

Cabinet Member Brief
Overview & Scrutiny Committee
(Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services)
14 September 2021

Welfare Reform & Anti-Poverty Update

The Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty Cabinet Member Reference Group met on 24 June 2021. The following updates were received:

Updates from the Welfare Reform & Anti-Poverty Steering Group

Officers from Public Health and Communities provided an update from discussions regarding community shop, community pantry model and summer food programmes.

Childhood poverty in Sefton and the impacts of COVID-19 were also discussed with members of the Partnership Steering Group.

Poverty Emergency & Childhood Poverty in Sefton

Following a report to Cabinet regarding Childhood Poverty in Sefton and the declaration of a poverty emergency, discussions have taken place between officers and Cabinet Members to consider how the Council moves towards the development of a Childhood Poverty Strategy and action plan.

A partnership event with a focus on collective responsibility is being planned as part of the consultation and engagement activities that will inform the development of a Childhood Poverty Strategy.

Community Shop

Cabinet Members and Officers provided feedback following visits to community pantries in the south of the borough managed by Ykids (Bootle), and Emmanuel Baptist Church (Netherton). It emphasised that the community pantry is a respectful and sustainable model and that it is smaller and easier to manage.

Members of the Reference Group agreed by consensus that the community pantry model is the most suitable way forward in Sefton and should be supported instead of the community shop model. Councillors emphasised the need to ensure the community pantry approach is implemented in a strategic way to meet the needs and breadth of access required across the borough. This approach is also supported by members of the Partnership Steering Group.

Holiday Activity Fund and Summer Food Programme

Officers from Communities reported that the Department for Education (DfE) are supporting with holiday activities during the school summer holidays. Focus has been upon keeping the funding allocation in Sefton and on delivering where need is greatest.

The Council is engaged with schools and is supporting the provision of holiday clubs. Youth provision has been commissioned as well as community and faith sector being approached to take part in holiday programmes.

DfE has requested provision for the Christmas period. It was discussed that this will present a challenge due to service availability over the period. It was suggested that a virtual offer could be created in addition to hampers with activities included.

Provision is also being considered for October and February half terms.

Welfare Benefits Team Recruitment

Recruitment within the Welfare Benefits Team has been completed and that two staff have been appointed.

ELAS

Cabinet Members received the annual ELAS report providing a summary of performance information for the Council's local welfare support scheme since its implementation in April 2013, to the 31 March 2021.

Officers reported that current daily applications have increased by 38% when compared to the same period last year. Additional funding has been made available to maximise the number of awards.

Requests for actionTransport

Cabinet Members requested further information regarding transport in relation to poverty, social exclusion, and ability to access services. It was emphasised that transport is a cross-cutting issue which is strongly linked to the poverty agenda.