

## SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

**REPORT TO:** Slough Wellbeing Board      **DATE:** 15 July 2015

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**WARD(S):** All

### PART I FOR DECISION

#### CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY

1. **Purpose of Report**

To recommend that the Committee agrees a Child Poverty Strategy for the borough for the next three years.

2. **Recommendation**

The Committee is requested to agree the draft strategy attached at Appendix A.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

3a. **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

Priorities in the Child Poverty Strategy support specific delivery against each of the following Joint Wellbeing Strategy priorities:

- **Economy and skills** - Improving the educational attainment of our children and young people and developing a strong, competitive and sustainable business sector, supported by a local workforce who have the skills to meet local businesses' changing needs, will increase local families' incomes and help grow and maintain the town's prosperity and local economy.
- **Health** - Reducing inequalities and improving the health and wellbeing of our children and young people (and their families and carers) will help them live more positive, active and resilient lives.
- **Regeneration and the environment** - Improving the physical fabric of the town and its leisure and recreational facilities (including parks and open spaces) to create an attractive environment for our children and young people (and their families) will help improve their health and wellbeing.
- **Housing** - Developing a strong, attractive and balanced housing market which includes a range of housing options will help reduce homelessness and limit the number of people living in fuel poverty.
- **Safer communities** - Reducing crime, the fear of crime and anti social behaviour and safeguarding and supporting our most vulnerable children and young people will help keep them safe, feel safe and make Slough a place where people want to live, work and visit.

3b. **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)**

A local Child Poverty Needs Assessment was completed (in liaison with statutory partners and service areas) in the summer of 2014, using the JSNA and other key data sources. The full Child Poverty Needs Assessment is available on request.

3c. **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

Reducing inequality, supporting the most vulnerable and enabling people to help themselves are threads that run through each of the challenges and opportunities identified in the council's Five Year Plan (2015 – 2019). The Child Poverty Strategy will support specific delivery against each of the following Five Year Plan outcomes:

- 1 - Slough will be the premier location in the south east for businesses of all sizes to locate, start, grow and stay.
- 2 - There will be more homes in the borough, with quality improving across all tenures to support our ambitions for Slough.
- 5 - Children and young people will be healthy, resilient and have positive life chances.
- 6 - More people take responsibility and manage their own health care and support needs.

4. **Other Implications**

- (a) **Financial** - There are no financial implications directly resulting from the recommendation of this report. The proposed action plan (detailed in the strategy) and any new activities required will be delivered within existing resources and remodelling of services will take place where appropriate to enable a stronger emphasis on early intervention, prevention and support through specific projects such as the working with families and the council's employment offer. Any new investment that is required will be assessed within the value for money context and a business case drawn up and approved before any financial commitments are made.
- (b) **Risk Management** – There are no risk management implications associated with this report.
- (c) **Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications** - There are no Human Rights Act implications associated with the proposed action. The Child Poverty Strategy sets out the key actions that will be undertaken to ensure that the council and partners meet the statutory duty set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010, to conduct and publish a Child Poverty Needs Assessment and have in place a strategy for addressing child poverty at a local level in close collaboration with partners.
- (d) **Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)** – The whole thrust of this strategy is to safeguard against discrimination and reduce inequality of opportunity across the borough. Nonetheless an EIA is in hand to determine what impact the adoption of this strategy might have on particular individuals and/or groups – as well as identifying any options for their elimination and/or mitigation, where necessary.

## 5. **Supporting Information**

- 5.1 The Child Poverty Act 2010 states that compelling action needs to be taken at local and national levels to meet the target of eradicating child poverty by 2020. The Act requires government to publish a national child poverty strategy (which was published on the 1st April 2011). The Act requires local authorities and their partners to co-operate to tackle child poverty in their local areas; including the duty to publish a local child poverty needs assessment and a child poverty strategy for their area.
- 5.2 Slough's Child Poverty Needs Assessment was completed during the summer of 2014. It details some of the key issues and causes of child poverty in the borough. It also provides a detailed analysis of child poverty levels in Slough and highlights some of the key factors that can perpetuate child poverty, for example parents living on low incomes, financial capability and debt, poor-quality or overcrowded housing, parents without qualifications or employment, parents/carers with mental health problems, disability or infirmity or if children are looked after or in care.
- 5.3 Slough has a higher rate of child poverty than the national average with 21 % of its children living in poverty (compared to 20% nationally). This means that over 8,000 children in the borough live in poverty, of which 7,000 are under the age of 16. The highest rates of poverty are concentrated in the wards of Britwell (28%), Chalvey (26%), Wexham Lea (24%), Baylis and Stoke (23%), Central (23%), Colnbrook and Poyle (22%) and (Foxborough 21%).
- 5.4 The draft strategy at Appendix A sets out 5 key priorities to reduce the number of children living in poverty and improve the life chances of our children and young people over the next three years. It has been developed by working closely with services and partners, not only in developing the outcomes that we want to achieve<sup>1</sup>, but also in ensuring that the strategies they are developing/may develop in the future reflect on the need to address child poverty locally. Our priorities are to:
- Priority 1 Improve access to employment and skills
  - Priority 2 Support children and young people to lead healthier life styles
  - Priority 3 Raise the aspirations of the next generation
  - Priority 4 Maximise family incomes
  - Priority 5 Slough's environment supports children to thrive
- 5.5 Reducing and mitigating the effects of child poverty are key drivers of the Wellbeing Board's improving children and families' health and wellbeing agenda. The draft strategy at Appendix A has implications for the public, community and

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<sup>1</sup> Over the last year a series of consultations have been undertaken to inform the development and final content of this strategy. This has involved:

- consultation with statutory partners and service leads to agree a local child poverty needs assessment as the basis on which to develop a child poverty strategy for Slough (spring/summer 2014).
- consultation with service leads and statutory partners on the draft child poverty strategy (autumn/winter 2014).
- A public consultation with targeted groups (including children and young people (and their parents) and local organisations strategically linked to and/or delivering relevant services), to test the strategy's proposed priorities with local people. A report summarising the findings from this five week consultation is available on request.
- Further consultation on a draft action plan to support the delivery of the draft strategy will take place with statutory partners and service leads over the summer of 2015.

voluntary and private sectors within the town as well as residents and communities.

- 5.6 It should also be noted that the factors that influence child poverty are often longstanding, intergenerational and cultural and as a consequence, more likely to be vulnerable to the performance of the national economy. Reducing child poverty across Slough will therefore require a long term, truly collaborative and committed multi-agency approach as well as the implementation of a number of actions and initiatives by a variety of different partners and agencies, including the borough's voluntary and private sectors.
- 5.7 We also recognise that the complex causes of, and effects of child poverty mean that it will be difficult to directly attribute specific outcomes to specific action. A robust action plan to achieve the strategy's outcomes (measured by a set of specific performance indicators) will however be developed, owned and monitored by the Early Help Sub Group (in collaboration with individual service areas and partners), and regularly reported to the borough's Children and Young People's Partnership Board (CYPPB).
- 5.8 This action plan by its very nature will not be able to cover everything that is happening across the borough in relation to our children, young people (and their families), or all of the activities that will take place to achieve the outcomes identified, but it will provide a common framework, a shared sense of purpose and a clear direction for those looking to co-operate when tackling child poverty locally.
- 5.9 A comprehensive review of the proposed action plan will take place annually (until 2018) to allow sufficient time for any subsequent changes to be made, such as the impact of welfare reforms which are being currently introduced, but whose impacts may take sometime to be fully understood.

## 6. **Conclusion**

- Slough's Child Poverty Strategy sets out a vision for what needs to be achieved in relation to a number of key priorities to effectively tackle child poverty at a local level.
- It recognises the policy levers the council and partners have available in Slough and commits these organisations and agencies to using them to maximum effect.
- It will (through its action plan) co-ordinate the approach of the Early Help Sub Group and the activities undertaken by services and partners to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty and deliver on a set of locally agreed outcomes.
- It will also ensure that all of the council and partners (future) strategies, plans and programmes link together to provide a consistent, co-ordinated and ongoing approach for our most disadvantaged families, so that resources are targeted at those children and young people (and their families) most at risk of living in poverty effectively.

## 7. **Appendices Attached**

'A' – Slough Child Poverty Strategy