

## COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL: 17 NOVEMBER 2015

### REPORT OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP INTO CHILD POVERTY

#### 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Task and Finish Group (T&FG) as set up at the Panel in March 2015, in response to a stakeholder meeting on this subject held in February 2015. The Group has worked since then on a long list of actions and has maintained focus on the terms of reference in a subject that has the potential to grow ever wider and become unwieldy.
- 1.2 The Group reported back on its initial findings concerning definition and extent of children poverty in its report in June. Current work is focussed on the latter two points in the terms of reference:
- Consider the implications of the data and evidence presented, for the delivery of Services, whether by the Council (directly or indirectly) or by other agencies where the Council may wish to influence delivery.
  - Having undertaken the above activities, to produce a report of findings to include such recommendations as are felt appropriate to effect beneficial change in service delivery.
- 1.3 The current Members are: Cllr Alan O'Sullivan (Chairman); Cllr Diane Andrews; Cllr Kate Crisell; Cllr Michael White and Cllr Steve Clarke.

#### 2. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 2.1 The report updates the Panel on the achievements to date, work in progress and planned future activities, with the intent to seek the Panel's approval to the Group's work and intended timescales.

#### 3. THE WORK OF THE GROUP

- 3.1 The Group was formed to consider a substantial body of work, which is set out in more detail in Appendix 1. It is believed worthwhile progress has been made. This can be seen in the Appendix but the summary below the work of the Group; what is completed, in progress and planned.

##### **Matters completed to date:**

- **Improved information**  
Web based documents on sources of information identified, with links provided across websites and welfare changes briefings taken place.
- **Improved awareness by front line staff**  
Information provided, briefings undertaken
- **Improved understanding of the issues at hand**  
Data on child poverty brought to the Panel  
Community food initiatives clarified.

## **Work In Progress**

- A related update of the safeguarding policy is underway, which is due in January 2016.
- Discussions with Solent Credit Union are taking place.
- The work of the Group did bring out a wider question for the Council on the matter of whether the next version of the Corporate Plan might include reference to work with families, which has been offered for consideration in the drafting process.

## **Planned Activities**

- **Awareness of Gypsy; Roma; Traveller community needs**  
Sessions programmed for the T&FG in December and pre-Council in February
- **Understanding of mental health impacts**  
Session programmed for T&FG in December
- **Understanding of the role of the Early Help Hub**  
Review in T&FG in March
- **Progress with action**  
Review in T&FG of overall action schedule in March and report to Panel

## **4. FUTURE TASK AND FINISH GROUP WORK**

- 4.1 The Group wish to undertake a second stakeholder seminar in February and then to review the outcomes of that session, together with the overall programme, so as to produce a final report for the Panel in March.
- 4.2 In addition, arising from the work to date, there would be value in this Panel joining with the Planning and Transportation Panel to hold a specific Task and Finish group on the utilisation of NFDC investment in community transport. Community transport is a subject that has benefits for local communities and there is a clearly a strong connection to those living with poverty. It is suggested that this is most effectively approached by defining closely the scope and including Members from both the current Child Poverty Task and Finish Group and Members from the Planning and Transportation Panel.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Panel:
- a) Note the achievements of the Task and Finish Group to date.
  - b) Agree the intended future actions for the Child Poverty Task and Finish Group, with a final report to the Panel in March 2016.
  - c) Approach the Planning and Transportation Panel with a view to setting up a Task and Finish Group as set out in the report.

## DETAILED WORKING NOTES FROM THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

<b>Item: 1. Improvements to information availability and distribution across all the subjects covered in the workshop</b>				
Portfolios: Finance and Efficiency; Health and Leisure; Housing and Communities				
REASON	HOW	SUGGESTION IN SEPTEMBER	OUTCOME	STATUS
Information is a core resource and whilst there is material out there, it is not well co-ordinated or presented.	Build on the work of the New Forest Advisory Service; Local Children's Partnership and others and connect to NFDC sources. Better use of mobile technology/ social media.	Information produced for the Local Children's Partnership is a good starting point and this should be kept up to date.	Now part of Community First SLA with NFDC	Complete.
		Monitor if HCC work with the Early Help Hub will provide local information on services.	As and when it arises, it will be linked to the above work (and others) it will be discussed at the Early Help Hub Core Group and encourage services to input details TF / Early Help Directory.	Aware of sources, now monitor until ready to make the links
		The Council should ensure that the relevant officers are aware of key sources of information.	Officers advised of the information sources listed above	Complete
		Arrangements should be made to bring an LCP representative to the T&FG to discuss how the information is made available across the workforce.	Requesting attendance at the March Panel.	Recommendation to Panel

<b>Item 2: Enable front line staff to identify those in need and signpost.</b>				
Portfolios: All with front line services				
REASON	HOW	SUGGESTION IN SEPTEMBER	OUTCOME	STATUS
Service staff meet with those in need and can be in a position to know where assistance can be found.	There will be a need to develop awareness / skills and ready access to information. Will apply to all relevant services and is likely to tie into safeguarding and “Prevent” training. Adapt the older persons ‘trigger tool’ as an additional guide to staff in assessing those in need. Test staff knowledge through “mystery shopper”.	Safeguarding training is undertaken across the Council and is a subject in its own right. The T&FG supports the need for the updating of policy and training and notes the work is underway.  A report back in January on achievements is requested.	Policy update scheduled for EMT in January  March Task and Finish Group re: implementation.	Scheduled  March T&FG meeting

<b>Item: 3. NFDC employee and Members to be more aware of the cultures of the GRT community and how services might best be made accessible so as to ensure the best life chances for all children</b>				
Portfolios: All Portfolios				
REASON	HOW	SUGGESTION IN SEPTEMBER	OUTCOME	STATUS
Difficulty in matching needs and services effectively. Changing arrangements amongst service providers (statutory and voluntary)	Start with training – perhaps related to the induction programme. Could then lead to consideration of addressing service delivery and awareness in the wider community. Ensure that there is an officer within the Council with specialist knowledge of this Group and filter this knowledge to other officers. Ensure one point of contact.	It was noted that an information session ahead of Council is being planned which was welcomed.  At a future session, it would be good to include reference to the Early Help Hub  HCC work in this field needs to be better understood. Invite a representative to talk to the Group about Hampshire’s role in links with the GRT in the District. This would help understanding of needs and who might do what.	Session on demography and health needs of GRT at future pre- Council.  Session for T&/FG can be arranged when the Group wish  There is a Hampshire GRT Health & Wellbeing Group. A representative to talk to T&FG will come when the Group wish to talk about the mechanics of partnership working	February pre - Council slot planned.  T&FG briefing in March – after HCC consultation  T&FG presentation in early December.

<b>Item 4: NFDC employees to be more approachable and more knowledgeable</b>				
Portfolios: All Portfolios				
REASON	HOW	SUGGESTION IN SEPTEMBER	OUTCOME	STATUS
Perceptions of the Council can be a barrier to people using services and getting what they need. Employee understanding of the mental health impacts of lack of access to finance and/or housing	Consider training of front line staff in customer skills and also specifics such as budget advice. More use of social media. Provide our customers with service feedback forms. Provide staff and members with training on mental health.	A future Heads of Service discussion was noted. T&FG to receive a report back after that, with any intended programme and intentions.  At the same time, more information on the work of the New Forest C&YP Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Group would be useful.	Mental Health awareness courses have been run. It would be useful to check the degree of coverage of children/young people issues. Is information available?  Children & Young People Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health in the New Forest Group is in operation. Report on this work under item 6 below.	Completed.  Officers to check coverage of child specific matters and report to T&FG.  Covered under item 6

<b>Item: 5. Develop a sustainable programme of ‘Community Food Initiatives’ to teach hard to reach groups that are living in poverty, socially isolated or have longer term health issues how to cook healthy food on a budget’</b>				
Portfolios: All Portfolios				
REASON	HOW	SUGGESTION IN SEPTEMBER	OUTCOME	STATUS
Making the most of existing groups / knowledge and workings. Avoiding duplication.	Enable awareness – officers linking up; supporting the operation of groups, possible higher profile for partnership section of NFDC web site. Provide a directory of voluntary organisations / key providers working within this subject. Host a yearly networking seminar similar to the workshop held on 6 Feb.	Provision seems to be effective but for this issue it was important to be clear about the target group. The next step is a review of what is happening now. To this can be added what is needed. This would prompt a conversation on whether there is a need for action and by whom. Directory is part of LCP work above (No1).  This should happen. Need to review precise details on content and invites (eg more from Education). February date is the target.	“War on waste” in Environment Services and project based work in Public Health has been identified. With information – this can then be included in LCP work and TF/EHH directory (Item1)  Content to be developed by the Task and Finish Group in a future meeting	Completed  T&FG planning event in early December and host event in February

**Item: 6. Mapping and understanding of mental health commissioning and service delivery for children and adults, particularly those with physical disabilities and special needs.**

Portfolios: Health and Leisure				
REASON	HOW	SUGGESTION IN SEPTEMBER	OUTCOME	STATUS
There was a lack of such mapping with may be hindering identification of need/take up and leading to the danger of duplication	Take this matter to the New Forest Health and Well Being Partnership Board	<p>The scale of a comprehensive exercise was noted. Some work had been done by the LCP and Police and Crime Commissioner.</p> <p>The suggestion is to use what is currently available and the question asked about whether best use is made of it.</p> <p>A report back to the T&amp;FG as part of No 4 and the work of the New Forest C&amp;YP Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Group.</p>	With part of Item 4 bring a future presentation on the Children and Young People Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Group to the Panel.	T&FG presentation in early December

**Item: 7. Provide more welfare surgeries**

Portfolios: Finance and Efficiency				
REASON	HOW	SUGGESTION IN SEPTEMBER	OUTCOME	STATUS
There is a need for more access to what can be complex information	<p>Informal (tea and biscuits) approach</p> <p>Make more use of community premises such as children centres.</p>	In hand as part of work on Universal Credit. A temporary resource has been employed to help set up surgeries / support.	As part of UC we are undertaking an exercise to communicate with organisations and publicise welfare reforms. We have met with Children's Centres and we are developing links, including training and awareness sessions. We are looking to do the same with It's Your Choice, CAB, McIntyre Charity and other related organisations. We are looking to develop our website and Forestnet to inform Members and Officers	Complete. T&FG review in March
		There were other factors (including discussions about a Credit Union) that will be reported back to Panel on how affected families are being supported and this would be part of that. In addition, there may be value in an email bulletin to Members	Productive discussions with Solent Credit Union and are looking to pilot surgeries initially in Hythe, commencing in January 2016. Planned report to EMT in the next couple of months about developing closer links with the Credit Union	Work in progress. T&FG review in March

<b>Item: 8. Enable a relationship between HCC GRT team and New Forest GRT with permanent residence</b>			
Portfolios: Housing and Communities			
REASON	HOW	SUGGESTION IN SEPTEMBER	OUTCOME
This link was not made	Enable a link	As discussed above (No 3)	As No 3.

<b>Item: 9. Direct referral to food banks.</b>				
Portfolios Housing and Communities				
REASON	HOW	SUGGESTION IN SEPTEMBER	OUTCOME	STATUS
As a direct result of networking at the workshop on 6 February, Housing Officers now have contact details of those running food banks in the district and can now refer people to these.	Ensure that Housing Officers continue to be aware of contacts details of those running food banks in the District.	<p>It was noted that in-house training is underway with provision of information to key officers and more services are making referrals</p> <p>More might be made of a two way relationship between NFDC and food banks.</p> <p>The subject prompted discussion about the best means for Members to share information or questions on topics. Discuss with the Communications Team and also within Group, may assist.</p>	<p>Our Welfare &amp; Benefits Team have met with all Food banks and have now agreements in place with providers. Since April 15 we have given out vouchers and we are promoting this amongst employees. All Benefits staff are aware of this service, it's part of our procedures and part of our Safeguarding referral process. All Information Officers are aware of the Service.</p> <p>Alan O'Sullivan to raise possible input to thinking in next Corporate Plan on the themes of this work and particular reference to the role of families.</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Now part of Corporate Plan process</p>

<b>Item: 10. Free use of room hire in NFDC offices</b>				
Portfolios: Finance and Efficiency				
REASON	HOW	SUGGESTION IN SEPTEMBER	OUTCOME	STATUS
Venues can cost third parties for interviews. This is likely to be at low or no cost to NFDC	Room hire function.	Happening at the moment in response to needs when they are expressed and there is the opportunity to do so.	Process confirmed	Completed

<b>Item: 11. Receive a report on Public Health Hampshire work with GRT community.</b>				
Portfolios: Health and Leisure; Housing and Communities				
REASON	HOW	SUGGESTION IN SEPTEMBER	OUTCOME	STATUS
Health needs of this group are still apparent and there may be particular actions to consider. Current work is being completed and will be up to date.	Presentation to Panel	Covered under No 3	As number 3	T&FG presentation in December. Council presentation in February.

<b>Item: 12. Community transport – what is commissioned and how / /what is out there – joining up of need and provision.</b>				
Portfolios: All Portfolios				
REASON	HOW	SUGGESTION IN SEPTEMBER	OUTCOME	STATUS
Public transport is understood to be largely a matter of central government and County Council action. Local action / commissioning of community transport services may offer more scope. There is some uncertainty as to how well community users and needs are connected to transport provision and commissioning.	Possible joint Task and Finish Group between Panels	It was noted that this is really challenging. To assist future discussion the T&FG suggests a proposal is devised for further work (probably a joint session with representatives from Planning and Transportation). Some questions: What services are there? Is there capacity to carry more people in the current provision? What is the demography of users? Are there pre-conceptions about who the transport is for? What role for Town and Parish Councils? Is there best practice to learn from?	Proposal for a specific Task and Finish Group	Recommend to Panel

<b>Item: 13. Should NFDC funding of third parties make more overt requirements to demonstrate recognition of child poverty?</b>				
Portfolios: All Portfolios				
REASON	HOW	SUGGESTION IN SEPTEMBER	OUTCOME	STATUS
Demands are rising, resources are falling, so there is a need to make best use of what is available	Panel considers if Portfolios should be asked to consider at all; generally or more specifically	The Council does not have a clear history of allocating funding to wider “societal or social” functions such as child poverty / parenting skills and support / loneliness in old age / domestic violence and so forth. It was not known where HCC was heading with its funding. The new Corporate Plan was an opportunity to set out priorities, against which action can be taken.	These were much wider questions. A matter for Members in the light of the new Corporate Plan – and then consideration of any action on its own merits at that time. As item 9.	Now a matter for the Corporate Plan process



**POSSIBLE SCOPE FOR A TASK AND FINISH GROUP ON CHILD POVERTY AND THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY TRANSPORT.**

**BACKGROUND**

This subject arises from the investigations of the Child Poverty Task and Finish Group, which identified a range of influences that impact on the lives of children and young people affected by poverty. One of these is the role of NFDC's investment in community transport and a review of that investment would be timely to understand its impact. The scope is specific so as to maintain focus within a potentially large subject and to concentrate on an aspect where NFDC has a direct investment and influence.

**WHAT TO COVER**

To review the investment of NFDC in community transport initiatives to determine:

- What is the overall funding model and the part played by NFDC (and other funders)
- What provision is made?
- Where is provision made?
- What impact is the provision having?
- What is guiding the commissioning of that provision?

In future:

- How does reflecting on the work undertaken on Child Poverty affect future provision and commissioning?
- How might provision best meet the Council's corporate priorities?
- How might provision have greater impact?

**HOW**

- Small Task and Finish Group (4 Members) – two from Planning and Transportation and two from the Child Poverty Task and Finish Group.

**WHEN**

- An initial discussion at Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel in November, with a view to an approach to the Planning and Transportation Panel following that. The Report back to be in March.