

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 25 February 2020

Edinburgh Poverty Commission Progress Update

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Policy and Sustainability Committee.
 - 1.1.1 Note the work carried out by the Edinburgh Poverty Commission to date, and plans for publication of final recommendations at the end of March 2020
 - 1.1.2 Agree to the development of a cross-council work programme to take forward the implementation of Edinburgh Poverty Commission recommendations to be considered by Committee by June 2020
 - 1.1.3 Agree to the establishment of the Poverty All Party Oversight Group and its proposed remit
 - 1.1.4 Note the development of existing officer and cross partner working groups to support this work programme.

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Edinburgh Poverty Commission Progress Update

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This paper provides an update on progress of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission in the period since its formal launch in November 2018. Final recommendations from the work of the Commission are planned for publication at the end of March 2020.
- 2.2 Following publication, this report proposes that Council commit, by June 2020, to agreeing a comprehensive programme of cross council actions in response to the findings of the Commission. This is in keeping with the developing priorities of the change strategy and the commitment to a prevention strategy.
- 2.3 The paper further proposes an approach to governance and development of this work programme, with adoption of a new Poverty All Party Oversight Group with a remit to champion the prioritisation of action within the Council and across the city to end poverty in Edinburgh.

3. Background

- 3.1 In June 2018 City of Edinburgh Council agreed to support the launch of a new independent Edinburgh Poverty Commission and agreed that recommendations proposed by the commission will be used to inform the implementation of the Council Change Strategy. The launch of the Commission was similarly supported in June 2018 by the Edinburgh Partnership Board, with a commitment that the Commission findings would be used in the development and implementation of the Edinburgh Community Plan.
- 3.2 The Commission is an independent group made up of 12 people from a range of sectors and backgrounds, including citizens who have direct experience of living in poverty in Edinburgh. Jim McCormick, Associate Director Scotland for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, is the chair of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission, with Cllr Cammy Day as vice chair.
- 3.3 In October 2019 the Finance and Resources Committee approved the adoption of addressing poverty and sustainability as the policy priorities which will provide a focus for development of the Council's budget for 2020-23.

- 3.4 In November 2019 the Policy and Sustainability Committee noted the emerging findings arising from the work of the Commission and, in advance of final recommendations, agreed that officers would work with Edinburgh Partnership colleagues and other stakeholders to develop specific joint actions and options on selected key findings identified in the interim report. An update on this activity is provided in this report.

4. Main report

Progress to date

- 4.1 Throughout 2019 commission's inquiry has been structured around three phases of work - considering aspects of poverty in Edinburgh relating to the themes of 'Pockets', 'Prospects', and 'Places'. Each phase includes visits to community projects in all parts of the city, evidence gathered from citizens on their experience of poverty, evidence gathered from support services, and commissioned research into the reality of poverty in this city and what solutions work best.
- 4.2 As at February 2020 the Commission has:
- 4.2.1 Met 6 times in full session to hear and deliberate on evidence from citizens, service providers, community groups, and researchers, covering the three inquiry phases described above
 - 4.2.2 Made 41 additional visits to meet and hear from community groups, citizen groups, public and third sector organisations, and other stakeholders
 - 4.2.3 Launched 3 public calls for evidence and one barometer survey, and analysed the results of over 800 submissions received through these calls so far
 - 4.2.4 Heard from and visited over 50 organisations across the city
 - 4.2.5 Commissioned new research into the experience of citizens living on low income in Edinburgh, and attitudes to poverty across all parts of the city. This research is being carried out by the Poverty Alliance and incorporates focus groups and one to one interviews with citizens. The full cost of this research is covered by funding provided to the Commission by Scottish Government.
 - 4.2.6 Engaged with Poverty Truth Commissions and other citizen led initiatives in other cities to help inform the development of independent legacy structures needed to carry forward the work of the Commission post March 2020.
 - 4.2.7 Developed new branding and communications toolkit for the commission, and launched a new independent website at www.edinburghpovertycommission.org.uk/
- 4.3 During the final phase of the commission's work, a further round of citizen based activities are planned to test and challenge the commission's findings with Edinburgh citizen's from a range of backgrounds. These will include two community

hearing sessions during February and March, facilitated by Poverty Alliance and the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit.

- 4.4 In November 2019 the Policy and Sustainability Committee agreed for officers to work with Edinburgh Partnership colleagues and other stakeholders to develop specific joint actions and options on selected key findings identified in the interim report, including in the first instance:
- 4.4.1 A more streamlined, accessible, and high impact city-wide advice service for those seeking support on welfare rights, debt, homelessness, and employability
 - 4.4.2 A new approach to engaging local private sector leaders in designing a new Fair Work Guarantee for Edinburgh
 - 4.4.3 A change in culture among support service providers to tackle stigma and improve understanding of poverty and its impacts
- 4.5 In December 2019 initial proposals on each of these points were discussed by the Edinburgh Partnership Board, with an agreement to develop formal business cases for the partnership to take forward. In January 2020 the Council's new Economic Advisory Panel discussed and agreed to take forward actions to co-design with businesses and partners a new approach to promoting fair work practices. Further actions on these business cases will be considered by the Edinburgh Partnership at its March 2020 meeting.

Draft findings

- 4.6 Final recommendations from the work of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission will be published at the end of March 2020.
- 4.7 In summary, throughout its consideration of the evidence received, the Commission finds that poverty is not a marginal issue in the Edinburgh. It affects a sizeable proportion of the population – 80,000 people including almost one in four of all children – and with much evidence to suggest its scale and impacts are growing larger over time.
- 4.8 The picture emerging is one in which the modern face of poverty in Edinburgh is not restricted solely to one of destitution, homelessness or only found in specific geographies. The majority of people in poverty in this city are of working age, probably in employment, probably living in rental accommodation in a family with children.
- 4.9 Very often these families will be affected by illness, by disabilities, and by mental health problems brought about either as a cause of or as a result of the poverty they experience. Such families live in every area of the city, in every type of neighbourhood and community. The majority of people in poverty in Edinburgh do not live in those areas commonly considered as 'poor' or 'deprived'.
- 4.10 In response to these findings, and the voices of citizens who have taken part in this inquiry, the Commission finds that:

- 4.10.1 All people in Edinburgh, whether they are in poverty or not, want to feel control over their lives and to contribute to a city where people look after each other
- 4.10.2 It is not right that so many people feel that the city does not care about their wellbeing, feel exhausted by the impossible decisions life on a low income demands, and feel trapped in a system that does not help them to thrive
- 4.10.3 Poverty in Edinburgh is neither acceptable nor inevitable, and the city has many of the tools and influence it needs to end poverty, and
- 4.10.4 There is no credible solution to poverty in Edinburgh that is not led by and delivered with the people those solutions are designed to support
- 4.11 By 2030 the Commission recommends that Edinburgh should aim to rank among the best performing cities in Europe for solving poverty. This would mean that:
 - 4.11.1 No-one in Edinburgh feels stigmatised because of their income or assets
 - 4.11.2 No-one in Edinburgh is destitute, having to do without the basic essentials they need to eat, keep clean and stay warm and dry.
 - 4.11.3 Fewer than one in ten people are in poverty at any given time
 - 4.11.4 No-one spends more than 2 years in poverty during their lifetime
- 4.12 With this vision as its guide, the Commission has identified the key game changers needed to end poverty in Edinburgh. They are the things which would change not only the amount of money in people's pockets, but their experience of living in Edinburgh. Final recommendations of the Commission are still in development, but are focused on ensuring that by 2030 people who are struggling to get by in Edinburgh are able to expect:
 - 4.12.1 Fair work that provides enough to live on and security of income
 - 4.12.2 A decent home you can afford to live in
 - 4.12.3 Support on ways to maximise income and reduce the cost of living
 - 4.12.4 Opportunities and support to get on in life
 - 4.12.5 Affordable connections to all parts of the city we belong to
 - 4.12.6 A culture of change built and co-produced by people who have experience of poverty in this city
 - 4.12.7 A visible and long term commitment from all sectors of the city to end poverty in Edinburgh
- 4.13 Across all these game changers the final recommendations of the Commission will provide practical and deliverable propositions for actions to be taken forward, including timescales for change, lead agencies/owners for each activity, and assessments of each proposition as to resource requirements and expected impact horizon. The recommendations set out by this Commission focus predominantly on decisions and issues it is largely in the power of this city to address. Some proposed changes may require additional investment, but in it is envisaged that

many of the recommendations of this Commission can be delivered with existing resources – the main drivers being change in practice, understanding and culture.

Governance and Delivery

- 4.14 Following publication of final recommendations, it is proposed that the Council commits to agreeing a formal response to the findings of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission by June 2020. This response should take the form of a comprehensive, cross-council, cross-partner programme of work setting out clear commitments to action in the short, medium, and long term.
- 4.15 It is proposed that the Policy and Sustainability Committee will continue to be the executive committee that provides political leadership and approves the direction of travel, programme, targets and strategy in this area. There may also be further specific policy commitments or actions contained within the Programme that require approval at other executive committees as appropriate. In addition, it is proposed that a new governance framework is established below the executive committees that will provide ongoing oversight and strategic co-ordination of Poverty Commission responses across the work of the Council.
- 4.16 In particular, it is proposed that in order to recognise the work undertaken to reinvigorate approaches to poverty following the Edinburgh Poverty Commission, the Council establishes a new Poverty All Party Oversight Group (APOG).
- 4.17 The APOG's membership and proposed terms of reference are outlined in Appendix 1 to this paper, but in brief the group would:
 - 4.17.1 Champion the prioritisation of action within the Council and across the city to end poverty (including child poverty);
 - 4.17.2 Support and drive a co-ordinated approach to embed Edinburgh Poverty Commission recommendations throughout all Council services and across the city;
 - 4.17.3 Provide additional scrutiny and oversight to the development and implementation of a Delivery Programme for the implementation of Edinburgh Poverty Commission recommendations;
 - 4.17.4 Provide additional scrutiny and oversight to the development and delivery of the annual Local Child Poverty Action Report;
 - 4.17.5 Support and work with citizen groups and other partnership groups involved in the delivery of Edinburgh Poverty Commission recommendations.
- 4.18 At an officer level, working groups with cross Council and multi-agency membership are already in place to support the development of this work programme, building in particular, on strong working relationships built in recent years for support of the Children's Services Plan with associated poverty reduction actions.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Next steps for the Edinburgh Poverty Commission include:
 - 5.1.1 February and March 2020 – hosting of two Citizen Hearings to discuss and co-design final Edinburgh Poverty Commission recommendations with a diverse range of citizens
 - 5.1.2 March 2020 – publication of the final recommendations of the Edinburgh Poverty Commission
 - 5.1.3 June 2020 – Policy and Sustainability Committee considers a comprehensive, cross-council work programme in response to Edinburgh Poverty Commission recommendations.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Secretariat support for Edinburgh Poverty Commission is led by City of Edinburgh Council which provides project management functions for the Commission, with colleagues across the Edinburgh Partnership providing additional support and contributions as the project requires.
- 6.2 All costs for the Commission are covered by a budget of £76,000. This is made up of £16,000 of funding provided by Edinburgh Partnership to cover running costs, and £60,000 provided by Scottish Government to cover the cost of research and citizen engagement activities. No additional financial costs are incurred by the Council associated with its support of the Commission.
- 6.3 In addition to that funding, the project has secured additional research support from Joseph Rowntree Foundation covering the period to March 2020.
- 6.4 Throughout its work the project has also been dependent upon the time of its 12 commission members and their commitment and investment in the inquiry process. As at February 2020, this has equated to well over 500 hours of volunteer time from our independent commission members.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 Details of stakeholder and community engagement are detailed in the paper above.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [City of Edinburgh Council, June 2018](#)
- 8.2 [Corporate Policy and Sustainability Committee, October 2018](#)
- 8.3 [Finance and Resource Committee, October 2019.](#)
- 8.4 [Policy and Sustainability Committee, November 2019](#)

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Poverty All Party Oversight Group – Terms of Reference

Appendix 1: Poverty All Party Oversight Group

Terms of Reference

1. Membership

- 1.1. Council Leader or Deputy Leader
- 1.2. Convener or Vice-Convenor of the Education Children and Families Committee
- 1.3. 1 Representative from Conservative Group
- 1.4. 1 Representative from Green Group
- 1.5. 1 Representative from Liberal Democrat Group

Where the role of Poverty Champion is not represented by one of the other above mentioned positions, membership of the group will include the Poverty Champion with other memberships adjusted to ensure appropriate cross party balance.

2. Convener/Chair

The group will be co-chaired by the Poverty Champion and the Convener/Vice Convenor of the Education, Children and Families Committee.

3. Substitutes

Substitutes are permitted from the same political group.

4. Citizen, Officer and Partner attendance

Officers, partners, and citizen representatives will attend to support, and contribute to meetings in line with the requirements of the agenda and with agreement from the co-chairs.

5. Remit

- i. Champion the prioritisation of action within the Council and across the city to end poverty (including child poverty);
- ii. Support and drive a co-ordinated approach to embed Edinburgh Poverty Commission recommendations throughout all Council services and across the city;
- iii. Provide additional scrutiny and oversight to the development and implementation of a 3 year Action Plan for the delivery of Edinburgh Poverty Commission recommendations;
- iv. Provide additional scrutiny and oversight to the development and delivery of the annual Local Child Poverty Action Report;
- v. Support and work with citizen groups and other partnership groups involved in the delivery of Edinburgh Poverty Commission recommendations.

6. Meeting Frequency

The Poverty APOG will meet on an eight-week cycle but may meet more frequently if determined necessary by the co-chairs.