

SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 27 OCTOBER 2011

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE (COMMUNITY DIRECTION) RE: ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Scrutiny on Anti-Poverty Strategy achievements and to put forward recommendations to manage anti-poverty post April 2012

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) That Scrutiny notes the content of this report.
- (ii) That the Scrutiny Commission supports the recommendation to integrate the anti poverty strategy priorities and outcomes into service improvement plans, and the corporate planning process.

3. BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

- 3.1 The need for a review into income deprivation within the borough of Hinckley & Bosworth was highlighted in 2006/07 by the Scrutiny Commission. A decision was made to include it in the Commission's work programme. The Commission's objective for the review was to improve the quality of life of people living in poverty in the area.
- 3.2 A Stakeholder Workshop was held in December 2008 to identify areas for development
- 3.3 Two reports were commissioned:
 - **Matters of Fact Consultancy** reported in April 2007. They aimed to define income deprivation and understand the geography of income deprivation within the Borough. The report concluded that the most common definition of income deprivation in economically advanced societies is a household income that is 60% or less of the average household income.
 - **CI Research Consultancy** reported in February 2008. They aimed to develop local strategies and policies to address situations arising from local income deprivation. The report highlighted best practice approaches and case studies which have demonstrated success. The report concluded by identifying recommendations to move forward and this approach was endorsed by the Scrutiny Commission. The recommendations focused on working with partners, providing a real and meaningful voice for residents and enhancing the work already undertaken in the Borough. The proposed action, endorsed by the Scrutiny Commission, was to establish a working group to take forward the conclusions of the studies and develop local strategies and policies to address income deprivation in the Borough.
- 3.4 The Anti-Poverty Strategy 2009-12 and supporting actions plans have been in place since April 2009. 6 Key themes are identified in the strategy:
 - Income Deprivation
 - Employment
 - Health Deprivation and Disability
 - Education, Skills and Training
 - Housing and Services
 - Crime and Anti-social behaviour
 - Living Environment

4. ACHIEVEMENTS

4.1 Achievements from the Anti- Poverty action plan are detailed below under the six key theme headings listed in Section 3.4 of this report.

4.2 Income Deprivation

- Mosaic and Experian software have been used to identify areas within the borough consisting of low income households who could potentially be entitled to Housing /Council Tax benefit. 215 leaflets have recently been sent out to households identified through this process and feedback is being monitored
- The Take Up strategy was refreshed in 2009 to include a more targeted approach to the working age.
- Changes to benefit regulations regarding the treatment of child benefit income. This change has enabled us to do a number of take up campaigns, particularly targeting working age families i.e. at supermarkets, schools promoting housing and council tax benefits.
- A working age leaflet was created in 2009 to encourage this working age group to check their potential entitlement to housing /council tax benefit either by telephone or via the benefits pages on the Councils web-site. This leaflet was made available from our Customer Services reception and given out at the various take up campaigns conducted in the borough.
- In 2009 a First Response Team was set up which comprised of the officers giving advice on Housing and Council Tax Benefit, the Mortgage Rescue Scheme and how to prevent homelessness. The Citizens Advice Bureau in Hinckley gave debt advice and Job centre plus gave advice on the benefits available when customers were made redundant. Letters were sent out to all businesses in the borough advising them of the service we were offering and how it could benefit them and their employees. Several information packs and posters were sent to businesses who requested further information about the First Response Team. 6 visits in total were carried out to local businesses that were suffering redundancies and the feedback received was positive.
- The council website is regularly updated, taking into account the effect changes to regulations have on our customers and their possible entitlement to benefits.
- A "Benefits House" has been created on the benefits web-pages, which is a quick and easy tool for customers to find out if they could possibly be entitled to claim Housing and Council Tax Benefit. It enables them to decide if it is worth them submitting a claim, as it gives them an idea of the average income they would need to have to qualify for help towards their rent and Council Tax charges.
- Referrals are made to the court desk for advice for people facing homelessness
- Local Credit Union Provision - established arrangements are now in place at Earl Shilton Community House with fully trained volunteers managing drop in sessions. An additional access point has been created at Hinckley Unitarian Church. The Credit Union provision is pro actively promoted at all Community Houses, with Community House staff trained to support applicants in collating all relevant documents ahead of a meeting with a trained volunteer, which helps to accelerate the pace on the loan application process. Baseline data has been collated for 2010/11 resulting in establishment of performance targets for 2011/12. Data demonstrates steadily rising take up figures both in relation to loans and savings accounts. The value of loans provided during 2010/11 is £36, 855. There is ongoing

elected member training sessions to raise the profile of this initiative and secure community champions, and regular features in the staff newsletter and Borough Bulletin, as well as Clockwise Credit Union presence at relevant community events.

4.3 Employment

- From February 2011, HBBC has supported the Hinckley Area Pilot. The aim of this pilot initiative is to explore how 'face to face' services to the unemployed are delivered by partners in the Hinckley area and what is the scope for improvement. The principal objective is to integrate the services that support people out of work or unemployed, who are seeking information, advice and guidance about learning and work in order to return to work by co-locating, integrating and sharing services in Hinckley.

Phase 1 of the pilot has involved the establishment and analysis of a range of information and data from the key agencies currently providing advice, information and guidance, as well as a range of customer/client workshops to gain customer insight. The Steering Group will present a business case to the county level Access to Services Board in October 2011, setting out findings and recommendations.

- At its annual review meeting in February 2011, the LSP Board agreed to the establishment of a strategic Skills and Employment Partnership. Whilst it is recognised there are a range of agencies progressing this agenda across the Borough, in the current climate, there is a need for greater collaboration and integration of activity and resource, and a strategic focus for tackling the employment and skills issues within the Borough
- This group will bring together key partner agencies to collectively drive forward this agenda to focus on the most important issues/those we can influence, to bring about improvement. , initially to include:
 - Tackling access to work issues – rural Borough with limited public transport provision, fuel expenses generally with this being a particular barrier for young people. Potential to influence/develop travel to work schemes
 - Establishment of more apprenticeships that are informed by and meet business needs
 - Establishment of vocational routes in priority areas – looking at alternative routes to higher level skills
 - Influence inward investment linked to changes in section 106 agreements. Gaining commitment/building into the planning process a requirement to employ a percentage of local people. Linked to this ensuring a job ready workforce, support and training provision to match sector needs

4.4 Health Deprivation and Disability

- Following the establishment of the Hinckley and Bosworth Health & Wellbeing Partnership in February 2010, and its progress in establishing local priorities and underpinning delivery plans to contribute to the countywide health outcomes, from April 2011 this partnership has been acknowledged as having 'early implementer' status working with County Public Health Team in delivering health reform agenda. With effect from April 2011 locality arrangements have been in place, with the public health team working part time on site at Hinckley and Bosworth. The Partnership Board is well represented including GP representation, enabling us to link in with GP Clinic Commissioning arrangements. The Partnership has two key priorities: Achieving a Healthy and a Healthy Life Style, and Tackling Health Inequalities. This work is focused around three key themes: Tackling Teenage Pregnancy; Reducing the Prevalence of Obesity and Physical Inactivity in Adults and Children, and Smoking Cessation. Delivery plans for each of these themes, have a specific focus within Hinckley and Bosworth's priority neighbourhoods and identified 'hot spots'

within the Borough. Priorities for the H&B partnership align with County H&WB Board priorities

- In 2010/11 677 young people attended the Youth games trials.
- In 2010/11 48 disabled young people attended the Leicestershire and Rutland Inclusive games
- In 2010/11 26,732 opportunities available for people to participate in physical activity through Active together
- Funding secured for appointment of 2 full time equivalent Physical activity officers
- GP Health referral scheme developed – 570 attendees in 2010/11
- Town Centre Run started and now in 3rd year of delivery- 500 runners took part in this years run
- Preparation underway for 2012 Olympics. 2 staff supported special Olympics in Leicestershire and ran presentation ceremony. Open weekends and special events planned in run up to Olympics.
- Inclusive 'come and try sports days' have seen over 110 local residents get active in the last year.

4.5 Education, Skills and Training

- The Young Artists Open Exhibition and bursary scheme saw 28 young people from across the borough submitting artwork to feature in an exhibition in the Atkins Gallery. Four young people also shared a £1,000 prize to enable them to purchase art materials or to attend art courses to further develop their artistic talents. There was also the opportunity for them to receive one-to-one mentoring with a professional artist who was able to give them advice about career development and how to work commercially within the arts and creative industries. This was funded with £5,000 of Find Your Talent money. Find Your Talent has now been suspended.
- The Centre for Creative Enterprise on the Atkins site opened in September 2010 to offer workshop and studio space to start up creative businesses in the area. It also features a gallery area for artists to be able to promote and sell their work.
- See Employment section above and specific reference to the Employment and Skills Partnership Group

4.6 Housing and Services

- 448 cases of homelessness were prevented in 2009/10 and 511 cases of homelessness were prevented in 2010/11 helping to reduce the use of temporary accommodation and the negative impact of homelessness on households.
- In 2010/11 completion of 41 disabled adaptations in the private sector improving the living conditions and quality of life for disabled households.
- In 2010/11 completion of 12 Major Works & 10 Minor Works Assistance in the private sector improving the living conditions and quality of life for private households

- Successful use of Mortgage rescue/Mortgage prevention schemes, 14 completed, helping to reduce the use of temporary accommodation and the negative impact of homelessness on households.
- Completion of home insulation project by Private Sector Housing Team. By targeting this project at priority neighbourhoods resources were directed to those households which were more likely to be in fuel poverty and finding it harder to heat their homes. The project helped to improve the energy efficiency of approximately 1800 households
- Review of council housing allocations policy completed to ensure that we meet the needs of those with highest need and lowest financial resources
- Allocations let 263 council properties in 09/10 and 269 in 2010/11 providing accommodation that is affordable and supporting those with most need
- Continued provision of a capital support grant to Care & Repair (West Leicestershire) Ltd who are the Home Improvement Agency operating in the area

4.7 Crime and Anti-social behaviour

- Levels of crime have reduced significantly. Overall crime rose slightly by 2.74% in 2009/10 compared to 2008/09. However in 2010/11 crime fell significantly by 13.7% compared to 2009/10. Year to date figures show a further reduction of 13.5% compared to last year.
- Levels of recorded anti-social behaviour fell by 28.4% in 2010/11 compared to 2009/10.
- Satisfaction with the way we deal (police and council) with anti-social behaviour reached a level of above 80% for the first time in 2010/11. We are currently achieving an 86% satisfaction rate.
- A Community House was set up in the priority area of Barwell in 2009 and is now a successful project in this area
- Successful development of CCTV and ANPR in Earl Shilton
- Vulnerability Training and the introduction of a vulnerability matrix are helping to ensure vulnerabilities of customers who access the anti-social behaviour services are identified.

4.8 Living environment

- Continued lead and implementation of the Play Strategy. Refreshed action plan. Third national play day event- free event for children and families approx 2000 attendees.
- Through What's Going Down brochure- free and cheap activities for children and families- x 16,000 distributed and 12,000 downloads
- Opening of new children's play area at Queens park
- Youth council members supported to provide activities and opportunities for young people to achieve outcomes for the community. Youth council have had involvement in community safety campaigns, devising of the town centre trail in 2011, support of National play day and have run an anti-bullying campaign in the borough.

- Subsidised pest control treatment for those on certain benefits. The normal cost of treatments is £58 for mice, £48 for insects. For residents in receipt of Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit or Income Support there is a reduced charge of £22. During the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011 48 residents took advantage of this reduced rate.
- Subsidised drainage investigations. The normal cost of drainage investigations is £55.70. For residents in receipt of Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit or Income Support there is a reduced charge of £30. During the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011 16 residents took advantage of this reduced rate.
- Certain enforcement actions e.g. against accumulations, filthy premises etc may result in the payment of fees by those enforced against. In certain situations, payment plans can be set up. During the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011, 1 residents took advantage of a payment plan for the removal of an accumulation of refuse.

5. FUTURE RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 Tackling poverty remains a high priority, particularly in the current economic climate with increasing numbers of people experiencing financial difficulties and inequalities widening.
- 5.2 The Anti-Poverty Strategy has helped to raise the profile of this area of work across service areas, and indeed within many service areas is included within service improvement plans. Therefore to ensure that this area of work continues to be driven as a key corporate priority, and brings about the accelerated improvements necessary across these range of service areas and others, it is recommended that the priorities and outcomes within the existing anti poverty strategy are formally integrated into the authority's service planning framework.
- 5.3 This will ensure actions and responsibilities are included in all relevant service improvement plans, with assigned leads, targets and outcomes, and monitored on an ongoing basis. This would still allow for reporting on related outcomes, but as part of the service planning process, rather than a stand alone work strand.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The work identified and prioritised in the report will be provided from within existing budgets.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (AB)

None raised directly by this report

8. CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS

The Anti Poverty Strategy contributes to all of the corporate priorities.

9. CONSULTATION

Consultation took place to inform the original Anti Poverty Strategy.

10. KNOWING YOUR COMMUNITY – EQUALITY AND RURAL IMPLICATIONS

The Anti Poverty Strategy provides interventions to all areas of the Borough and impacts on the community were considered when developing the original strategy.

Background papers:
Appendix A – Anti-Poverty Strategy 2009-12

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