CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday, 29th July 2021
Report Subject	Poverty Priority Update Report
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Assets
Report Author	Chief Executive
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council Plan priorities have been refreshed for 2021/2022 and now include a specific priority which focusses on poverty.

Poverty can mean many different things to different people, however a very generally it could be defined as:

"a lack of something or when the quality of something is extremely low"

The overall objective of the poverty priority is described as:

"Protecting people from poverty by supporting them to meet their basic needs"

Within the poverty priority there are 5 key themes:
- Income Poverty
- Child Poverty
- Food Poverty
- Fuel Poverty
- Digital Poverty

This report will provide an update on progress within each of the key areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.	To note the progress made to date in each of the poverty priority areas

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	**EXPLAINING THE POVERTY PRIORITY**
1.01	The Council Plan priorities have been refreshed for 2021/2022 and now include a specific priority which focusses on poverty.
1.02	Poverty can mean many different things to different people, however a very generally it could be defined as: *"a lack of something or when the quality of something is extremely low"*
1.03	The overall objective of the poverty priority is described as: "Protecting people from poverty by supporting them to meet their basic needs"
1.04	Within the poverty priority there are 5 key themes: • Income Poverty • Child Poverty • Food Poverty • Fuel Poverty • Digital Poverty Detail and progress in each area is detailed below.
	Income Poverty
1.05	Income poverty is described as: "People on low income who are unable to meet day to day living costs" There are a number of key actions and objectives identified within the plan which seek to support families to become financially resilient by maximising the number of people signposted for support to facilitate longer term behavioural change **Ensuring that take-up to benefit entitlements is maximised in a timely way by processing claims efficiently –** This has been a key indicator in the council plan for many years. Current performance: New Claims Processing – 20.36 days (target 20 days) Change Processing – 5.06 days (target 8 days) **Maximising take up of the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) scheme and other financial support –** The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) funding for DHPs has reduced by £163,000 for 2021/2022, however, Welsh Government have allocated additional funding to Local Authorities to top this up – the amount allocated for Flintshire is £126,000 which will assist with alleviating the financial pressure falling to the council. The scheme is being promoted as widely as possible and we are working with services and agencies to continue to promote the scheme to ensure that we can support as many residents as possible.

	Continuing to offer our community hub (Contact Centres) approach giving access to a range of programmes, services and agencies together in one place This approach is in early stages of development and fuller details will be available later in the year. In the meantime, our connects centres continue to explore and develop opportunities to work with services and agencies to deliver joined up services for our residents.	
	Child Poverty	
1.06	Child poverty is described as: "Children who do not have access to adequate food, clothing, shelter and education to lead a healthy and active life" There are a number of key actions and objectives identified within the plan which seek to address 3 specific areas: **The cost of sending children to school is reduced by:** • **Making the processes for claiming free school meals as easy as possible to increase the percentage of take-up against entitlement** • **Encouraging take-up of the free school breakfast for year 7 pupils eligible for free school meals** • **Maximising the take-up of the school uniform grant** The process for claiming free school meals has been reviewed and streamlined to ensure it is as simple as possible. There are established links with the schools to support parents to make claims when appropriate. Breakfast provision is actively encouraged, take up and measurement of this has been particularly challenging due to moving towards a return to settled learning. Further work will be resumed when the Autumn term starts in September. The Uniform Grant for 2021/2022 has again been extended to include more eligible year groups:	

Eligible Group	Grant Available
Reception, Y1; Y3; Y5	£125
Y7	£200
Y8; Y9; Y10; Y11	£125
Learners in Special School, special needs resource base or pupil referral unit aged 4; 5; 7; 9; 11; 12;13;14 or 15	£125
Every school year for looked after children	£125

		Free access to books, ICT networks, devices and library services are maintained by: • **Maintaining the network of seven libraries in partnership with Aura** • **Increasing usage of online resources for children and young people** This work is progressing well and further detailed information will be available later in the year **Children have access to play opportunities by:** • **Ensuring children have access to staffed open-access playwork projects in local communities** • **Ensuring children have access to well-maintained outdoor play areas which offer a varied and rich play environment** This work is in development and further detailed information will be available later in the year.
		Food Poverty
1.07		Food Poverty is described as: "People who are not able to access food that meets their daily nutritional needs and requirements" There are a number of key actions and objectives identified within the plan which seek to ensure everyone in Flintshire has access to affordable, good fresh food: **Developing a "Well Fed at Home service"** **Developing and delivering a "Hospital to Home" meals service** **Introducing a transported and delivered food service "Mobile Meals" to those who are vulnerable** Well-Fed Food Store – Emergency Food Support Well-Fed have been working on the opening of a Food Store to provide emergency food support since January 2021. We are in the early stages and have been receiving referrals from Social Services, Welfare Reform and Accommodation Support teams initially. The food store provides emergency food support, a choice of fresh meals the resident is able to cook themselves along with fresh provisions, bread, mild etc. We are able to support the families/individual with a free food parcel each week for up to 4 weeks depending on their circumstances while referring them to Flintshire's Welfare Reform team for any other support they may require, such as income and debt support.

		Well-Fed's Food Store offers the resident a choice on the food they eat and provides them with stability over a number of weeks, knowing their meals are going to be delivered direct to their door, enabling them to concentrate on other areas of their lives. If people are able to eat well, they are able to do well.

We delivered the first emergency food parcel direct to the resident home last Friday and will continue to provide food and other relevant support to this resident over the next few weeks.

We now plan to share information about the Food Store and the easy referral process with other departments in Flintshire and external agencies.

Well-Fed - Mobile Shop

We are just in process of making the final arrangements so we can take to our fully stocked Well-Fed mobile shop out on the road this August.

We will be visiting rural areas as well as areas across Flintshire where resident struggle to get to the shops, providing fresh meals as well as food provisions they would expect to see in their local corner shop.

Holiday Hunger 2021

The Holiday Hunger Programme looks very different this year. As parents receive a direct payment for free school meals for each of their children over the holidays, this year we decided to work in collaboration with Flintshire's Social Services.

Social Services have nominated families who would benefit from receiving fresh meal over the summer holidays and Well-Fed will be delivering them direct to their door each week. |
| | | **Fuel Poverty** |
| 1.08 | | Fuel Poverty is described as:

"Households that have higher than average fuel costs and meeting those costs will cause them to experience poverty"

There are a number of key actions and objectives identified within the plan which seeks to reduce the risk of fuel poverty for residents:

Increase the energy efficiency of homes

Supporting and referring vulnerable households to reduce fuel poverty and improve health and wellbeing

(These objectives are also linked to other areas within the council plan)

Work is progressing in this area and there will be a more detailed update later in the year. |

		Digital Poverty
1.09		Digital Poverty is described as:

"Limitations on easy access to the digital world due to prohibitive costs, skills and confidence, or network coverage"

There are a number of key actions and objectives identified within the plan which seek to address 3 specific areas:

Supporting and enabling access to the internet and devices to ensure people are not excluded from a digital world by:

- **Supporting people to use appropriate digital technology through the Digital Champions Scheme**

- **Providing free of charge public access to the internet at Connects Centres and Aura library services**

- **Increasing loans of devices through the Aura Digital Access Scheme**

- **Increasing take-up of digital learning opportunities supported by Aura**

The Digital Champion scheme is currently being developed and significant progress has been made. Further and more detailed information will be reported later in the year.

All Flintshire Connects centres provide free access to the internet and also provide support to residents who may require this.

Work is progressing well in this area specifically around development of apprentices to support digital learning and how that knowledge and skill can be effectively shared to support the wider community.

Supporting people to access information digitally by:

- **Providing access to council services on the internet in a responsive way (information can be accessed using different devices)**

- **Promoting initiatives to help people to use digital technology**

- **Increasing access to information online to support people to retain their digital skills**

- **Promote the range of digital training and skill development provided by Coleg Cambria**

Through our recovery work, specifically the work of the Poverty and Vulnerability Recovery Group, we recognised that there was much already being done to support those suffering from digital exclusion and we felt we needed to promote this, simplify access to it and build on what we have already achieved.

Members will be aware that we have recently reviewed the digital strategy and incorporated a specific theme for digital inclusion. The digital inclusion theme has its own targets and milestones but also influences the aims and actions of the other themes, so that they are designed in a way that minimises exclusion from the outset.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There are no specific resource implications for this report.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	**Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact**

Long-term	Throughout all of the Council plan priorities there are demonstrable actions and activities which relate to all of the Sustainable Development Principles.
Prevention	
Integration	
Collaboration	
Involvement	

Well-being Goals Impact

Prosperous Wales	Throughout the overall monitoring report process there is evidence of alignment with the Well-being Goals. Specific strategic and policy reports include impact and risk assessments.
Resilient Wales	
Healthier Wales	
More equal Wales	
Cohesive Wales	
Vibrant Wales	
Globally responsible Wales	

Council's Well-being Objectives

We have reviewed and updated our Well-being Objectives throughout the development of the Council Plan 2021/22.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
4.01	The Reporting Measures are monitored by Overview and Scrutiny Committees according to the priority area of interest.
4.02	Chief Officers have contributed towards reporting of relevant information.

5.00	APPENDICES
	None

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	**Contact Officer:** Jen Griffiths **Telephone:** 01352 702929 **Email:** jen.griffiths@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<u>Discretionary Housing Payment - Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs)</u> Payments that may be made by the Council to people that are receiving **Housing Benefit or Universal Credit (Housing Element**), but who may still need further financial help with their housing costs. The money used for DHPs is provided by the Government every year, but it is a limited sum and the Council has to decide how best to award the money. In order to make a payment, the Council tries to meet the following objectives; • To encourage and help keep people in employment • To prevent homelessness and aid people to retain sustainable tenancies • To help people who are trying to help themselves • To help keep families together • To support vulnerable people in the community • To help people through times in which they are stressed and vulnerable • To help to alleviate poverty • To assist people that are particularly disadvantaged by Welfare Reforms In order to make a decision the Council will consider the following points; • The shortfall between a person's Housing Benefit and their rent • Steps taken by a person to reduce their rent liability • Steps taken by the person to find cheaper alternative accommodation • Reasons why a person cannot move to cheaper alternative accommodation

- Steps taken by a person to increase their income
- The financial circumstances of the person and their family, but payments of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) will not be considered as income as these are intended to be used to help pay for extra costs of disability and any related expenditure up to the value of the amount of disability awarded.
- Any relevant medical circumstances of the person and their family
- Any circumstances which may be considered as exceptional
- The level of funding available to FCC
- The consequences of not awarding a DHP