

MEETING:	CABINET
DATE:	16 FEBRUARY 2012
TITLE OF REPORT:	HEREFORDSHIRE'S CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY 2011-2015
PORTFOLIO AREA:	HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To approve the Child Poverty Strategy 2011-2015.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

Recommendation(s)

THAT Cabinet:

- (a) approve the Child Poverty Strategy; and**
- (b) approve the approach to the delivery and accountability / governance arrangements of the strategy and the approach to updating the strategy and needs assessment**

Key Points Summary

- The Child Poverty Act 2010 was established to put in place the action required to meet the 2020 vision to end child poverty. The government has affirmed its commitment to the Child Poverty Act and has produced a child poverty strategy in accordance with the requirements of the Act. The Act requires local authorities to prepare, publish and refresh both child poverty needs assessments and strategies, acting as leaders for a local, partnership approach. Herefordshire's Child Poverty Needs Assessment was published last year and forms part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
- Herefordshire's Child Poverty Strategy has been developed through a steering group and workshop approach with partners, including wider public services and the voluntary sector and is attached. At a national and local level, the dramatic and deep effects of the economic crisis continue to be a source of concern for the immediate and long term futures of children and young people. The Strategy provides a coordinated approach to child poverty in

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Herefordshire, but does not propose additional resources.

Alternative Options

- 1 There are no alternative options as it is a requirement that the local authority have a Child Poverty Strategy

Reasons for Recommendations

2. Child poverty matters because:
 - Children and young people are experiencing the effects now, they are often excluded from many of the things that other children and young people enjoy and that society would aspire to
 - Children within families who are poor tend to have lower educational attainment. Low skill levels and consequent productivity is seen to stunt economic growth, limiting the UK's ability to compete in the global economy.
 - There are strong links between child poverty and poor outcomes. Poorer outcomes for children and families place extra burdens and costs on public services, such as health care and children's services and affect everybody's day to day experiences of safety and well-being.
 - Communities suffer through increased deprivation and inequalities which reduce social cohesion. The costs of child poverty fall on individuals, families, communities and the taxpayer.
 - Many people believe there is very little child poverty in the UK today. This is not the case: over a fifth of children are in poverty (taken from Ending Child Poverty: Everyone's Business March 2008). This figure is widely recognised to have worsened over the past three years.
 - The economic crisis from 2008 has fundamentally affected the opportunities and life chances of many people in the UK. Arguably the poorest have been the worst affected, along with young people as recent national and local figures for people under the age of 25 not in education, training or employment have illustrated
3. The Herefordshire Child Poverty Needs Assessment provides a clear summary of the issues involved in child poverty. National data is released two years in arrears and relates to a snapshot date of 13 August each year. 2010 data suggests that 4,370 children under the age of 16 were living in poverty in Herefordshire at the snapshot date in 2008. From data released in 2011, this figure had risen to 4,685 at the snapshot date, a 0.9% increase. It is a multi faceted problem for society and for all statutory and non-statutory services working for the interests of communities. The Child Poverty Needs Assessment is now an embedded part of Herefordshire's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, ensuring that child poverty needs are identified and integral to a holistic needs assessment across HPS.
4. The Child Poverty Strategy 2011-2015 was produced through a working group, working on behalf of the then Children's Trust and Herefordshire Partnership. Two workshops were held involving the voluntary sector to develop both the needs assessment and the strategy. It is a requirement of the Act to publish it by April 2011. Given local elections and subsequent developments regarding partnership approaches, it was agreed with the interim Director of People's Services to seek approval for the strategy and approach in the autumn of 2011.
5. The Child Poverty Strategy contributes to the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board in Herefordshire and also strategic intentions captured within the Economic Development Strategy. It is not a distinct approach, but one that provides a clear focus, a multi agency approach, and an opportunity for others to consider needs and activity and decide what they

can do to align their own work. This has taken place with representatives of the South Wye Partnership and could be replicated in other localities in Herefordshire, potentially with the assistance of the Assistant Directors.

6. The Strategy contains proposals for governance, monitoring and refresh (page 11 of the Strategy).

Introduction and Background

- 7 This report enables Cabinet to approve Herefordshire's Child Poverty Strategy, which is a requirement of the Child Poverty Act 2010. The strategy has been created through the development and use of the Child Poverty Needs Assessment, another requirement of the Act. This assessment is now an embedded part of Herefordshire's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
- 8 The Director of Public Health Annual Report 2011 Executive Summary also highlights the importance of intervention in the Foundation Years (early years) of a child's life in terms of improved outcomes and cost effectiveness of any early intervention. *People from deprived socio-economic groups not only have shorter lives but also spend more of their later years living with a chronic disease or disability.. This social gradient in health starts in the womb and accumulates through life.. with the most effective interventions being those in the first years of life. Action to reduce child poverty has close synergy with action to improve population health because reducing the social gradient in readiness for school at age 5 is the effective way to achieve both goals.*

Key Considerations

Making the strategy happen

- 9 This initiative forms 3.4 of the Joint Corporate Plan and contributes to the delivery of a number of strategic intentions and plans, including the Economic Development Strategy, our approach to housing, and the developing Health and Wellbeing Strategy. As a key part of the Joint Corporate Plan, Herefordshire Public Services Leadership Team has an important role to play in directing and leading the implementation of the strategy. Alongside that, the Council and the Health and Wellbeing Board will have a significant leadership and enabling role.
- 10 There is a requirement to have both a strategy and needs assessment and for them to be reviewed and updated. The needs assessment identifies the profound issues facing children who grow up in poverty and that these are evident in areas of Herefordshire. The Strategy sets out why issues are important in Herefordshire and also what activity is being undertaken to address them.
- 11 The Strategy is presented in such a way as to enable partners, community groups and others to consider how they might also contribute to addressing child poverty in Herefordshire. The Local Authority can use the Strategy to exercise its community leadership role.
- 12 The effectiveness of the Strategy will be kept under review through a number of different ways. Importantly the activities are positioned as ones that are central to different service areas, rather than "add-ons" that require additional activity and governance arrangements.
- 13 As there is a requirement to refresh the strategy on an annual basis, it is proposed to publish the strategy as a working document. This will then be used with a variety of groups, as well as with partnership bodies, to raise awareness and promote the use of the needs assessment and strategy by others. Activity that contributes to the delivery of the strategy will be captured.

- 14 It is proposed that the Children and Young People's Partnership Forum be used to oversee the impact of work in Herefordshire in a holistic way. They will hold individual agencies and services to account for the delivery of the activity identified in the strategy. Furthermore, it is proposed that the strategy is refreshed through this forum with the updated version being considered by the Health and Wellbeing Board along with a progress report. .
- 15 There has been some debate on how to measure the effectiveness of the Strategy and this will be refined through the work of the Children and Young People's Partnership Forum. The factors that contribute to child poverty are numerous and significant, with the recent national economic position playing a considerable part. Herefordshire's Child Poverty Strategy is ambitious whilst at the same time recognising that the national and local context can only be influenced to a degree in some areas.

Community Impact

- 16 Child Poverty is a significant issue for a number of localities in Herefordshire, as illustrated in the Child Poverty Needs Assessment. Community approaches to meeting the challenges of child poverty can fundamentally improve the lives of children and young people in Herefordshire, and can break cycles of poverty which are evident in particular areas within wards.

Equality and Human Rights

- 17 The strategy does pay due regard to our public sector equality duty :-

Under Section 149, the "General Duty" on public authorities is set out thus:

"A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct ... prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it."

- 18 The aim of the strategy is to meet the challenges and reduce the impact that poverty places on families, and their children. By tackling this we will be improving their lives and outcomes to those achieved by their peers.

Financial Implications

- 19 The Strategy does not have a separate resource plan. It has been produced by combining the individual activities across a range of services and partners, recognising that there are few national grants now available and that local authorities have a fundamental role in coordinating and leading action, more so than perhaps commissioning or paying for all the activity that will make a difference.

Legal Implications

- 20 The Act requires a local authority to prepare and publish an assessment of needs of children living in poverty in its area. This must be published by September 2010, refreshed every 12 months and reviewed and revised within 3 years of being first published.
- 21 The Act requires local authorities and their partners to turn cooperation and their needs assessment into effective local child poverty strategies. These must be published by April 2011, reviewed and refreshed every 12 months and fully revised every 3 years

Risk Management

- 22 The risks to individuals and to society as a whole are such that the Child Poverty Act 2010 was reaffirmed by the present government, although it was introduced by the last Labour government. The national strategy establishes an overarching approach but doubts have been expressed about what can be done in some areas in the face of the economic situation. Locally, risks to opportunity, quality of life, basic needs, and wider society goals can be addressed through the strategy and the range of strategic intentions that HPS has established through the life of this Council. Fundamental activities to create employment and housing for local people will do much to reduce the risk of child poverty in the future, as will effective changes to people's health.

Consultees

- 23 Consultation has taken place with services within HPS and with voluntary organisations through two workshops which has led to changes to the strategy. The most recent changes have been made as a result of the views of the Health and Wellbeing Board who asked that greater emphasis be given to actions to increase the income which families have available to them
- 24 To date, there has been no direct consultation with children, young people and families on the overall strategy although specific actions/pledges within the strategy have been informed by feedback from families and communities. A consultation/engagement strategy will be rolled out as part of the implementation of the strategy.

Appendices

- 25 Herefordshire Child Poverty Strategy 2011 – 2015

Background Papers

Herefordshire's Child Poverty Needs Assessment