SAFER STRONGER COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE			
Title	Poverty taskforce scoping paper		
Key Decision	No		Item No. 4
Ward	all		
Contributors	Executive Director for Resources and Regeneration		
Class	Part 1	Date: 28 November 2016	

## 1.	Purpose

2.1	The Council's Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee conducted a review into poverty in borough, as some areas in Lewisham are among the most deprived in the country according to the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation[1]. One of the things noted by the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee was that poverty is a complex problem and there are difficulties in identifying the right course of action to take to tackle this problem effectively. In addition, policies that aim to tackle poverty or alleviate its outcomes need to reach the right people to be effective. Safer Stronger felt that poverty should receive greater focus in the Council.

2.2	As a result of the review into poverty, Mayor and Cabinet agreed at their 7 September meeting to appoint the Cabinet Member of Policy and Performance as the lead member responsible for the overseeing the Council's actions to tackle poverty and that a Lewisham Poverty 'Taskforce' be convened to develop a comprehensive Poverty Strategy.

2.3	This paper sets out the purpose for the taskforce, its areas of focus, its programme of work and suggestions for its membership. Points raised during discussion about the taskforce at the last Committee meeting on 19 October have been incorporated into the scope for the taskforce.

## 3	Recommendations

3.1	The Committee is asked to:
- Note the content of the report
- Nominate three of members of the Committee to take part in the taskforce.

## 4	Policy context

4.1	Lewisham's Sustainable Communities Strategy (2008-2020) sets out a vision of a resilient, healthy and prosperous borough. The Strategy informs the direction of Council policy and it guides the process of decision making. One of the governing principles of the Strategy is the ambition to 'reduce inequality and narrow the gap in outcomes for citizens'. It is recognised in the Strategy that '...deprivation and poverty

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[1] The English Index of Deprivation 2015 published by the Office of National Statistics, which combine information from a range of official administrative sources and census data in to develop a coordinated picture of deprivation across the whole country.

can limit people's prospects (and) some of our communities are more likely to experience their effects than others'.

4.2   In addition, the Council has a number of corporate priorities, two of which are particularly relevant to the taskforce's work: 1) Community leadership and 5) Strengthening the local economy.

4.3   The taskforce's aim is to provide recommendations to the Council that aim to alleviate poverty, mitigate against its negative effects and strengthen people's resilience about. The taskforce will therefore contribute to the aims of the Lewisham's Sustainable Communities Strategy and to two of the Council's corporate priorities as outlined above.

5   The taskforce

5.1   Purpose of the taskforce

5.1.1   The Taskforce will build on the work done by the Committee with its review into poverty. The purpose of the taskforce is to combine expertise about poverty with expertise about the local area. At the end of its work, the taskforce will draft recommendations that aim to alleviate poverty, mitigate against its negative effects and strengthen people's resilience.

5.2   Proposed areas of focus

5.2.1   The taskforce cannot possible cover all aspects of poverty so will need to agree to focus on a limited number of areas. The taskforce could look both at ways to decrease poverty but also to mitigate against its negative effects. Two key considerations are which steps will have the biggest impact on poverty in the borough but the taskforce should also be mindful of the areas Lewisham Council and its partners can genuinely impact.

5.2.2   With this in mind, the main route out of poverty is getting people in jobs, and particularly into well-paid jobs, and would therefore likely be a main area of focus for the taskforce. In Lewisham there are two groups that are disproportionately presented in the population of both working and non-working poor: single parents (usually women) and disabled people. The numbers of people on Employment Support Allowance are amongst the highest in London. The taskforce can look at how the Council and its partners support people getting into work as well as ensuring that work is well-paid. There are a number of things the Council and its partners are already doing (e.g. its support for the London Living Wage and joint work with Lambeth and Southwark on employment support) but there might be more that can be done. Understanding the impact of further welfare reform and the introduction of universal credit will be crucial

5.2.3   The cost of housing has a significant impact on the percentage of people living in relative poverty in London[2]. The provision of genuinely affordable housing is therefore important in alleviating poverty, and so is a well -functioning housing market across all tenures. The taskforce may want to look at innovative approaches to the housing crisis, such as interventions in the private rental market and the London living rent.

5.2.4   The material circumstances of people living in poverty can be tackled but so can their lived experiences by focusing on strengthening the resilience of communities in

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[2] Trust for London London's Poverty Profile 2015: http://tinyurl.com/jkoqn2h

mitigating the negative impacts of living in poverty. Community-led approaches achieve a range of valuable outcomes around poverty. Some focus on the 'non-material' aspects of the experience of poverty, such as improving individual well-being, opportunities for social interaction and perceptions of area[3]. The taskforce can decide to look at ways to achieve such outcomes in Lewisham.

5.3   Programme of work

The taskforce will hold four sessions, roughly 6 weeks apart. The first meeting is due to be held in the Spring, with the taskforce finishing its work before the end of the calendar year.

5.3.1 <u>Session 1: What do we know about the problem of poverty in Lewisham?</u>

To provide the taskforce with the necessary information to make judgements about the specific situation in Lewisham. This will mostly be provided by the Council. The information will likely focus on:

a. What does poverty mean in Lewisham? How will it be defined by the taskforce?
    - This should take account of the differences between absolute and relative poverty.
b. What is the nature of poverty in Lewisham?
    - Residents' income and jobs, inside and outside of the borough.
    - Which groups are specifically affected? E.g. people with disabilities, lone parents, those with in-work poverty, child poverty, the elderly.
    - Is there an overlap in members of the groups listed above and what impact does that have on their experiences?
c. What are causes of poverty in Lewisham?
    - Business environment & the local economy
    - Housing
    - Skills and employability
    - Impact of health and wellbeing, naturally including mental health
d. What are the impacts of poverty?
    - Impact on health and wellbeing, naturally including mental health
e. What actions are currently taken by the Lewisham Council and its partners?

5.3.2 <u>Session 2: What areas does the taskforce want to focus on?</u>

To allow the taskforce to identify which areas they want to focus on, based on where most can be gained from their recommendations. The recommendations will likely focus on improving and coordinating existing work by the Council and its partners.

The taskforce should also take account of work done in other areas of London and the rest of the country that is particularly effective.

5.3.3 <u>Session 3: Summit with partners</u>

a) To share the taskforce's thinking so far
b) To test emerging ideas and proposals
c) To discuss what steps could be taken by the Council and its partners to alleviate poverty and mitigate against its negative effects.

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[3] https://www4.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/sites/shu.ac.uk/files/community-led-approaches-to-reducing-poverty-in-neighbourhoods.pdf

5.3.4 <u>Session 4: Conclusions and formulating recommendations</u>

The expectation is that the taskforce's work would be positively considered by the Council and its partners, and that the taskforce's recommendations would become part of the Council's ongoing work. A final report by the taskforce will be presented to Mayor and Cabinet, but presented to the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee first.

5.4 Members of the taskforce

The taskforce will consist of two Cabinet members and three members of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee. The Committee is requested to nominate three of its members to take part in the taskforce.

The taskforce will also have members that are experts in the field of poverty. A verbal update on the membership will be provided at the meeting.

6 Financial implications

There are no financial implications following this report.

As discussed at the last meeting of the Committee, the taskforce will likely focus on improving and coordinating existing work by the Council and its partners as opposed to focusing on recommendations that would require additional financial resources.

7 Legal implications

There are no legal implications following this report.

8 Equalities implications

There are no equalities implications following this report.

Background documents and originator

The English Index of Deprivation 2015 published by the Office of National Statistics.

Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee final report Poverty Review, June 2016 http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=4178

Mayor and Cabinet response report to Safer Stronger Communities final report Poverty review:
http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=4304

Lewisham's Sustainable Communities Strategy (2008-2020)

Trust for London London's Poverty Profile 2015: http://tinyurl.com/jkoqn2h

Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Sheffield Hallam University, Community-led approaches to reducing poverty in neighbourhoods: A review of evidence and practice, June 2016:
https://www4.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/sites/shu.ac.uk/files/community-led-approaches-to-reducing-poverty-in-neighbourhoods.pdf

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