

## Report of Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities)

### Report to Executive Board

**Date: 24 June 2015**

**Subject: Citizens@Leeds - Supporting Communities and Tackling Poverty**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

### Summary of main issues

1. In June 2013, Executive Board received a report on the issue of welfare, benefits and poverty. That report identified a number of challenges to be addressed in order to make a step change in tackling poverty and deprivation across the city. The key challenges identified were the need to: deliver truly integrated and accessible services for people suffering hardship; develop whole packages of support for people which address a range of hardship issues; provide a real focus on supporting people into work; and, develop an effective campaign in response to the problems created by high cost lenders in the city.
2. In response to these issues a new approach under the identity of Citizens@Leeds was developed to ensure a focus on inclusive, locally provided citizen-based services delivered through a community hub approach. Four key propositions were presented to Members of Executive Board in December 2013 that set out the building blocks for a city-wide response to tackling poverty and deprivation. The four propositions cover:
  - the need to **provide accessible and integrated services**;
  - the need to **help people out of financial hardship**;
  - the need to **help people into work**; and
  - the need to be **responsive to the needs of local communities**.

3. During 2014 Members received a number of reports detailing progress against each of the propositions including the introduction of the new Community Committee arrangements and the development of a city wide network of Community Hubs.
4. This latest report provides Members of Executive Board with a more comprehensive update on the work undertaken under the Citizens@Leeds initiative including an analysis of current poverty levels in Leeds, details of key achievements over the last two years along with a number of case studies and what we intend to do next to achieve our aims for the next five years.
5. Members will find the update report at appendix 1.

### **Recommendations**

6. That Members of Executive Board note the key progress made to support communities and tackle poverty.
7. That Members endorse the proposed next steps to be taken over the course of the next year by the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) as detailed in section 4 of the appended report.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The report provides details of the progress made to date in supporting communities and tackling poverty and sets this within the overall context of poverty in the city. The report also provides details on the actions to be taken next to help deliver outcomes to be achieved over the next 5-years.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 The Council's Best Council Plan identifies as a key priority the need to "Support communities and tackle poverty". In 2013 the Council brought together a number of services under the new Citizens and Communities directorate tasked with taking a lead on addressing the poverty agenda, working with other directorates, services and partners.
- 2.2 In December 2013, Executive Board endorsed an approach to tackling poverty, built around 4 key propositions:
- i. Helping people out of financial hardship:* with a focus on reducing dependency on local and national benefits, improving access to affordable credit as well as tackling high costs lending, reducing debt levels and increasing financial resilience of the poorest citizens and communities in the city;
  - ii. Providing integrated and accessible services and pathways:* with a focus on developing integrated pathways of support that are accessible to local communities and create local partnerships between council-led services and other relevant organisations;
  - iii. Helping people into work:* with a focus on working with those adults who are furthest away from employment and developing programmes of support that meet individual needs and promote citizen engagement;
- 2.3 During 2014 Members received a number of reports detailing progress against each of the propositions including the introduction of the new Community Committee arrangements and the development of a city wide network of Community Hubs.

## **3 Key Messages**

- 3.1 Supporting communities and tackling poverty is a key priority for the City Council at a time when many people across the city are finding life challenging. We are delivering real change and we have ambitious plans for the next 12 months and beyond.
- 3.2 We are helping more people out of financial hardship and reducing dependency on local and national benefits by tackling high cost lenders, tackling low pay, increasing and improving credit union services, providing emergency support, tackling food poverty and creatively using discretionary housing payments to support people stay in their homes.

- 3.3 We are helping more people into work through the introduction of our new incentivised council tax support scheme, establishing community champions on employment skills and worklessness, focussing activity on those further away from the labour market, proactively supporting volunteering and delivering a wide range of work related initiatives.
- 3.4 We are providing more integrated and joined-up services that are better meeting the needs of local people through our Community Hubs, new centres of excellence approach in the telephone contact centre and through improved digital services on our website.
- 3.5 We are being more responsive to the needs of local people and improving local democratic and engagement arrangements through our new Community Committees and investment of local well-being budgets.

## **4 Key Statistics**

- 4.1 It is important that the size and scale of the issues around poverty and deprivation in the city are understood and communicated. Therefore below are 10 key stats which highlight the current state of play in the city
- Unemployment levels have been falling gradually since 2012 but are yet to reach pre-recession levels with 30,000 residents in full time employment and 122,000 in part time employment earning less than the living wage.
  - 31,880 people were out of work and getting Employment Support Allowance or incapacity benefit (Nov 2014)
  - 6,680 lone parents are out of work and claiming benefits.
  - 30,000 children in Leeds are living in poverty
  - 38,100 households in Leeds are experiencing fuel poverty.
  - 7,000 households have been affected by the under-occupancy changes with a collective reduction in benefit of £88,000 per week. Of the 7,000, 40% of households are in rent arrears.
  - 61% increase in the last year in the use of foodbanks in Yorkshire and the Humber.
  - £90m is the estimated value of the high cost lending market in Leeds and the credit union have grown their business to £8m in loans with the intention of increasing this to £20m by 2020. Leeds membership has increased from 11k in 2005 to over 28k today.
  - 12,000 people helped into work or to re-engage with learning
  - £7.2m spent by the council in providing discretionary housing payments or emergency support for families since 2013.

## **5 Main issues**

- 5.1 The attached paper provides detailed and comprehensive information on the progress made over the last 18 months in supporting communities and tackling poverty. The paper covers the following issues:
- Section 1: Poverty and deprivation in Leeds: This section provides information about the current levels of deprivation in the city. It sets the context both for the activities that have been undertaken to date and also provides a baseline

against which the council can measure its progress in tackling poverty and deprivation.

- Section 2: Our response: This section provides details on the initiatives and achievements to date focusing on practical examples that show the benefits of providing wrap around services, in conjunction with partner organisations, to individuals in need
- Section 3: Case studies: This section goes into more detail about initiatives that either demonstrate best practices to be taken forward or demonstrate significant outcomes from better engagement with communities.
- Section 4: Next steps: This section sets out a number of key outcomes that we're looking to achieve over the next 5 years (see para 3.2) and also details the key priorities and focus for 15/16.

5.2 Over the next 5 years, we aim to have delivered a number of outcomes as set out below. Members are asked to endorse these high level outcomes.

- Every household in the city is aware of and able to access services that provide practical solutions to deal with financial hardship, support work-related ambitions and promote community-led anti-poverty initiatives;
- A network of Community Hubs with well-developed cross-sector partnerships that deliver integrated pathways of support;
- A Centres of Excellence approach that delivers more effective and efficient council services that provide connections with localities and integrated pathways of support;
- A network of cross-sector partnerships that provide relevant and timely support to enable all vulnerable citizens to manage and maintain Universal Credit claims;
- Devolved welfare schemes delivered locally that provide integrated and wrap around support to customers;
- In conjunction with Leeds City Credit Union, deliver a 5-year strategy that delivers significant growth in membership, loans, savings and products through a modern banking platform;
- An effective, affordable and joined-up network of advice for all Leeds residents that embraces new technologies and recognises and builds on the strengths of all partner organisations, and;
- Supported community-led initiatives that address food poverty and support a food strategy for Leeds that increases local resilience.

5.3 It is intended to provide members with progress reports against these high level outcomes.

## **6 Corporate Considerations**

### **6.4 Consultation and Engagement**

- 6.4.1 Specific proposals have been, and will continue to be, subject to specific consultation and engagement arrangements. In preparing this update colleagues from across the Council and key partners have been engaged through the Citizens@Leeds programme board.

### **6.5 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 6.5.1 A key focus of the Citizens@Leeds work has been to do more to support people suffering hardship, poverty and inequality and, therefore, the need to consider equality, diversity, cohesion and integration are key aspects of our work. Initiatives such as the 2015/16 Council Tax Support scheme and the local welfare provision scheme have been subject to detailed Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) and further initiatives will also be subject to EIAs to ensure that they focus on helping the most disadvantaged.

### **6.6 Council policies and the Best Council Plan**

- 6.6.1 Supporting communities and tackling poverty is a key objective within the Best Council Plan. The Citizens@Leeds developments provide the next level of planning to ensure that relevant outcomes and priorities for this objective are appropriately responded to..

### **6.7 Resources and value for money**

- 6.7.1 There are no specific resourcing or value for money issues identified in this report. Individual proposals and initiatives will, as required, be supported by fully costed business cases.

### **6.8 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 6.8.1 There are no specific legal implications or access to information issues with this report. The report is subject to call-in.

### **6.9 Risk Management**

- 6.9.1 There are no identified or specific risks arising from this report.

## **7 Conclusions**

- 7.1 It is felt that good progress is being made in developing and delivering initiatives that support the 4 key propositions for supporting communities and tackling poverty. It is important that we continue to make progress in this area and the proposals for 15/16 set out a programme of work that will help deliver a 5-year vision for what we need to achieve.
- 7.2 The achievements to date are also based on excellent inter-directorate working and support from partner organisations both in the public sector and in the third-sector and voluntary sector. We need to continue to develop these arrangements.

## **8 Recommendations**

- 8.1 That Members of Executive Board note the key progress made to support communities and tackle poverty.
- 8.2 That Members endorse the proposed next steps to be taken over the course of the next year by the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) as detailed in section 4 of the appended report.

## **9 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 9.1 None

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.