

# **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of the meeting of Poverty Working Panel held at Online via the Zoom app. All Councillors will have been sent an appointment with the meeting link. on 12 October 2020**

### **Attendance list at end of document**

The meeting started at 4.00 pm and ended at 6.22 pm

### **1 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **2 Welcome and introductions**

The Chair welcomed Members and Officers to the meeting and thanked Libby Jarrett (Service Lead – Revenues, Benefits & Customer Services), Helen Wharam (Public Health Project Officer) and John Golding (Strategic Lead – Housing, Health & Environment) for attending and addressing the Panel.

The Chair then invited Panel Members to highlight issues which they felt were priorities for the poverty agenda in East Devon, and the following points were raised:

- Focus on the positive outcomes in the Poverty Report, particularly paragraphs 6.9 (rough sleepers) and 6.27 (properties acquired)
- Domestic abuse and calls to the children's helpline had increased during the Covid-19 pandemic and both should be monitored moving forward
- The situation caused by the pandemic was likely to worsen
- The poverty agenda should focus on advice and support to prevent homelessness, immediate crisis support and the ability for residents to recover from financial crisis
- It was noted that the poverty agenda is linked to the low skills / low wage economy and so cannot be separated from the economic agenda
- Education was vital
- Tenants of housing associations should be included in support as, for example, there was no EDDC housing provision or support in Cranbrook
- Focus on financial vulnerability of residents
- Greater use of social media to publicise available support and good liaison with organisations such as Citizens Advice
- The situation with Covid-19 could change rapidly and the poverty strategy would need to be able to respond quickly to such changes
- Rural poverty needed to be addressed.

### **3 Why the Council has set up the Panel and draft Terms of Reference**

The Chair advised that the Council had set up the Panel following the publication last year of East Devon's Poverty Report, which was undertaken by Libby Jarrett and Amy Gilbert-Jeans. The Overview Committee and Cabinet had proposed that a Poverty Working Panel be established to address recommendations made in the Poverty Report and to contribute towards the formation of the Council's first East Devon Poverty Strategy.

It was emphasised that actions undertaken by the Council need to be both evidence based and wherever possible address the root causes of poverty. This meeting was intended to explore issues and set the context.

The expanded draft Terms of Reference, the basis of which was agreed by Cabinet at its February meeting, had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The Chair invited John Golding to introduce the expanded Terms of Reference.

It was noted that the expanded Terms of Reference replicated the purpose of the Panel as set by Cabinet, which was to focus on the development of the Poverty Strategy, its implementation and subsequent monitoring.

With regard to the Terms of Reference, the following points were discussed:

- Partners could be invited to advise the Panel, eg. Department of Work & Pensions, Citizens Advice, Homemaker
- Future Panel meetings could be focussed around themed activities / issues
- It was agreed to delete recommendation no. 10 as this was a repeat of recommendation no. 6
- It was agreed that the economic and skills development agenda should be included in investigations into poverty
- The Panel should focus on issues either where EDDC has direct control or which the Council can impact eg. social housing
- A slide showing areas under the Council's influence was shown and would be circulated with the minutes
- The Poverty Strategy should be flexible enough to deal with changing situations eg. the Covid-19 pandemic
- The Strategy should be linked to the wider work of the Council eg. provision of more housing, land assets and strategic planning and the climate change agenda
- It was noted that the Cabinet resolution included that no one should fall into poverty as a result of a crisis and that no one should stay in involuntary poverty for more than two years
- The introduction of 'money mentors' could be considered to help prevent people going into debt
- Better use could be made of digital systems to help residents access relevant information
- It was noted that other local authorities (mostly upper tier) had good poverty strategies in place, examples being Cambridge and Portsmouth
- In developing the Poverty Strategy, there was a need to define the groups on which to focus
- Different life stages and age groups should be considered
- There should be a means of tracking successful outcomes
- There was concern that residents trying to meet the cost of Christmas would create additional pressure on foodbanks in January. It was noted that the Council was proactive in trying to build financial resilience and encourage residents not to 'rob Peter to pay Paul'
- Services across East Devon should be considered to ensure consistency across the whole district

The Poverty Report had been re-circulated prior to the meeting. Libby Jarrett was invited to present the Report and highlight key issues and areas of work for the Council, which included the following:

The Report was focussed on working age households, under the main headings of debt and financial vulnerability, homelessness, employment and earnings and health and wellbeing.

Since producing the report the position had undoubtedly worsened since Covid-19. Many of the issues identified at the time together with the recommendations are still relevant now.

Some issues to be addressed were:

- Rural poverty
- Fuel poverty
- Budgeting and high levels of indebtedness
- High levels of private rents with those who privately rent more likely to be in debt
- High levels of part-time workers and low pay
- Higher levels of unemployment and this is expected to rise further

Funding of £30,000 had been received from Devon County Council in order to focus on financial resilience work.

The Panel discussed the following points:

- There was concern regarding doorstep lending and the need to address its root causes
- Consideration should be given to support for those whose children have free school meals
- Consideration of support for people losing jobs in the catering and hospitality sectors

## 5 **The Marmot Report (Helen Wharam)**

Helen Wharam introduced the Marmot Report and highlighted the following:

**Definitions** – from Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government:

- People are considered to be living in *poverty* if they lack the financial resources to meet their needs
- People are regarded as being *deprived* if they lack any kind of resources, not just income.

Various factors are taken into account to identify priority communities who require support. Together these factors are referred to as the Index of Multiple Deprivation [IMD]. The IMD is the official measure of relative deprivation in England and it follows an established framework in defining deprivation through a wide range of an individual's living conditions. The seven IMD domains for 2019 are:

- Income
- Employment
- Health Deprivation and Disability
- Education, Skills Training
- Crime
- Barriers to Housing and Services

- Living Environment

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/835115/loD2019\\_Statistical\\_Release.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/835115/loD2019_Statistical_Release.pdf)

Devon County Council has a dashboard covering these indicators:

<https://www.devonhealthandwellbeing.org.uk/jsna/jsna-headline-tool/>

### **Health Equity in England: the Marmot Review 10 Years On**

Published in February 2020, this new report examines progress since the 2010 report. It explores changes since 2010 in five key policy objectives:

- giving every child the best start in life
- enabling all people to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
- ensuring a healthy standard of living for all
- creating fair employment and good work for all
- creating and developing healthy and sustainable places and communities.

For each objective the report outlines areas of progress and decline since 2010 and proposes recommendations for future action, setting out a clear agenda at a national, regional and local level.

<https://www.health.org.uk/publications/reports/the-marmot-review-10-years-on>

### **Poverty and the Covid-19 pandemic**

People on low incomes have been disproportionately impacted by the health and economic impacts of the coronavirus.

<https://www.local.gov.uk/using-marmot-principles-tackle-health-inequalities-and-covid-19-23-june-2020>

### **Links to the EDDC Public Health Strategic Plan**

'Public health' is used to cover physical and mental health and wellbeing of everyone in the district.

Strategic aims:

1. To help more people to be healthy and stay healthy
2. To enhance self-care and support community resilience
3. To integrate and improve support for people in their homes.

<https://eastdevon.gov.uk/environmental-health-and-wellbeing/health-and-wellbeing/east-devon-s-public-health-plan-and-review-of-progress/public-health-strategic-plan/>

It is based on evidence-based JSNA data:

<https://www.devonhealthandwellbeing.org.uk/jsna/>

## **6 Identify how Covid-19 has impacted on the poverty agenda within our communities**

The Panel discussed ways in which Covid-19 had impacted on the poverty agenda within local communities:

- Churches in Exmouth had responded well to provide support for local people
- The EDDC support hub had worked well within dispersed populations such as the Exe Valley. Farm shops and pubs had also worked well
- Honiton had seen a willingness among neighbours to help each other
- There was a need moving forward to build on good relationships to encourage sustainable communities
- EDDC was organising a virtual meeting for communities to share information
- The Honiton Random Kitchen was seeking alternative premises and Cllr Tony McCollum would welcome any suggestions

## 7 **What are our limitations / opportunities as a Council?**

John Golding presented the 'Circle of Influence' to illustrate the limitations and opportunities within the Council's remit and the tools available to district councils to tackle poverty. The slide would be circulated with the minutes.

Concern was raised that EDDC was not properly represented by officers at a wider level across the south west on the economic activity agenda. John Golding and Andy Wood would follow this up.

## 8 **Future meetings including items for discussion**

It was agreed that the Panel would next meet in approximately one month, date to be arranged.

The November meeting would explore the next stages in the formation of the Poverty Strategy. John Golding would present ideas as to how the Strategy might be shaped.

Items for future meetings were discussed as follows:

- Invite other organisations to brief the Panel on the support they offer and how to partner with them to assist local residents (eg. Department for Work & Pensions, Citizens Advice)
- Whether the above organisations should sit on the Panel?
- Hold a one-off open webinar with local groups working within the poverty agenda

### **Attendance List**

#### **Councillors present:**

M Allen  
M Armstrong (Chairman)  
M Chapman  
B De Saram  
S Hawkins  
F King  
P Millar  
M Rixson

#### **Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)**

P Arnott  
J Bailey  
P Faithfull

P Hayward  
N Hookway  
S Jackson  
D Ledger  
T McCollum  
A Moulding  
J Rowland  
T Woodward

**Officers in attendance:**

Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance  
John Golding, Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment  
Susan Howl, Democratic Services Manager  
Libby Jarrett, Service Lead Revenues and Benefits  
Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer  
Helen Wharam, Public Health Project Officer  
Andrew Wood, Service Lead - Growth Development and Prosperity

**Councillor apologies:**

P Jarvis

Chairman .....

Date: .....