

## **Notes of a Meeting of the Poverty Working Group - 7 December 2020**

### **Members Present:**

Cllr Shaun Garrett (Chairman)	Rev. Chris Richardson, St Martin's Church
Trefor Hogg, ODCOG	Kate Sawdy, CASH
Cllr Rodney Bates	Greg Scott, CASH
Cllr Colin Dougan	Cyane Sullivan, SHCCG
Rev. Andrew Knowles, St Mary's Church	
Cllr Alan McClafferty	
Robert Mills, Accent Housing	

**Officers:** Jayne Boitault, Gail Bushell and Louise Livingston

### **1 Notes of the Last Meeting**

The notes of the meeting held on 23 November 2020 were agreed.

### **2 Surrey County Council's Plans from Free School Meals Families**

The Working Group was informed that Surrey County Council (SCC) had confirmed that vouchers of £15 per child, per week would be made available for children in receipt of Free School Meals. The vouchers would be available between Monday, 21 December 2020 and Monday 4 January 2021. Schools would need to apply for the vouchers on behalf of the children, which would be downloaded and made available to parents by the school. The vouchers could be used with specified retailers and would be restricted to food and other essential items.

It was acknowledged that the programme was now in place but members of the Group recognised that the details of its implementation were essential to ensuring that the parents received the support. Concern was expressed about a number of practical issues, including parents accessing the vouchers in cases where they did not have access to an email, as there was uncertainty about whether all schools would print the vouchers on their behalf. The Group also referred to the potential for difficulties regarding the timing of the receipt of vouchers and schools' closing dates. Language barriers for households where English was not the first language were also recognised as a potential concern.

It was recognised that the responsibility for this matter rested with SCC and the Group's main remit was to highlight concerns and assist with signposting information. It was agreed to highlight the Working Group's concerns at the consultation event on Thursday, 10 December, where SCC representatives were expected to be present.

The Working Group discussed the publicity of the scheme and asked for information to be placed in a prominent place on the Council's website during the two week Christmas period. The Council's Executive Head of Transformation undertook to discuss the matter with the Marketing & Communications team. It

was also advised that other support from the Council and its partners would be publicised.

**RESOLVED that**

- (i) officers be asked to share the Working Group's observations and concerns with Surrey County Council colleagues; and**
- (ii) the Executive Head of Transformation be asked to discuss publicising the Free School Meal Vouchers and other support schemes in place over the Christmas period with the Marketing & Communications team.**

### **3 Poverty Working Group Stakeholder Event Update**

The Working Group received an outline of the Stakeholder event that would be held on Thursday, 10 December 2020. It was proposed that there would be a short introduction to the event from Councillor Shaun Garrett, Councillor Josephine Hawkins, and Kate Sawdy after which participants would move into 3 facilitated workshops, to be grouped as follows:

- Old Dean
- St Michaels and Watchetts
- All other Surrey Heath

The workshops would focus on four questions based on the ideas proposed at the previous meeting, with approximately 10 minutes allocated for discussion on each question. During a short break the facilitators would compile information from the workshops to provide a brief update on what had been discussed in the groups. The session would conclude with a summary from Councillor Garrett.

Members of the Working Group were informed that the information from the event would inform a report to the Council's Executive in February 2021 regarding poverty and the Council's grant schemes.

The Working Group discussed the attendance at the event and it was agreed that Jayne Boitout would circulate the list of attendees, with other members of the Group to advise her if they were aware of anyone else who should be invited.

### **4 The Working Group's Terms of Reference**

The Working Group reviewed the Terms of Reference drafted for the Working Group. It was agreed to add Accent Housing to the list of community organisations represented on the Working Group. Members discussed councillor ward representation on the Group, recognising that the Executive had agreed to refer to the Working Group "initially" comprising members from Old Dean, St Michaels and Watchetts wards. In response to reports that other councillors had raised increasing the Group's membership and political balance, it was advised that the membership of the Group would be reviewed when the Working Groups were reappointed by the Executive in May 2021.

It was suggested that the third bullet point in the Key Objectives be updated to remove the reference to "...18 months...". It was also suggested that the Working Group's remit should also include the review of any Council policies that specifically relate to poverty.

**RESOLVED that the Executive be asked to adopt the Working Group's draft Terms of Reference, as attached at Annex A to these notes.**

## **Poverty Working Group**

### **Terms of Reference**

The Poverty Working Group is a Working Group of the Executive.

#### Membership

The Group will initially be made up of the Councillors from the following Borough Wards:

- Old Dean
- St Michaels
- Watchetts

The Group will also comprise of representatives from:

- Surrey Heath Clinical Commissioning Group
- Faith Groups
- The Voluntary Sector and Community Organisations including Accent Housing, Citizens Advice Surrey Heath and the Hope Hub.

The Chairman of the Working Group will be appointed at its first meeting.

#### Key Objectives

- To agree the scope of a hardship fund from the repurposing of the allocated budget approved in minute 110/E of the Executive Meeting held on 24 March 2020.
- To oversee the establishment of a new Ward Councillor Community fund in line with the indicative criteria agreed at 48/E of the 20 October 2020 Executive Meeting.
- Analyse the data from Universal Credit in conjunction with further data from Citizens Advice that will be used as a basis to support a partnership approach to alleviate deprivation in areas of most need.
- To introduce a communications campaign to clearly promote the services available to assist during times of hardship.
- To aim to secure long term funding streams for organisations which alleviate poverty within the Borough: i.e. Citizens Advice, Camberley Job Club, the IT connect service; and schemes for those looking for work and requiring digital training via The Hope Hub.
- To host a community and statutory partner stakeholder event in December 2020 to identify the longer-term partnership plans to provide support in this area.
- To incorporate the outcomes of the resolved motion agreed at full Council on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020 in Minute 47/C relating to the short and long term food poverty gaps within Surrey Heath.
- To review any Council policies that specifically relate to poverty.

#### Meetings

The Working Group will meet as and when needed.