

## Poverty Panel – Terms of Reference

The Poverty Panel was established by Cabinet in February 2020 (delayed start due to Covid -19). In so doing Cabinet agreed the following as the purpose of the Panel:

*To assist Cabinet in the development of an East Devon Poverty Strategy, to monitor progress against the Strategy once adopted and to review the Strategy on an ongoing basis and to make recommendations to amend it as appropriate. Also to consider the progress of the actions in relation to poverty agreed to by Cabinet at its meeting of 8th January 2020.*

At the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2020 Cabinet meeting, it was resolved that the following recommendations from the Overview Committee be agreed:

1. *Consider funding the creation of an East Devon Poverty Strategy to further develop and target the areas identified within this report that we are able to influence and to support a corporate approach to ensure consistency across Council Services.*
2. *Carry out a review of the funding and delivery arrangements for Money Advice to ensure that we're focussing on the key issues identified in the report.*
3. *Recommend that Council protect the existing funding levels contributed for Money Advice to Homemaker South West and Citizens of circa £120,000 for 2020/21 to enable the review (Recommendation 2) to be undertaken.*
4. *Update Corporate Debt Policy to include; Breathing Space in-line with proposed Government changes & to consider any other supportive measures that may be beneficial.*
5. *Agree to the Council's frontline services, in collaboration, setting up a series of local events across the District with key stakeholders that focus on Universal Credit, Money/Debt advice (including how to avoid Loan sharks), budgeting, fuel poverty etc. with the over-arching aim of supporting people to become more financially resilient.*
6. *Consider lobbying central Government directly and/or through our MPs in the following areas;*
  - *Right to Buy*
  - *Removing the freeze on Local Housing Allowance Rates in order to be reassessed to reflect market rents.*
  - *Universal Credit – More financial support to be given to customers to help with the transition. More funding to be given to local Councils to reflect the support that customers need with moving onto this Benefit.*
7. *Continue to explore opportunities to increase our supply of social housing through either redevelopment of existing stock and/or building new Council Housing, in conjunction with a review of the current Housing Revenue Account business plan.*
8. *Agree to the Council working alongside East Devon foodbanks to better understand demand and eradicate dependency that could lead to a reduction and possible extinction of the need for foodbanks in the district.*
9. *Undertake a detailed analysis of fuel poverty in the district with a view to developing a separate action plan.*

### Key Question

The Poverty Panel's primary outcome for the work it is undertaking should be aiding in the production of the East Devon Poverty Strategy with a view to tackling poverty in the district.

The key question, therefore, is:

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How can the Council's tackling/anti-poverty approach be coordinated, improved and captured in a corporate strategy document that improves the situation for households in poverty in East Devon?

The Poverty Panel will include in its scope poverty relating to income & employment; debt & financial vulnerability; food & nutrition; affordable warmth & water; affordable housing & homelessness; and health equality.

### Main Lines of Inquiry for the Poverty Panel

**Anti-Poverty Strategy:** How can the Council tackle poverty in the district? How should it be framed and targeted? How do we measure the impact? How do we ensure this is a genuine cross cutting theme mainstreamed across council services?

**Target Areas:** This policy is central to the Council Plan priorities and achieving sustainable communities. Are the target areas of policy intervention being consistently delivered and understood?

**Partnership Working:** The Council cannot tackle poverty in isolation. What are the limitations on the Council's influence and ability to tackle poverty? What should the role of East Devon Public Health Strategy be in future? How do we best coordinate partnerships to deliver shared anti-poverty ambitions? How do we work effectively with community and voluntary groups?

### Additional Lines of Inquiry

**Outcomes:** While the strategy is intended as a long term commitment it is important to know what outcomes are expected, and what will be achieved in the short term. Can these outcomes be identified, and are the long term ambitions realistic, achievable, measurable and appropriate?

**Resources:** The strategy might signal a fundamental shift in the way that the Council operates. To what extent will the strategy influence the council budget and attract sufficient resources?

**Councillors:** Councillors play an important and active role in their communities and will be critical in delivering the strategy. How can this be achieved? How can we best lobby for change in social policy that addresses poverty?

**Cross Cutting:** To be effective the strategy needs to influence how every Service operates. Has this happened to date? How could the strategy be cross cutting and meaningful?

**Awareness:** To have impact the strategy needs to be widely understood. How do we ensure that stakeholders, partners and residents understand the strategy and what it means for them?

**What Works and what doesn't Work:** What has the Council's approach on poverty achieved to date? How can the Council do more of what works?

### Intended Impact and Contribution

Tackling Poverty is one of the Council's priorities. This Poverty Panel intends to support this work by providing:

- Evidenced proposals that will lead to the strategy being fit for purpose
- The views of people experiencing poverty
- The views of key stakeholders and partners
- Consideration of the conclusions and recommendations from national reports with an assessment of the implications for East Devon
- Identification of good practice/research elsewhere and whether there is any learning to inform East Devon's approach
- Increased councillor understanding about the Poverty Strategy

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- Greater public awareness of the work of the Poverty Strategy

### Defining poverty

There is more than one definition of poverty and it can mean different things to different people, but it is generally considered that someone is in poverty when they are not able to heat their home, pay their rent, pay for food or buy the essentials for their children.

There are 4 levels of poverty (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2019):

- **Income at minimum income standard or better** – able to afford a decent standard of living
- **Income below minimum income standard** – getting by day-to-day but under pressure, difficult to manage unexpected costs and events
- **Not enough income** – falling substantially short of a decent standard of living, high chance of not meeting needs
- **Destitute** – can't afford to eat, keep clean and stay warm and dry

Poverty is most commonly measured using either:

- People in relative low income – living in households with income below 60% of the median in that year;
- People in absolute low income – living in households with income below 60% of (inflation adjusted) median income in some base year, usually 2010/11.

