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## Report of the Director of Communities and Environment

### Report to Executive Board

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> September 2017

Subject: Citizens@Leeds – Tackling Poverty and Supporting Communities Update.

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):		
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?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:		
Appendix number:		

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### Summary of main issues

1. In June 2015, Executive Board received a report on the progress made in establishing the Citizens@Leeds approach to supporting communities and tackling poverty. The report focused on four key propositions which are 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**.
2. The June 2015 report set out the key aims for the next five years in terms of tackling poverty and supporting communities and also set out a 12-month plan of action against each of the four key propositions.
3. Executive Board received a further report in September 2016, detailing progress made against both the annual plan and the 5-year aims, and it was agreed that a further report be submitted in September 2017 to report on the continued journey of progress. This report provides that update.
4. In looking at the progress made, the report continues to provide additional context for Members of the Executive Board, including further information on the Government's welfare reforms and key statistics relating to poverty in Leeds.

### Recommendations

5. Executive Board are requested to:
  - Note the information provided in this report;

- Note the progress made in delivering against the actions identified for 2016/17
- Note the key activities being delivered in 2017/18; and
- Request a further report in 12 months setting out the progress made in supporting communities and tackling poverty.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The report provides an update on progress made in supporting communities and tackling poverty in Leeds over the last 12 months and is the second annual report presented to Executive Board on this issue.
- 1.2 The report sets out progress against key actions for 2016/17 and ongoing and planned activities for the next 12 months which will continue the good work done to tackle poverty and inequality in the city. It also provides an update on key challenges including the Government's ongoing programme of welfare reform.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 Tackling poverty and reducing inequality as part of a strong economy and compassionate city, underpins the Council's Best Council Plan 2017/18. In 2013 the Council brought together a number of services under the then Citizens and Communities directorate (now the Communities and Environment Directorate), tasked with taking a lead on tackling poverty and inequality, working with other directorates, services and partners.
- 2.2 The approach to tackling poverty is built around 4 key propositions:
  - **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;
  - **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;
  - **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, and;
  - **Being responsive to the needs of local communities** with a focus on establishing a voice for local communities within the democratic process that leads to community-supported actions to address local issues.
- 2.3 Delivery of activity that supports and underpins the propositions has changed in the intervening period between their first publication (November 2013) and the present day.
- 2.4 These changes are due to a number of factors including changes within the socio-economic environment, the evolving impact of national policy (e.g. Welfare Reform), and a more sophisticated understanding of poverty within Leeds which has enabled

the Council and partners to flex and change approaches based on a deeper understanding of the issues faced by citizens and communities living in poverty in Leeds. Two examples of the application of this deeper understanding in the past 12 months is the work done to better understand the impact of gambling in the city and the work done on the localities agenda, specifically the approach to integrating service delivery and activity within priority neighbourhoods.

- 2.5 However, as in the September 2016 report, fundamental to the Council and partner's ability to respond appropriately to alleviate the impact of poverty and equality in the city is a continued focus on understanding the state of poverty and deprivation in the city. Below is an update of the statistics presented in September 2016 to show the latest position:

#### **2.5.1 *People living in poverty***

From national DWP data published in March 2017, 9.3 million people in the UK were in poverty in 2015/16. Poverty is estimated to affect 155,000 people in Leeds (after housing costs are deducted from income). A couple with 2 children are in poverty if they earn £401 per week or less (after housing costs) and a single adult with no children is in poverty on earnings of £144 per week or less (after housing costs).

#### **2.5.2 *Food bank use***

The number of times people have accessed a food bank in Leeds has increased by over 6% in the last year, from around 25,200 in 2015/16 to 26,800 in 2016/17.

Leeds	Apr – Mar 2016-17	Apr - Mar 2015-16	Jan 1st - Dec 31st 2014*	2015/16-2016/17 annual change	
				No	%
Number Accessing Foodbanks	26,831	25,168	20,306	1,663	6.6%
Estimated total, meals/sandwich provided	60,474	54,546	56,481	5,928	10.9%

\*Data for 2014 only available by calendar year and therefore not directly comparable with other years.  
Source: Leeds Food Aid Network (FAN), August 2017

National figures from the Trussell Trust show 67,510 three-day emergency food supplies were provided just for children by its network in July and August 2016, compared with 63,100 in the May and June period - an increase of almost 7%. Currently 1.08 million (14%) primary and secondary school children in England are eligible for free school meals; in Leeds just over 19,000 pupils are eligible, which is 16% of all pupils. Once the holidays start, this safety net is removed, and families' budgets are stretched. The result is that up to 19,000 Leeds children go without access to proper meals during the school holidays. To respond to this a Holiday Hunger Provision initiative is being developed to start in 2018 across the city (running over the Easter and main summer holiday period) along with a plan of action to help meet the growing need of child food poverty during the holidays. This will be delivered in partnership with Leeds Community Foundation and FareShare and other key city partners.

#### **2.5.3 *Children in poverty***

The latest local figures are for 2014 and estimate that around 37,200 (23%) of Leeds dependent children under 20 are in poverty, during this same time period the national child poverty figure rose to 2.3m (20%). Annual analysis reveals child poverty

increased between 2013 and 2014 both nationally and locally. These figures grew by over 4,000 children in Leeds and 200,000 more children were affected nationally.

On a national level, during 2014/15, 67% of all dependent children under 20 in poverty were from a household where at least one person was in work. If this is applied to the Leeds figure above, it can be estimated that almost 25,000 children in Leeds were affected by in-work poverty in 2014.

#### **2.5.4 In-work poverty**

Nationally 5.2 million adults that are in poverty are from households where at least one person is in work. This affected 13.5% of all working age adults in the UK in 2015/16. If 13.5% is applied to the working age population of Leeds, 68,716 Leeds adults could be affected by in-work poverty. Over a fifth of all Leeds working residents earned less than the Real Living Wage (the figure accredited by the Real Living Wage Foundation) in 2016, affecting almost 65,000 FTEs and whilst no employee within Leeds City Council is on a zero hours contract, it is estimated there are over 10,000 Leeds employees on such contract.

#### **2.5.5 Council Tax Support**

In 2016/17 over £47m was paid in Council Tax Support. The number of households dependent on Council Tax Support continues to reduce, and has reduced by a further 4.5% from around 70,200 to 67,200 in the last 12 months.

There are likely to be a number factors contributing to this including a national trend of more people moving into work. The roll out of Universal Credit could have a small impact in cases where people may not have submitted a Council Tax Support claim which must now be applied for separately direct to the Local Authority. There is no way of identifying these households, however there are local arrangements in place to provide a short application form to Universal Credit claimants and the soon to be implemented on line application will make claiming easier.

#### ***Personal Work Support Programme***

The Personal Work Support Programme was introduced as part of the amended Council Tax Support scheme that was introduced in 2015 and may have had a contribution to the reduction in the number of CTS claimants. The number of participants in the programme can be broken down as follows:

- 591 participants have found work whilst on the programme since its inception
- 458 have completed the programme and continue to receive Council Tax Support
- 572 are currently participating in the programme and continue to receive Council Tax Support
- 831 have been made exempt from the programme because they have a good reason for not participating at the current time and continue to receive Council Tax Support
- 735 households failed to participate in the Programme and have lost their eligibility for Council Tax Support

The new scheme for Universal Credit claimants is now in place, with 1,038 households receiving Council Tax Support based on the new scheme rules, of which 218 of these are in low paid work

### **2.5.6 Fuel poverty**

In 2015, the estimated number of households in fuel poverty in Leeds was 43,871. This means 13.5% of all Leeds households were fuel poor. Fuel poverty increased in Leeds by 5,258 households, up from 38,613 in 2014. Nationally, the number of households in fuel poverty was estimated at around 2.5 million, representing approximately 11% of all English households and has increased slightly from 10.6% of households in 2014. Estimates also suggest that over 9,000 fuel poor households in Leeds could be paying for their fuel via a pre-payment meter.

- 2.6 For further information and data, the Poverty Fact Book has been developed in order to understand the levels of poverty in Leeds; inform policies and assist in the City's anti-poverty agenda. It contains national and locally sourced data and information to help define and analyse the different themes of poverty. This resource is available at [www.leeds.gov.uk/fi](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/fi)

### **Welfare Reform**

- 2.7 It has now been four years since the most significant reforms were introduced, namely the social sector size criteria (often referred to as the "bedroom tax") and the benefit cap which now limits benefit entitlement to £385 per week. Each month, the Welfare and Benefits Service provides information on the number of tenancies affected by the under-occupancy, benefit cap and local council tax support changes. This information provides a snapshot picture of the numbers affected at a point of time. The number of social sector tenants affected by the social sector size criteria has seen a slow reduction over the last year and now stands at around 5,500. Although it is difficult to determine the reason for this slight reduction, it can be linked to the general ongoing reduction in Housing Benefit caseload
- 2.8 From November 2016 the benefit cap reduced to £20,000 a year in Leeds or £385 a week. This has resulted in approximately 1100 families being affected and now affects families with three or more children and includes families in both the social rented sector and the private rented sector.
- 2.9 Discretionary Housing Payments continue to support, wherever possible, those impacted by these changes and during 2016/17 £2.4m was awarded to people who were mainly impacted by the social sector size criteria and the benefit cap.
- 2.10 From April 2017 the main welfare reform changes introduced by the Government were:
- Limiting to two the number of children eligible for additional support. This change impacts any 3rd or subsequent children born from 6th April 2017. This means that for most families who have a third or subsequent child on or after 6th April 2017 will see no increase in their Child Tax Credits / Housing Benefit or Universal Credit award to help them support that child.
  - Removing auto entitlement to housing costs for 18-21 year olds, within Universal Credit full digital service areas. From 1st April 2017 some young people who are on Universal Credit under the 'Full'/Digital service will not be able to make a new claim for the Housing Costs Element although there will be a number of protections for this group

- 2.11 Universal Credit (UC) is now fully rolled out for single unemployed people who would otherwise claim Jobseekers Allowance. As at end May 2017 there had been over 9,000 claims made to Universal Credit since go live in February 2016. The numbers in receipt of UC as the end of May 17 were 5,100. Of this figure 38% were in employment and 62% were not in employment.
- 2.12 The majority of the current UC caseload will still be single people who are currently fit for work and are job seeking. It is estimated that approximately 40% of the 5,100 (2,000) have a rental liability.
- 2.13 Further roll out of UC to all other groups of people is due to start in Leeds in June 2018.

### **3 Main issues – Progress on Key 16/17 Actions**

- 3.1 The propositions that underpin the Citizens@Leeds approach to tackling poverty are intended to direct the way we deliver services and the opportunities we create for residents and communities to help themselves where appropriate.
- 3.2 The overall 5 year aims of the approach, as approved by Executive Board in June 2015, are set out below with a synopsis of further progress (to that reported last year), made in 2016/17.
- 3.3 *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.***

Good progress has continued to be made in activity that support delivery of this aim. The Council's Council Tax Support Scheme and specifically the Personal Work Support Package element continues to grow with job outcomes for people engaging on the scheme significantly exceeding the target set in 2016/17 (378 outcomes against a target of 200).

Likewise the Local Welfare Support Scheme continues to be an invaluable support scheme for local people facing vulnerability with the funding of £800k during 2016/17 resulting in approximately 5000 awards being made through the scheme with support for white goods, floor covering, food and fuel support.

The Discretionary Housing Payment scheme continues to support those most vulnerable people who are impacted by welfare reforms. During 2016/17 over 4,000 awards were made to support people with rental shortfalls. The reduced Benefit Cap is now seeing demand increase to this scheme and will continue to be monitored on a monthly basis to ensure support is directed to those most in need

Work has also been undertaken to help and support the development of more grassroots initiatives. An example of this is the development of Debt Forums. Debt Forums have been established and operate in East, West, North and South Leeds.

The forums consist of a number of agencies working together to provide the community with information and support with a view to addressing the needs of the community. The Debt Forum members recognise that 'advice' is not the only way of helping people with debt, hence there is a widespread range of members working

together to raise awareness of local services which include looking at access to affordable credit e.g. through Credit Unions, support to getting people in to employment, access to support services and access to food banks etc.

Finally, and as mentioned in paragraph 2.4, as understanding and awareness of the issues impacting on poverty have developed, a more sophisticated and deeper level of understanding and investigation has taken place. A good example of this undertaken in the past 12 months is the work done on mitigating the impact of problem gambling.

Following a research study into the prevalence of problem gambling, the Council is co-ordinating work to support those suffering from or at risk of gambling related harm. In order to progress this work, the Problem Gambling project group was established and brought together the local problem gambling counselling service, partners from the gambling industry, third sector advice agencies and a cross section of departments from the Council. Together, this group is working on actions to mitigate problem gambling across the city. Actions include the development of a marketing campaign to raise awareness of current support services available, and to reduce the stigma associated with talking about the issues. Work is also being developed to strengthen local support provision and involves work to improve referral links between the general advice network and specialist problem gambling counselling service through frontline training.

### **3.4 A network of Community Hubs with well-developed cross-sector partnerships that deliver integrated pathways of support.**

The delivery of the Community Hubs has been split into three phases due to the scale of the programme and to accelerate delivery, as follows:

- **Phase 1 Pathfinder sites** - Armley, Compton Centre and St George's Centre. These opened in April 2014.
- **Phase 2 Sites** – 14 sites across the city, the development of which was agreed by Executive Board in June 2016. Progress on Phase 2 sites is as follows:

<b>Community Hub</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Description</b>
Rothwell	Rothwell Library	Open
Horsforth	Horsforth Library	Open
Pudsey	Pudsey Library	Open
Moor Allerton	Moor Allerton Library	Open
Kippax	Kippax Library	Open
Seacroft	Deacon House	Open
Beeston	Dewsbury Road OSC	Opens September 2017
Bramley	Bramley Library	Opens October 2017
Headingley	Headingley Library	To start during Q3 2017
Morley	Morley Library	To start during Q3 2017
Otley	Otley Library	Refresh in 2018
Garforth	Garforth Library	Refresh in 2018
Harehills	Compton Centre	Refurbishment in 2018
Middleton	St George's Centre	Refurbishment in 2018

- **Phase 3 Sites** – Whilst delivery of Phase 2 is ongoing, development work has now shifted to focus on the Phase 3 Community Hub programme.

The Phase 3 programme will culminate in the delivery of the remaining Community Hubs within the city, further asset rationalisation and staff reorganisation to deliver a sustainable Hub workforce.

The Phase 3 Business Case is planned for submission to Executive Board prior to Christmas 2017.

The approach to integrated and accessible services (with Council and partner services), being implemented within the community hubs, continues to deliver positive change for customers within the city. For example, new hubs opened this year at Horsforth and Moor Allerton.

At Horsforth, where there was no hub but a housing office, enquiries have increased from 731 a month to 3085 enquiries a month. Similarly, at Moor Allerton, enquiries have increased to 1,200 a month. During 2017/18 for the Community Hubs city wide there has been:

- 727,100 visitors for the various services (April to July)
- 126,565 free IT sessions provided
- 603,195 items borrowed from the Libraries

New services have been introduced within the Community Hubs such as Bike Libraries (borrow a book borrow a bike), Yoga and exercise classes after opening hours, Registrars, Legal advice surgeries, Leeds City College courses, Memory Groups, Money Buddies.

#### **3.4.1 A Centres of Excellence approach that delivers more effective and efficient council services that provide connections with localities and integrated pathways of support.**

We continue to deliver the centres of excellence approach within the corporate contact centre with a particular focus around the development of digital self-serve capability and training and development of Customer Service Officers (CSOs) to be more multi-skilled and able to support customers with more complex needs.

Some of the examples of actions taken this year to deliver against these 2 areas are as follows:

- We are moving simple enquiries online and have designed online forms which integrate with back office systems. This means that all the easy enquiries are dealt with online, thereby freeing up CSO's to deal with the more complex needs our customers may have.

Success has been had with a number of environmental and highways forms with approximately 50% of customers opting to use the self-serve forms for these services.

- Work has been ongoing to multi-skill CSOs to enable them to provide a more holistic service for the customer, rather than a service that focuses on one aspect of their enquiry. Examples of how we do this to help customers mitigate the impact of poverty and inequality include briefings/training sessions from key

agencies who have a focus on helping people out of financial hardship. These agencies include Leeds Credit Union, Money Buddies and the Money Information Centre. As a result, CSO's are able to signpost to these agencies with confidence. Further to this we are also introducing training on how to help customers with money problems as part of our new starter induction, so that all new staff coming into the Contact Centre will have this training.

**3.4.2 *A network of cross-sector partnerships that provide relevant and timely support to enable all vulnerable citizens to manage and maintain Universal Credit claims.***

As reported last year, Universal Credit (UC) went live in February 2016 and work to prepare front facing staff, social and private landlords, and the citizens of Leeds was carried out ahead of this introduction.

DWP and the Council have agreed a Delivery Partnership which sees the Council providing help and support to those who need it to make an online claim. For the initial roll out the majority of claimants are newly unemployed people who, in theory, are already used to the online claiming regime. This support service is, in the main, being delivered through Community Hubs and One Stop Centres.

As we prepare for wider roll out of UC (which will see all groups of people making a UC claim from June 2018), the Council and partners are looking at how the front facing services will need to adapt and change to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge to support online UC claims for more vulnerable people and also be able to support people to manage their ongoing UC claims online.

The Delivery Partnership also sees the Council providing Personal Budgeting Support to people who need help with managing the monthly payment that Universal Credit brings. The emphasis is on helping people to deal with a monthly payment of Universal Credit made directly and ensuring they are able to meet the demands of having Housing Costs in with this payment instead of being paid to the landlord. This support includes managing a basic household budget, managing a bank account, and making payments.

In this initial roll out take up of Personal Budgeting Support, is low. However, Housing Leeds also provide money management support to their Universal Credit tenants as part of their ongoing commitment to support tenants impacted by both Universal Credit and other welfare reforms.

Further to this, development work is ongoing to fully understand the service-offer that can be delivered once full service UC is rolled-out. This work extends beyond how claimants can be supported to make a claim on-line, and will focus on how the Council and partners can provide advice, information and guidance to customers to manage the impact of UC as the expectation is that they will still come to the Council and to third sector partners for help and support.

**3.4.3 *Devolved welfare schemes delivered locally that provide integrated and wrap around support to customers.***

As per last year's report, there continues to be little, if any, encouragement from Central Government to look at further devolution of welfare schemes.

However, within Leeds, we continue to deliver local schemes that benefit local people. For example, in 2016/17, the Social Inclusion Fund (SIF) supported Ebor Gardens with their Benefit Buddies project to provide volunteer-led mentoring style

support for vulnerable clients in deprived areas. Benefit Buddies focus on income maximisation to help clients with detailed form filling to receive benefit entitlements. Demand for this type of service has become more pressing due to the recent Welfare Reforms and Universal Credit.

Further to this, the work done this year on developing and implementing the localities agenda is providing a focus on the most deprived communities in the city through integrating service delivery within 6 priority neighbourhoods.

### **Enhanced Focus on Priority Neighbourhoods**

Despite the city's long history of seeking to support our most challenging neighbourhoods and Leeds having seen improvement in some specific areas of activity, the reality is that the gap has indeed widened for our most deprived communities. This is evidenced in the preceding sections of this report.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) shows 105 Leeds neighbourhoods in the most deprived 10% nationally with a population of 164,000. When broken down further Leeds has 16 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA's) that fall within the bottom 1% most deprived.

Whilst all communities have been affected in some way by the economic recession and austerity measures, some of our most deprived and challenged communities have seen the worst effects of these changes.

Within this context, there is a commitment from all services and partners of the need to work differently to address these increasing challenges, with an agreement to target more of our focus towards the 16 most deprived LSOA neighbourhoods. The approach being adopted is one of establishing locally integrated neighbourhood teams, with an initial focus on the top 6 neighbourhoods, which are all relatively small with approximately 1500 residents, 650 households. For each area, work is underway to understand the key challenges and opportunities, determining the focus for intervention and the resources and capacity required.

In working as an integrated team, there is a need to utilise new ways of working and make best use of all assets to build stronger and more resilient communities. There will be a focus on co-designing solutions with residents to improve outcomes and well-being whilst building on the strengths of local assets. There will also be a need to change the way organisational support capacity is deployed. For example, the focus of our intelligence in the organisation, the analysis of our finances, the manner in which we use our assets and the way our staff work. A pathfinder is currently being run in the Holdforths neighbourhood within Armley ward and learning from this as well as best practice from elsewhere is being used to establish an outline framework for how we might implement the new locality working priority neighbourhoods arrangements.

#### **3.4.4 *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.***

The Credit Union has grown significantly in recent years and this has enabled it to play a key role in helping to tackle financial hardship across the city. With the support of the Council, Leeds Credit Union (LCU) has more than trebled its membership from 11,000 in 2005 to 31,049 as at March 2017.

Current projects being delivered in partnership with LCU and focussed on delivering against the 5 year strategy include:

- Delivery of a range of technology initiatives including the launch of a new faster and more streamlined website in June 2016 and the launch of a web based payday loan product charging LCU rates. Over the next 18 months LCU will look to establish significant improvements in its IT infrastructure and back office systems.
- Over 30 school saving clubs across Leeds have been introduced, which sees every pupil entering Key Stage 2 given a £10 contribution when opening a LCU account. It is hoped that parents will also become engaged and join the LCU. Work is ongoing to promote the clubs within schools
- LCU working in partnership with the Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT) and Leeds City Council to raise awareness of the dangers of borrowing from illegal money lenders, more commonly known as loan sharks. The joint initiative will see the team use proceeds of crime money, confiscated from convicted loan sharks, to sponsor new credit union accounts. The first new incentive is targeted at increasing membership amongst Housing Leeds tenants. The first one hundred tenants to join Leeds Credit Union and save regularly between now and November, will be awarded with a £25 savings boost straight into their account before Christmas.
- Housing Leeds continuing to fund LCU to deliver a citywide Money Management and Budgeting Service (MABS). The service is primarily focused at Housing tenants who are in arrears and struggling to pay their rent due to low incomes or poor money management. The support service is delivered by three LCU staff members and aims to provide timely intervention to avoid court proceedings in West, East and South Leeds – the service is available in the East at Burmantofts, Gipton and Seacroft Housing offices, and Moor Allerton Community Hub.

In one case study (see appendix for details) a couple with 2 children under five were struggling financially mainly due to one partner spending most of their income on drugs. A referral from a Children's Centre resulted in the partner attending rehabilitation and the MABS team provided support to get finances under control, reorganise the family budget and help claim Housing Benefit and CTS. The client open a budgeting account and ensured their rent and council tax was paid, along with the Credit Union ensuring rent arrears payments were made on a weekly basis which resulted in rent arrears being cleared and spending being dedicated to family items and the children's needs.

### **3.4.5 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.**

Welfare Reforms continue to have a significant impact on many of our citizens and create more complex enquiries which take longer to resolve. This, coupled with more citizens than ever now seeking advice, means it is imperative that advice providers continue to work together to ensure best use of resources to deliver integrated and cohesive advice provision across the city.

The Council's Advice Contract is now in its fourth year and during the last 12 months, the consortium delivering the contract have continued to work tirelessly to expand and modernise their services. These changes have had a profound impact on the consortium's ability to help people, with a 35% increase in the number of people seen in the last 12 months (from 33,795 in 2015/16 to 45,681 in 2016/17)

The advice contract is now due to be re tendered and the key priority for 2017/18 is to undertake a full procurement exercise to ensure we continue to provide efficient and effective advice service across the city from April 2018.

The Welfare Rights Unit continues to provide a quality benefits advice service across the city. Demand for benefit advice continues to increase year on year, however the team have consistently managed to continue to increase benefit gains for clients. An example case of the team supporting a client with learning difficulties who had no gas or electricity and was struggling to resolve issues with a personal independence payment application. On intervention by the team they were able to resolve his current housing issues around heating and also support him to resolve his PIP claim.

	2015/16	2016/17	% increase
<b>Surgeries</b>	4892	5348	9%
<b>Visits</b>	2671	3075	14%
<b>Telephone</b>	23575	26360	11%
<b>Emails</b>	2844	2937	3%
<b>Total</b>	33982	37720	10%
<b>Benefit Gains</b>	<b>£19,681,407</b>	<b>£22,489,470</b>	<b>13%</b>

#### **3.4.6 *Supported community-led initiatives that address food poverty and support a food strategy for Leeds that increases local resilience.***

The council continues to support Leeds Food Aid Network which helps to deliver a joined-up approach to emergency food provision at a local level. Integral to the success of the Food Aid Network is the partnership the Council has with FareShare (Leeds).

FareShare Yorkshire launched FareShare in Leeds (FiL) in August 2014 in partnership with Leeds City Council, Leeds Food Aid Network and St Georges Crypt. They support food aid providers in the city who are engaged in feeding vulnerable people alongside providing support to help people out of crisis.

Since the launch of FareShare in Leeds in 2014 (to 1st March 2017):

- 101 Charities, Community groups and Schools now have access to food through FareShare in Leeds as often as every week

- Total food provided by FiL in the City is 244,530kg (244 tonnes), helping provide over 580,000 meals
- 14 School Clusters have had access to breakfast cereal and fresh fruit
- In partnership with Kellogg's, Leeds schools have received over 29,000 boxes of cereal, enough for 435,000 breakfasts

Further to this, since March 2015 to February 2017 FareShare in Leeds, via the Local Welfare Support Scheme has:

- Received 1,860 referrals for food provision, for 37% of referrals, food was directly delivered to a resident by FareShare
- for the remaining 63%, food was provided by a food aid provider in the city
- 3,190 people have been supported by the LWSS food provision scheme – 2,122 adults and 1,068 children.

3.5 A more detailed update on the actions taken over the last 12 months is provided at appendix A with Appendix B providing more detailed case studies which demonstrate how the actions we and our partners have taken continue to deliver positive change within the city and have a positive impact on people's lives

#### **4 Main issues – Key Activities being delivered in 2017/18**

- 4.1 Whilst Section 3, coupled with the information set-out in Appendix A and B, clearly demonstrates the continued progress made in tackling poverty and inequality in the city, it is right that actions and activities evolve and develop this year and in future years to ensure the Council and partners continue to mitigate the impact of poverty and inequality in the city.
- 4.2 Given this, the following actions are being delivered in 2017/18 to support continued delivery of the 4 propositions:

##### ***Helping people out of financial hardship***

- Continued delivery of financial support schemes which support the most vulnerable
- Continue to maximise the impact of the Social Inclusion Fund at a local level
- Deliver a campaign and associated projects to mitigate the impact of problem gambling
- Preparing for the full roll-out of Universal Credit starting in June 2018.
- Preparing to tender for a major research project to evaluate the extent of poverty in Leeds including the impact of welfare reforms
- Continuing to support the Credit Union to provide affordable banking and credit services to families in deprived communities
- Continuing to support Fareshare in Leeds and the Food Aid Network to support food aid providers in the city who are engaged in feeding vulnerable people alongside providing support to help people out of crisis.
- Maximising the Discretionary Housing Payment spend to target those in most need.

##### ***Providing integrated and accessible services and pathways***

- Retender of the Leeds Advice Contract

- Complete delivery of the Phase 2 Community Hub sites and seek agreement from Executive Board on the Phase 3 programme.
- Continue delivery of the centres of excellence approach within the corporate contact centre, specifically the integration of housing rent calls into the Council Tax, Benefits and Welfare Support centre of excellence.
- Continue the delivery of the Digital Centre of Excellence to make it easier for customers to self-serve and go-live with the new Council website.
- To work with 3rd sector organisations in hubs to expand the range of services available.

### ***Helping people into work***

- Continue to develop and deliver the Council Tax Support Scheme which has a clear focus on helping people into work.
- Develop a more integrated pathway to work through the adoption of a triage process within the Council's job shops which ensures jobseekers are given the best and most appropriate help and support to obtain work.
- In partnership with DWP, evolve the Jobshop offer to mitigate the potential impact of Universal Credit on those furthest away from the labour market and those already in low-paid work.
- The council's Personal Work Support package continues to get long term unemployed people into work.

### ***Being responsive to the needs of local communities***

- Continue to ensure that community hubs become integrated within local communities, address local need and are seen as local community assets to use and engage with.
- The council's licensing authority continues to consult with communities when developing licensing policies to ensure local needs and concerns are fully taken into account

## **5 Corporate Considerations**

### **5.1 Consultation and engagement**

5.1.1 The report is for information only and does not require consultation.

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

5.2.1 The report outlines actions that have been taken with the intention of reducing inequality and, through greater engagement with communities, increasing cohesion and diversity.

### **5.3 Council Policies and the Best Council Plan**

5.3.1 The four key propositions play a key element in tackling poverty and reducing inequalities which underpins the 2016/17 Best Council Plan. The scheme contributes to the Best Council Plan outcomes for everyone in Leeds to 'Earn enough to support themselves and their families', to 'Live in good quality, affordable

homes within clean and well cared for places' and to 'Do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life'.

#### **5.4 Resources and Value for Money**

- 5.4.1 The report itself does not require any resource allocation. The key activities detailed in the report which require resource allocation have been subject to separate reports and, where appropriate, detailed business cases

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

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

#### **5.6 Risk Management**

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

### **6 Conclusion**

- 6.1 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 17/18 set out a programme of work that will continue to contribute to a 5-year vision for what we need to achieve.
- 6.2 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.

### **7 Recommendations**

- 7.1 Executive Board are requested to:

- Note the information provided in this report;
- Note the progress made in delivering against the actions identified for 2016/17
- Note the key activities being delivered in 2017/18; and
- Request a further report in 12 months setting out the progress made in supporting communities and tackling poverty.

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

- 8.1 None.

Appendix A – Update on 16/17 actions

Appendix B – Case Studies.

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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.