

South Lakeland District Council
Cabinet, Wednesday 20th October 2021
A Fairer South Lakeland

Portfolio: Councillor Suzie Pye - Health, Wellbeing and Poverty Alleviation
Report from: David Sykes – Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources
Report Author: Simon Blyth – Specialist Strategy
Wards: All Wards
Forward Plan: N/A

Links to Council Plan Priorities: A Fairer South Lakeland

Working across boundaries – N/A

Delivering a balanced community – N/A

A fairer South Lakeland – halve the proportion of households in poverty and eliminate child poverty, Protecting the vulnerable and helping people out of poverty, providing energy advice and additional support to households in fuel poverty

Addressing the climate emergency – N/A

1.0 Expected Outcome and Measures of Success

1.1 This report outlines the Council's work to reduce inequalities and help deliver a fairer South Lakeland, focusing particularly on the development of a Poverty Truth Commission. It aims to inform Cabinet of the programme of work and seek its approval to allocate £20,000 of poverty alleviation funding to support the Poverty Truth Commission.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:-

(1) Note the work underway to reduce inequalities and comment as appropriate.

(2) Approve making a grant award of £20,000 from the Council's Poverty Alleviation Fund to the identified lead/accountable body for the Poverty Truth Commission and delegates authority to the Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources in consultation with the Lead Specialist for Legal, Governance and Democracy and Lead Specialist for Finance, to agree the detail of and enter into a grant funding agreement accordingly.

(3) Approve the approach outlined in paragraph 3.11 below of SLDC submitting 2 x applications for grant funding for the South Lakeland Poverty Truth Commission to the Health Improvement Fund and approves SLDC acting as lead/accountable body for this grant funding;

(4) Subject to the success of the funding applications outlined in 2.1(4) above, approves receipt by SLDC of any grant funding in the sum of up to £40,000 from the Health Improvement Fund in respect of the South Lakeland Poverty Truth Commission and delegates authority to the Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources in consultation with the Lead Specialist for Legal, Governance and Democracy and Lead Specialist for Finance, to agree the

detail of and enter into any necessary grant funding agreements with the respective grant funding bodies accordingly;

(5) Subject to 2.1(3) and 2.1(4) above, approves making a further grant to the identified lead/accountable body for the Poverty Truth Commission of such grant funding as is received from the Health Improvement Fund for the purposes of the Poverty Truth Commission and that the Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources be delegated authority, in consultation with the Lead Specialist for Legal, Governance and Democracy and Lead Specialist for Finance, to agree the detail of and enter into any necessary grant funding agreements with the identified lead organisation of the South Lakeland Poverty Truth Commission.

3.0 Background and Proposals

- 3.1 [The Council Plan](#) aims to deliver 'A Fairer South Lakeland'. Despite the district being [relatively affluent](#), as the [2018/19 Annual Report acknowledged](#), 'a selection of wards can be identified which have quite extreme levels of low incomes and poverty.' This was the case before the Covid-19 pandemic which has [widened inequalities across the globe](#). The impact locally has been particularly pronounced with South Lakeland experiencing the [nation's highest furlough take up rate](#) (19%) and the [Universal Credit and Job Seekers Allowance claimant count nearly doubled across Cumbria since March 2020](#) while many of the impacts of the pandemic are yet to be fully realised.
- 3.2 The Council Plan includes 39 targets, 11 of which fall under the 'Fairer South Lakeland' council priority. Principal among them is the target to halve the proportion of households in poverty and eliminate child poverty. These objectives do not have clear baseline measures and instead are monitored by a number of proxy measures, as set out in the most [recent performance monitor](#). It is also understood this ambition cannot be achieved by SLDC alone and that there are many interrelated causal factors, but that the council needs to identify the levers it has and work to achieve that ambition as best it can. In addition, a number of targets outside the 'Fairer South Lakeland' priority refer to reducing inequalities, for instance 'ensuring that social programmes address loneliness' (Delivering a balanced community) and 'working... [on] sustainable public transport across the district' (Addressing the climate emergency).
- 3.3 For more detail on the Council Plan's targets and current levels of delivery against them see the [Council Plan Performance Monitoring Quarter 1 report](#) which was presented to Cabinet on 21st July 2021. Alongside this see Appendix 1 for a summary of some of the activities SLDC services have been engaged in.
- 3.4 In October last year [Full Council declared a Poverty Emergency](#). Since then the Building Financial Resilience Partnership has identified four sub-groups: rural inequalities, food inequalities, skills and employment inequalities; and the development of a Poverty Truth Commission. The rural inequalities sub-group will focus initially on fuel poverty, the food inequalities sub-group is led by Cumbria County Council and is supporting the 18 food hubs across the district, while the skills and employment sub-group is focusing on the Covid recovery, EU Exit, end of the furlough scheme and coordinating efforts around routes to skills and employment.
- 3.5 **South Lakeland Poverty Truth Commission - background**
- Work to develop a Poverty Truth Commission is designed to run alongside the other three sub-groups, complementing and informing them over time. A Poverty Truth Commission (PTC) brings together a small group of people who have lived through severe financial difficulties, 'community commissioners', to share their experiences with each other before sharing them with 'civic and business commissioners', key

individuals from organisations that the community commissioners have identified as relevant to their experience. The two sets of commissioners then meet regularly, both individually and collectively, and identify key areas for improvement. These areas are addressed by the relevant organisations with a view to helping improve policies, processes and ways of working. This evidence based approach to policy making is designed to build trust in the community, better client / agency interactions and a more tailored empathic approach. The whole process takes two to three years and typically costs between £60 - 90k.

- 3.6 The Poverty Truth Network, which supports PTCs around the country, outlines the essentials of a PTC here: [What is a Poverty Truth Commission? | Poverty Truth Network](#). However, to better understand what a PTC is in practice there are a number of recommended short videos:
 - 3.6.1 Morecambe PTC's [23 minute video](#) includes their launch event and lots of discussion and reflection from civic and community commissioners.
 - 3.6.2 As an example of a PTC working in an area that, like South Lakeland, is perhaps less easily defined and is considered to be relatively affluent overall, [East Surrey's 12 min film](#) was produced at the end of Phase One of their PTC.
 - 3.6.3 Leeds Poverty Truth Commission have a [series of films](#) showing their launch and closing events and the stories of a number of their commissioners.
- 3.7 Given the recent local government reorganisation decision it is particularly important to consider Barrow and Eden's approaches to similar work. There do not appear to be plans to develop a PTC in Eden at present. Barrow is developing a PTC at the same time as South Lakeland, and officers have met to share learning and will continue to do so. However, the two areas have very different demographics and data concerning poverty. In terms of governance the approaches are different too. Barrow Borough Council are leading the PTC and have just gone out to advert to recruit a part-time project co-ordinator who will be a council employee (see 3.10 below as to why this is not the approach being taken by SLDC).
- 3.8 South Lakeland's PTC promises to be unique as the first PTC with a largely rural focus, which the national Poverty Truth Network is particularly keen to investigate and support. It will also be delivered over a timescale that goes beyond vesting day for the new local authority. Importantly, the understanding and implications of the stories shared and discussions had as part of the PTC will help inform the new authority, especially when combined with those of Barrow's and its more urban-focused PTC. The insights gained could influence the development of strategy and services related to poverty, inequality, population health and more by the new authority and ensure rural poverty is better understood by all stakeholders.
- 3.9 **South Lakeland Poverty Truth Commission – progress to date**

SLDC, led by Councillor Suzie Pye, instigated an initial meeting with interested organisations in June before meeting individually with partners to explore their commitment to the project. A support group has since been formed and includes the DWP, Morecambe Bay CCG, ACTion with communities in Cumbria, Manna House, local foodbanks, Cumbria Council for Voluntary Services (CVS), the Church of England, Pennines Community Credit Union, the County Council and more. The support group met most recently on September 15th, discussing finances, governance, leadership and commitment to the project. It is next due to meet on 3rd November.
- 3.10 Most PTCs around the country are facilitated by voluntary sector organisations, either having been started by them or commissioned by public sector agencies. It is widely agreed that the South Lakeland PTC is best led in this way and that the project facilitator(s) are best employed by that same organisation due to their perceived

neutrality, distance from the public sector and links within local communities. Members of the steering group have been asked whether they would be interested in leading the project and to date one voluntary sector organisation has expressed 'cautious interest'. The support group have been asked to consider this expression of interest with a view to deciding together how to proceed.

- 3.11 Two funding bids, each for £20k, have been made to the Health Improvement Fund. The first, to come from 2020/21 monies, has previously been agreed in principle and the application is to make that a formality. The second bid, to come from 21/22 monies, was considered by the Population Health Strategic Group on September 14th, albeit no formal announcement has yet been made. The National Lottery Community Fund is a further potential source of funding, although a bid cannot be made by anyone other than the organisation which will receive the funds. As SLDC are a partner organisation, and a host organisation is yet to be determined, this particular application has been drafted but not yet submitted. In addition, the support group highlighted a number of further funding opportunities in their most recent meeting which can soon be explored.
- 3.12 Some councillor allowances in 2020/21 went unclaimed and were moved into a 'Poverty Alleviation Fund'. It is proposed that £20k of that fund be allocated to the PTC and transferred to the lead organisation, once identified, alongside Public Health Improvement Fund monies. If the Health Improvement Fund bids are successful this would mean more than half the required funding will have been secured in advance of a lead organisation taking on the project, giving them greater security in doing so.

4.0 Appendices Attached to this Report

Appendix No.	Name of Appendix
1	SLDC services' current activity in seeking to reduce poverty
2	A Fairer South Lakeland - EIA

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 This paper has been shared with the Leadership Team and the Health, Wellbeing and Poverty Alleviation Portfolio Holder.

6.0 Alternative Options

- 6.1 No alternative options to the overview of Fairer South Lakeland work.
- 6.2 Cabinet could decide not to fund the PTC. However, this would be damaging to the PTC project which would need to find £20k from an alternative source. This would have knock-on implications for the lead organisation and their ability to deliver the PTC. In addition, it would damage SLDC's standing on the support group, who have understood the funding to be a possibility from the outset.

7.0 Implications

Financial, Resources and Procurement

- 7.1 Under current delegations on the use of reserves the Operational Lead People Welfare and Income Maximisation can authorise the use of £20k of unclaimed councillor allowances held within the Poverty Alleviation Reserve.

Human Resources

- 7.2 There are no direct human resources implications in the report. The PTC project facilitator(s) will be employed by the lead organisation.

Legal

- 7.3 The Legal team will draft/advise on any agreements to be entered into relating to the payment of grant monies from the Council's Poverty Alleviation Fund to the identified lead/accountable body of the PTC.

Health and Sustainability Impact Assessment

- 7.4 Have you completed a Health, Social, Economic and Environmental Impact Assessment? No
- 7.5 If you have not completed an Impact Assessment, please explain your reasons:
The PTC project has limited direct applicability here. Sustainable travel and technology will be utilised as appropriate, albeit most PTCs centre on in-person relationship building.
- 7.6 Summary of Health and Sustainability Impacts

		Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Environment and Health	Greenhouse gases emissions		X		
	Air Quality		X		
	Biodiversity		X		
	Impacts of Climate Change		X		
	Reduced or zero requirement for energy, building space, materials or travel		X		
	Active Travel		X		
Economy and Culture	Inclusive and sustainable development	X			
	Jobs and levels of pay		X		
	Healthier high streets		X		
	Culture, creativity and heritage		X		
Housing and Communities	Standard of housing	X			
	Access to housing	X			
	Crime		X		
	Social connectedness	X			

Equality and Diversity

- 7.7 Have you completed an Equality Impact Analysis? Yes
- 7.8 If you have not completed an Impact Assessment, please explain your reasons:
- 7.9 Summary of equality and diversity impacts: There are no additional equality impacts as a result of the report – the PTC seeks to identify and work with people who have

experienced severe financial difficulties, especially those from rural areas, and build understanding and develop relationships with civic and business leaders who can affect positive change.

7.10 Summary of Equality and Diversity impacts

Please indicate: P = Positive impact; 0 = Neutral; N = Negative; Enter "X"						
Age	P		0	X	N	
Disability	P		0	X	N	
Gender reassignment (transgender)	P		0	X	N	
Marriage & civil partnership	P		0	X	N	
Pregnancy & maternity	P		0	X	N	
Race/ethnicity	P		0	X	N	
Religion or belief	P		0	X	N	
Sex/gender	P		0	X	N	
Sexual orientation	P		0	X	N	
Armed forces families	P		0	X	N	
Rurality	P	X	0		N	
Socio-economic disadvantage	P	X	0		N	

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
The work carried out by SLDC is insufficient in breadth and scale to make a significant impact on achieving the target ambitions.	The targets are missed and SLDC's contribution is understood to have been inadequate.	Clear identification of actions designed to achieve the ambition with good performance management and monitoring.
The PTC does not have a lead organisation.	The PTC either cannot go ahead, is delayed, or SLDC takes on project leadership.	Clear agreement with potential lead organisation(s) about the terms and requirements of their role and what success looks like.
The PTC does not have sufficient funding.	The PTC is either shortened in duration and scope, or does not start at all.	The lead organisation is fully appraised of the funding situation and supported in bidding for further funding. SLDC contribute where it can.
SLDC do not contribute financially to the PTC	SLDC's reputation is damaged and project risks being insufficiently funded and therefore curtailed.	SLDC contributes where it can and supports those working to bring in additional funding (e.g. drafting a bid for National Lottery funding).
Key public sector organisations do not engage with the PTC	The community commissioners cannot call on likely candidates for civic commissioners, the	Commitment of public sector organisations is sought from the outset (as has been the case to

	PTC is therefore limited in scope and impact, and public sector organisations' reputations are damaged.	date) and named individuals identified as organisational leads.
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Contact Officers

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Background Documents Available

Name of Background document	Where it is available
Council Plan Performance Monitoring Quarter 1 2021/22	Council Plan Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 1 202122.pdf (southlakeland.gov.uk)

Tracking Information

Signed off by	Date sent	Date Signed off
Legal Services	29/09/2021	30/09/2021
Section 151 Officer	29/09/2021	04/10/2021
Monitoring Officer	29/09/2021	05/10/2021
CMT	17/09/2021	23/09/2021

Circulated to	Date sent
Lead Specialist	05/10/2021
Human Resources Lead Specialist	05/10/2021
Communications Team	05/10/2021
Leader	05/10/2021
Committee Chairman	
Portfolio Holder	05/10/2021
Ward Councillor(s)	
Committee	
Executive (Cabinet)	05/10/2021
Council	