

SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE			
Title	Poverty Review – Evidence Session	Item No	4
Contributors	Scrutiny Manager		
Class	Part 1	Date	19 January 2016

1. Purpose of paper

- 1.1. The Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee has agreed to undertake a review looking at poverty as part of its work programme for 2015/16. This report, coupled with evidence provided at the meeting, will provide information for the Committee to discuss as part of its review.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Select Committee is asked to:
- note the content of the report and consider the information presented at Committee, including the presentation from the Chief Executive on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation and the evidence on deprivation from an officer from the Greater London Assembly.

3. Background

- 3.1. At the meeting of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee on 20 April 2015 the Committee resolved to undertake an in-depth review looking at poverty. At its meeting on 1 July 2015 the Committee approved the scoping report for the review.

- 3.2. The key lines of enquiry of the review are split into two areas:

1. The developing national context:
 - Are certain groups more likely to feel the effects of poverty than others?
 - What impact have welfare reforms had on the distribution of poverty in Lewisham?
 - What are the evolving issues which will impact on future distribution and scale of poverty in the borough?
2. A review of the Council's approach to tackling inequality
 - How do the Council's strategies work to reduce deprivation?
 - How does the strategic approach to equalities ensure that multiple deprivation and inequality are given full consideration?
 - How are the reductions in the Council's budgets being managed to ensure that they do not disproportionately impact on protected groups and exacerbate poverty and deprivation?

4. City of Lincoln Council's scrutiny review into poverty

- 4.1. Lincoln Council's Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee conducted an extensive piece of detailed scrutiny into poverty over a nine month period in 2013-14. The review included a study of many academic texts, interviews with key partners

and case studies from families living in poverty. The outcome of the review resulted in an Anti-Poverty Strategy adopted by the Executive of Lincoln Council in April 2014.

- 4.2. Throughout the period of development of Lincoln's strategy the following definition of poverty, produced by Townsend, P. (1979) cited by PSE UK (2013) *Deprivation and Poverty*, was used: *"Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities, and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary patterns, customs and activities."*
- 4.3. Lincoln's review noted that though there is an alternative definition of poverty based on household income below 60% of the median income that can form the basis for measurement, in a period of intense recession (such as the one experienced in the UK since 2008) where income levels at best stagnate or at worst are falling, this can result in the median income level dropping and hence in statistical terms more people falling outside the definition of poverty. The review concluded this cannot be right as these people remain in poverty facing all the challenges associated with low income.
- 4.4. The aim of the scrutiny review from the start was to produce a strategy that would make a difference to the daily lives of local people who were financially vulnerable. The strategy was developed with partners to take account of what 'all partners can do here and now today to help people'¹. The ambition of Lincoln's Anti-Poverty Strategy is: *"Working with partners, to tackle the effects of poverty, and so have a positive noticeable impact on people's daily lives"*. The strategy will not in itself eradicate the causes of poverty, Lincoln believes it will help people on low income to be better able to meet their daily financial struggle and equip them over time with the skills, confidence and support to make life that bit better. As such the strategy has clear links to its 'sister strategy' – an emerging Growth strategy - which itself seeks to tackle the longer term infrastructure issues within the city that ultimately will create the job opportunities to lift people out of poverty.
- 4.5. The strategy is supported by an annual action plan detailing where effort will be focussed in the year ahead. This is reviewed and updated annually at a conference of all interested partners. So far, a Lincoln Poverty Conference has been organised in 2014 and 2015, and more than a hundred actions points have been suggested by partners. Some of the early actions being developed include:
 - Working with schools to pilot a scheme where Year 7 pupils get a Credit Union Savings Account, with a free £10 deposit, plus a package of financial education - believed to be one of only a handful of such schemes nationally.
 - Distributing Anti Loan Shark leaflets to every new council tenant, and working with a local emergency shelter to do the same for their clients.
 - Holding monthly CAB sessions for clients of a large provider of access to work services operating in the city.
 - Working with a high street bank to raise awareness of support and advice available to residents.
 - Holding a food bank forum to increase partner support for food banks in a period of unprecedented demand.

¹ Poverty in Lincoln – A journal of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee review into poverty in Lincoln, and the resulting Anti Poverty Strategy recommended to the Executive – July 2013 to March 2014

http://cfps.org.uk/domains/cfps.org.uk/local/media/library/poverty_in_lincoln_cfps.pdf

- Agreement of a £3.2 million scheme for vulnerable council tenants at risk of fuel poverty living in a high rise block of flats. This includes installation of a bio-mass boiler to replace the expensive electric storage heaters, putting up better insulated windows, doors and cladding, and installing 'smart meters' to put tenants in control of their energy usage.
- Agreed recruitment of a Money Management Advice Officer to support people in rent and council tax arrears.
- Working to provide signposting to benefits and council tax advice when notified of a death concerning a joint tenancy.
- Continuation of a Council Tax Discount Scheme for 2014/15.
- Delivery of a programme providing new council tenants with an incentivised Credit Union account, with an incentivised £10 deposit to encourage saving.
- Lincolnshire County Council is developing a scheme with schools that ensures more families entitled to Free School Meals automatically receive access them.
- Development of a focused regeneration scheme in one of the city's most deprived wards, with a particular focus on tackling poor quality housing in the private sector, and inclusion of a community shop.

5. Camden Equality Taskforce

- 5.1. The Camden Equality Taskforce was set up in July 2012 by Camden Council to understand and tackle the inequality faced by residents and communities in Camden. Although issues of inequality are different to poverty, the ability for people to enjoy a comfortable standard of living, with independence and security was a focus for the Taskforce. The four key aims of the Taskforce were to:
- explore structural and systemic reasons for inequality in Camden;
 - consider the future role of the Council and its partners in tackling inequality through the design, delivery and funding of local public services;
 - recommend solutions to the identified issues, providing insight to inform the Council's future role in tackling inequality; and
 - make a strong contribution to national debates on tackling inequality and the role of local public services.
- 5.2. The Taskforce concluded in its final report in May 2013 that income and wealth are unarguably central factors in an individual's life chances and experiences of inequality. Large scale structural factors influence income inequality both through the tax and benefit system but also in the operation of an increasingly global capital and labour market. While local public services have limited influence over income distribution within a place, they do have the power to influence inequality viewed through a broader lens. At the sharp end of this global economic system, the point of delivery for many people and the services they rely on is local government. This position is unique, as are the responsibilities. No other organisation has as wide a remit or is expected to touch upon people's lives in so many ways. The levers that Camden Council could pull make progress and change possible.
- 5.3. Through its evidence and engagement with the community and local partners, the Taskforce identified key strategic roles for Camden Council in tackling inequality. The first one was through the power of leadership, as during the work of the Taskforce the positive impact of the Council in harnessing local resources and influencing a broad range of organisations became evident. The second was identified as the power of services delivered by the Council. From social work to schools, planning to public health, libraries to leisure centres, the services which the Council delivers or has an influence over are wide and reach into nearly every part of a person's life. This role provides the Council with a unique opportunity to engage, support and work

with residents in ways which have a positive impact on their lives. This interaction will of course vary depending on the person, yet for some, and often this is the most vulnerable people, this can represent a significant involvement in their lives. Finally, through the power of investment, Camden Council was encouraged to ensure that the impact of the Council's recruitment practices and purchasing power was used positively in as many ways and for as many people as possible.

- 5.4. The Taskforce focused its recommendations on areas where the Council has either some degree of influence or is able to make direct interventions. The Taskforce has made six recommendations to the Council, local partners and government to address the issues of inequality it has identified. In December 2013, Camden's Cabinet approved the overall approach to implementing the Taskforce's recommendations and the specific actions which would be pursued in the first year. The progress report for Camden's Cabinet on the implementation of the recommendations from the Taskforce from January 2015 lists some of the work done to address inequality in Camden.
- 5.5. *Recommendation 1: Ensuring the right housing for Camden's diverse communities.* A key area of progress was the implementation of Camden's Council's Private Rented Sector (PRS) Strategy, which came into effect in September 2013. It is positioned as a campaigning call for change, and seeks to ensure the PRS in Camden works for everyone – landlord, tenant, and Camden's diverse communities. There is good progress being made against the delivery plan sitting behind the strategy. This includes:
- Development of a borough wide additional licensing scheme to improve PRS conditions (public consultation currently being concluded).
 - Delivery of a report on Rent Stabilisation by the London School of Economics (LSE), which focuses on having longer tenancy periods and pre-agreed rent increases (in response the Council will work with a group of 135 landlords to pilot some areas).
- 5.6. It is worth noting that Lewisham Council has recently conducted a consultation that would require landlords renting out accommodation above commercial properties (such as flats above shops) for multiple occupation to obtain a licence from the Council. The results of the consultation and costs of any proposals are due to be considered by Lewisham's Mayor and Cabinet meeting².
- 5.7. *Recommendation 2: Increase participation in work, education and training available for 14-19 year olds from low attaining groups.* This work is integrated into delivery though the Council's 14-19 (25) strategy, which the Taskforce's findings helped to shape, and good progress is being made. For example, the Camden Partnership for Educational Excellence (CPEE) has commissioned a number of projects designed to provide real opportunities to develop employability and higher level skills for young people.
- 5.8. *Recommendation 3: Work with all employers to increase job opportunities for mothers* Camden Council has made significant progress to increase job opportunities for mothers in 2014. In particular, the Council has successfully commissioned two Growth Fund projects, which are raising the profile of maternal employment and providing innovative support to mothers. These projects are: Camden Women Like

² A presentation on the Private Rented Sector Licensing Scheme was discussed at the last meeting of the Housing Select Committee.:

<http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s40167/07Private%20Rented%20Sector%20Licensing%20Scheme011215.pdf>

Us, which is developing a universal service for mothers seeking employment; and the Camden Parents First project (led by Hopscotch), which is supporting long-term unemployed mothers with complex barriers to employment.

- 5.9. *Recommendation 4: The Council and partners should use their buying power and role as employers to tackle inequality* Camden Council is committed to its role as an employer in reducing inequality, with a significant milestone met in 2012 when Camden became a London Living Wage accredited employer. Camden Council became the first accredited Timewise Council in the country in April 2014. Camden is at the forefront of the drive to improve standards for the capital's home carers and has become third local authority in London, and the seventh in the country, to formally sign up to UNISON's Ethical Care Charter. By signing the Charter, Camden Council has committed to go even further in driving up standards for the 860-strong homecare workforce in the borough by taking steps which include:
- Paying the London Living Wage.
 - Paying for travel time between visits.
 - Offering fixed hours in place of zero hours contracts.
 - Introducing occupational sick pay schemes.
- 5.10. It is worth noting that Lewisham Council was the first Council in the country in 2012, alongside Islington, to earn a Living Wage Employer Accreditation³. In November 2015, the Council agreed to offer a one-off discount in business rates to local business that become accredited as a London Living Wage Employer⁴.
- 5.11. *Recommendation 5: Test new ways of financing and delivering services which help make every Camden pound count* In 2014, key progress has focused on exploring how the Council can better involve residents in ideas about the delivery of services. In particular, the community researcher pilot was successfully completed. In addition, the Council has explored new ways to deliver and finance services as part of its approach to the financial strategy. Officers anticipate that changes developed through the financial strategy, wider public service reform, and an increasing emphasis on investing in individual and community resilience, may offer further opportunities to learn and trial new ways to deliver and finance services.
- 5.12. *Recommendation 6: Camden should become a 'no wrong door'* A key achievement for Camden in 2014 was the exploration and development of the 'No Wrong Door' (NWD) concept through a 'task and finish' group. The NWD concept aims to ensure that no matter where a person accesses a public service their problem will be identified and assessed to receive the right response, either directly or through appropriate referral. The group, involving partner organisations, produced a final report in October 2014, which focused on improving support for mothers seeking work. The group also identified a set of NWD principles which can be applied to a wider range of services in the local public sector and in 2015 Camden Council was aiming to work internally and with partners to ensure the areas for action and the principles of the report are tested and implemented through a range of projects. The actions to improve support to mothers seeking work included:
- Trial a physical co-location of employment services for mothers seeking employment within a children's centre. JobCentre Plus (JCP) committed to providing a Job Coach to work at Harmood's Children's Centre, with a view to rolling this out more widely if successful.

³ <http://www.livingwage.org.uk/news/first-london-living-wage-boroughs-announced>

⁴ The Mayor and Cabinet report and formal decision can be found here:
<http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=139&MIId=3861>

- Develop greater consistency of standards across the Camden Employment and Skills Network. This will involve regularly referring to partners and tracking the results of the referrals.
- Joint commissioning for employment and health support pathways being explored by JCP, health services and Westminster Kingsway College.

6. Further implications

- 6.1. At this stage there are no specific financial, legal, environmental, equalities or crime and disorder implications to consider. However, each will be addressed as part of the review.

Background Documents

Poverty in Lincoln – a Journal of the Community Leadership Scrutiny Committee review into poverty in Lincoln (March 2014)

<http://www.lincolnagainstopoverty.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Poverty-in-Lincoln.pdf>

Lincoln Anti-Poverty Strategy 2014-16 (April 2014)

<http://www.lincolnagainstopoverty.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Anti-poverty-Strategy.pdf>

Camden's Equality Taskforce - Final Report (May 2013)

<https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/Camden.pdf>

Camden Council's Equality task force implementation update (January 2015)

<http://democracy.camden.gov.uk/documents/s39011/Item%2017%20-%20Progress%20Update%20on%20the%20Implementation%20of%20the%20Camden%20Equality%20Taskforce%20Recommendation.pdf>

If you have any questions about this report, please contact Simone van Elk, Scrutiny Manager (ext. 46441)