be required in specific communities to help address health inequalities.

13. Risk management issues

13.1 The Council's Strategic Risk Register (SRR) is currently under review; therefore, the reference to specific risks is likely to change. However, it is likely the recommended activities detailed in this report will contribute further to the effective mitigation of risks associated with poverty in Barnsley, and it would be appropriate for any follow-up report to be cognisant of these risks.

14. Glossary

AMIB	All Member Information Briefing
BMBC	Barnsley Metropolitan borough Council
CiC	Community Interest Company
LSOA	Lower Layer Super Output Area
OSC	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
SCR	Sheffield City Region
TFG	Task and Finish Group

15. Background papers and useful links

- OSC TFG Report on Poverty (Cab.18.3.2020/8):
<https://barnslymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s64022/Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee%20-%20Task%20and%20Finish%20Group%20-%20Poverty.pdf>

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