

TO: THE EXECUTIVE
29 MARCH 2011

**CREATING OPPORTUNITIES - BREAKING THE CYCLE
A CHILD POVERTY STRATEGY 2011 – 2014
Director of Children, Young People and Learning**

1 PURPOSE OF DECISION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to the Executive Creating Opportunities – Breaking the Cycle, a Child Poverty Strategy for Bracknell Forest.

2 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 **That the Executive approves the Child Poverty Strategy.**
- 2.2 **That the Executive agrees further development of a detailed plan by the Children and Young People’s Partnership, following the publication of the National Strategy at the end of March 2011.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Coalition Government remains committed to the goal of ending child poverty by 2020. It aims to publish a national strategy every three years, the first in March 2011 and to publish an annual report detailing progress.
- 3.2 Part 2 of the Child Poverty Act 2010 requires responsible local authorities and their partner authorities to cooperate to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty in their local areas.

Key responsibilities are:

- **Cooperate** – put in place arrangements to work with partner authorities named in the Act.
 - **Understand needs** – prepare and publish a child poverty needs assessment. This will enable an understanding of the characteristics of low income and disadvantaged families in their area and key drivers of poverty that must be addressed.
 - **Develop and deliver a strategy** – prepare a joint child poverty strategy which sets out the contribution that each partner will make to address issues raised in the needs assessment.
- 3.3 The Child Poverty Strategy is one of a number of plans and strategies that will underpin the Children and Young People’s Plan *Creating Opportunities – A Joint Strategic Plan for Children and Young People in Bracknell Forest*, which will be published in April 2011. The priorities for action in the Child Poverty Strategy align with the priorities in the Children and Young People’s Plan, and will support the successful delivery of these outcomes for children and young people.
- 3.4 The Child Poverty Strategy is aligned with the Economic Development Strategy, and the Economic and Skills Development Partnership, as this is crucial in terms of

sustaining economic prosperity and reducing the impact of poverty on outcomes for children, young people and families.

3.5 In Bracknell Forest much has already been achieved in relation to being able to identify and support those children, young people and families who have been affected by poverty. We have our Children's Centres already based in the areas which are considered to be the most deprived. The Children and Young People's Strategic Plan recognises and identifies poverty as a priority, a range of services support young people who are not in employment, education or training such as NRG [run by the Youth Service] and Connexions. We also have a project which has focussed on issues of child poverty and educational attainment.

3.6 Work to complete the strategy has included:

- Understanding the local picture, through carrying out a needs assessment to identify characteristics, and key drivers of poverty.
- Holding a Child Poverty Conference, with speakers from the national Child Poverty Unit, a presentation on the local perspective and on economic development, and the future priorities of the Economic Development Strategy. The conference also heard from local providers who gave a very real flavour of the impact of poverty on children, young people and families with whom they work.
- Research was also undertaken to look at what was happening in other areas in relation to Child Poverty, and it was noted that Bracknell Forest was well advanced in relation to its responsibilities for addressing child poverty.

3.7. The Conference and the commitment shown to the work on child poverty by the Council, Council Members and other partners has been held up nationally as an exemplar of good practice, and we have been asked to submit a case study on our work, which may be used in the National Child Poverty Strategy to be published at the end of March 2011.

3.8 The Strategy identifies the key priorities which we believe will support us in addressing the issues and has two main aims, one short term, and one longer term:

1. To make some impact on the lives of children currently living in poverty
2. To break the cycle that leads to poor children becoming poor adults.

The Strategy has three outcome priorities and one underpinning priority:

- To raise the family income of those families living in poverty
- To mitigate the impact of those living in poverty
- To improve outcomes for children and young people, breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

Underpinning Priority

- To increase awareness and challenge perceptions of child poverty and build a framework for the future.

3.9. The Strategy [in section 10] outlines some high level actions that will support the delivery of the priorities identified. A more detailed plan to support the delivery of the Strategy will be completed following further consultation with the Bracknell Forest Partnership, the Children and Young People's Partnership (formerly the Children & Young People's Trust) and the Economic Skills and Development Partnership. This

also allows for the National Child Poverty Strategy to be published and for any adjustments / amendments to be considered.

3.10 The public sector equality duty provisions will come into force in April 2011. The Council will have a general duty to pay due regard to:

- Advance equality of opportunity
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and
- Foster good relations.

The Child Poverty Strategy will be one of a range of plans and strategies that will demonstrate the way in which the Council and its partners are achieving this duty.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 The guidance is statutory and should be followed unless a good reason can be identified for departing from it. Therefore no alternative options are considered.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

5.1 The Child Poverty Strategy has been developed to align closely with the overarching framework of the Bracknell Forest Partnership Sustainable Communities Strategy and “Creating Opportunities” – A Joint Strategic Plan for Children and Young People in Bracknell Forest 2011 – 2014.

5.2 The Strategy has been developed around the building blocks identified in guidance as:

- Family and Life Chances [Education, health and early years]
- Parental employment and skills
- Place and Delivery
- Financial Support

It should be noted that the Government has indicated a change in focus and final consultation on its approach has recently been completed. The national strategy is due to be published in late March 2011. There have also been National Reviews linked with child poverty e.g. Graham Allen’s review of early intervention.

5.3 The emphasis is on identifying those people at risk of poor outcomes as a result of poverty, and the roles and responsibilities of all partners to work together to tackle and mitigate the impact. Around 2,500 children in Bracknell Forest are growing up in poverty – around one in ten of all of our children. Poverty will affect every aspect of their lives – social, educational and personal. Children from poorer backgrounds do not perform as well at school as their peers in all stages of their development and the gap widens, as they get older. This influences their future prospects; increasing the likelihood that they will experience poorer health, poorer housing, unemployment and poverty into adulthood - perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

5.4 The Strategy is supported by a Needs Analysis, which draws significantly on the information in the Children and Young People’s Strategic Plan and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

- 5.5 Developing the strategy has been challenging as the overall picture for Bracknell Forest is very positive, showing that Bracknell Forest is a good place to live and work, outcomes overall are good, people are generally healthy, live longer and educational outcomes are steadily improving. This however masks the fact that there are children, young people and families who live in poverty, and that this is not evenly spread across the authority, with a number of wards consistently demonstrating high levels of need and deprivation. Typically these wards tend to be located in and around the Town Centre.
- 5.6 The strategy has been developed during a period where there have been significant reductions in budget allocations within the Council and with partner agencies with the prospect that this is likely to continue during the remainder of the current spending review. The strategy does not identify the use of additional resources to deliver the priorities, it is intended that these are achieved within the resources available, and with a clear focus on more effective commissioning and joint commissioning to achieve the necessary economies, and to promote partnership working. The removal of 'ring fences' on grants with the creation of an Early Intervention Grant also presents the opportunity to be more flexible with how resources need to be spent.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The relevant legal provisions are made within the body of the report

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 The Council allocates its financial resources through the budget process in the context of its medium term financial plan. Currently the medium term financial plan forecasts that the Council will need to make significant budget reductions over the next few years. That said over the same period the Council will have to develop increased efficiency in service delivery while responding to demographic changes, new legislation and the need to modernise services. This will require the reallocation of the Councils limited resources.
- 6.3 In order to deliver these service changes the Council publishes a range of strategies and policies to help it allocate these limited resources to the optimum effect. A strategy or policy does not represent a financial commitment. These strategies also form the basis of the annual service plan which ensures that the development of the Councils services is consistent with its medium term objectives.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 The nature of the Child Poverty Strategy is that the focus is on further addressing the issues of the most vulnerable children, young people and their families.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 The Strategy is reliant on partners working together. There is a risk that partners will not cooperate or work together, however the process of developing the Strategy has fully engaged with partners, and ensured that they are signed up to the priorities. Progress will be closely monitored through the Bracknell Forest Partnership.

Other Officers

6.6 N/A

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

7.1 The list of people consulted during the completion of Strategy plan is extensive and details are contained within the document.

Method of Consultation

7.2 Various methods of consultation used, including presentations, workshops, events and questionnaires.

Representations Received

7.3 The outcome of the consultation is included within the plan and has contributed significantly to the priorities.

Background Papers

Joint strategic Needs Assessment

Children and Young People's Needs Assessment

Creating Opportunities – A Joint Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2011 -2014

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