

ITEM No ...6.....

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 9 NOVEMBER 2015

REPORT ON: DUNDEE FAIRNESS COMMISSION – INTERIM REPORT / STICK YOUR LABELS CAMPAIGN

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

REPORT NO: 354-2015

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report provides an updated on the work of the Dundee Fairness Commission between April and September 2015 and outlines emerging conclusions and areas for priority action.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that Committee notes

- i) the progress of the Dundee Fairness Commission
- ii) the actions in place to meet the pledges set out in the Poverty Alliance's "Stick Your Labels" campaign.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 At its meeting on 9 March 2015, Policy and Resources Committee approved the membership, remit and timetable for the Dundee Fairness Commission (Article VIII of the Minute of the Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee of 9 March 2015, Report No 41-2015 refers).

4.2 Councillor Jimmy Black was appointed as chair of the Fairness Commission and Councillor Laurie Bidwell also represents Dundee City Council. At its first meeting, the Commission agreed to invite two additional members: James Thomson, Chair of the Dundee Youth Council and Mike Arnott, Secretary of Dundee Trades Council.

5. PROGRESS

5.1 Taking Evidence

5.1.1 The Commission has held five sessions to date with topics and presenters set out below:

5.1.2 28 April 2015 – Learning from other Commissions in Scotland

Rhona McGrath, Tackling Poverty and Welfare Reform Manager, Renfrewshire Council
Annabelle Armstrong-Walker, Policy Lead, Tackling Poverty, Renfrewshire Council

Key issues considered included:

- the impact of direct and indirect stigma
- conveying positive messages to the public
- training frontline services to remove barriers and negative attitudes
- capturing community voices especially the 'hidden poor'

5.1.3 26 May 2015 – Poverty in Scotland and Dundee

John Dickie, Head of Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland
 John McKendrick, Senior Lecturer, Glasgow Caledonian University
 Peter Allan, Community Planning Manager, Dundee City Council

Key issues considered included:

- the need to target interventions to people and communities expressing the greatest deprivation
- the need for a 'hearts and minds' approach to challenge public attitudes
- a focus on approaches which would directly benefit the majority of people
- addressing the impact of welfare reform and benefit sanctions
- creating a Living Wage city

5.1.4 30 June 2015 – Welfare Reform and Impact in Dundee

Mary Kinninmonth, Director, Citizen Advice Bureau Dundee
 Ginny Lawson, Manager, Brooksbank Centre
 Greg Colgan, Head of Customer Services and IT, Dundee City Council
 Alan Kane, Senior Operations Manager, Department for Works and Pensions
 Kirsty Marr, Customer Service Operations Manager, Department for Works and Pensions

Key issues considered include:

- benefit sanctions and how they affect and increase levels of poverty
- the independent Oakley review of sanctions and its recommendations
- broad range of measures taken by Dundee City Council and partners to alleviate the consequences of welfare reform
- challenges to be created by the introduction of Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments
- management of claimant commitment responsibilities and relationship to sanctions

5.1.5 25 August 2015 – Closing the Education Attainment Gap in Dundee

Edward Sosu, University of Strathclyde
 Sara Spencer, Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland
 Paul Clancy, Head of Secondary Education and Support for Learning

Key issues considered include:

- home environment and family stressors associated with poverty
- parental guidance, support and investment
- teaching practice and expectations
- school exclusions
- improved use and targeting of existing resources
- costs for families including uniform, transportation, resources and extra curricular activities

- stigma affecting pupils from low income households
- the relationship between school size, location, placing requests and attainment
- holistic initiatives which address the attainment gap in Dundee including Family Support and Development Workers, Inclusion Plus and Aspire

5.1.6 29 September 2015 - In Work Poverty, the Living Wage and Tackling Stigma

Jim McCormick, Scottish Adviser to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Peter Kelly, Director, The Poverty Alliance

Key issues considered include:

- Decrease in semi-skilled jobs and people having to take lower skilled/paid jobs leading to increasing risk of poverty
- Over a third of workers receiving working tax credits are in retail, health and social work jobs
- People with disabilities are at extra risk of low pay
- People being paid below the Living Wage have less access to in-work, training and development
- Additional factors affect low income including the number of working hours and other costs incurred relating to transport, childcare and food
- The value of employers achieving Living Wage accreditation and the opportunity it offers to engage with all sectors including private sector employers
- The hardening of public attitudes to poverty in recent years and the impact of stigmatising language and behaviour
- The potential of the “Stick Your Labels” campaign which asserts that poverty is not inevitable, attitudes matter and affect how people on low incomes are treated and that positive action across society will address negative attitudes.

5.1.7 Full minutes of all these meetings and all the background papers and presentations can be found at www.dundeepartnership.co.uk/content/fairness-commission-papers.

5.1.8 On 12 August, the Fairness Commission hosted a public event as part of the Scottish Government’s national discussion: Creating a Fairer Scotland – What Matters to You?. The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners Rights, Alex Neil MSP, attended and heard the emerging view of the Dundee Fairness Commission members before joining round table discussions with members of the public, voluntary organisations and public sector organisations.

5.2 Interim Conclusions

5.2.1 Members of the Commission met in August to reflect on sessions held and to frame early conclusions and messages to feed into the ministerial visit to Dundee referred to in 5.1.8 above. A summary of this discussion is included in appendix one. Members will further develop these early recommendations over the course of the next five months and add others associated with the topics still to be covered and these are:

27 October – Housing Challenges and responses/Impact of Physical Disabilities

24 November – Employability and Youth Unemployment

15 December – Food Banks and Fuel Poverty

5.3 Community Engagement

5.3.1 Five local organisations were invited to bid for a contract to facilitate community engagement on behalf of the Fairness Commission. By the closing date of 19 June, two bids had been received. These were evaluated and, on the basis of the quality, connections and experience contained within the proposals, the contract was awarded to a collaboration between Craigowl Communities, Shelter Scotland in Dundee, Faith in Community Dundee and Microdot Films. The main methods to be used are broad ranging:

- discussions in key locations with groups made up of individuals and families experiencing poverty to establish key issues and questions for further work. These include **Stay and Play** for lone parents and toddlers in Mid Craigie; job seekers in the **Craigowl Futures Group**; young people working with the **Shelter Scotland Safe and Sound Project**; Offenders in Perth Prison working with the **Shelter Scotland SPAN (Supporting Prisoners Advice Network)** project; and **Amina Muslim Women's Resource Group**
- questionnaire and focus group working in a range of settings including Shelter clients. It is planned to carry out 20-30 one-to-one interviews and between 3-5 focus groups
- questionnaires to be used in other locations once staff have been briefed. Potential locations include job clubs, money advice agencies and social housing providers

5.3.2 The project will deliver a report on its findings, a DVD containing the stories of up to eight local people and a facilitated workshop for commissioners and other partners.

5.3.3 An early output from this work was a private group discussion between individuals and Alex Neil during his visit to Dundee. Powerful stories of the experience of dealing with low incomes, sanctions and exclusion were presented. A similar opportunity is being arranged for Commission members in late October 2015.

5.4 Additional Engagement

5.4.1 Two small groups of Commission members attended St Mary's Church, Lochee to meet members of its Community Café and further visits will be arranged to St Salvador's Church Food Cupboard and the Parish Nursing Drop-In Clinic in the coming months.

6. **STICK YOUR LABELS CAMPAIGN**

6.1 As the 14 September Policy and Resources Committee (Article No II refers), Dundee City Council became the first local authority in Scotland to sign up to the Poverty Alliance's "Stick Your Labels" campaign. This commits the Council to take practical steps to address the stigma that people in poverty often face. The campaign's pledges require the Council to:

- be clear about what the Council and the Dundee Partnership currently do to address poverty
- carefully consider the language used by the Council and the Partnership and to ensure that they never use language that may stigmatise those living in poverty
- take actions that will address negative attitudes directly.

6.2 A broad range of measures are in place across the Council and the Partnership which embody the intentions and ambitions of these pledges, including:

- the clear commitments to tackling poverty and reducing inequality set out in the Single Outcome Agreement for Dundee and the Council Plan
- the Fairness Strategy and action plan which takes the widest approach to addressing the causes and consequences of poverty and exclusion in the city
- the establishment of the Dundee Fairness Commission which will make recommendations (including tackling stigma) in early 2016
- the work of members of the Council's Equally Well and Welfare Rights teams who have piloted a well-evaluated training course on poverty-sensitive service delivery. Plans are being finalised regarding the scale of targeting of training which will be delivered in 2016. A priority within this will be raising awareness of frontline staff.

6.3 All the Council/Partnerships actions, and all the outcomes of the Fairness Commission will be shared with the Poverty Alliance as part of an ongoing dialogue regarding the city's increasing commitment to this issue.

7. **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality and Impact Assessment and Risk Management. In considering the Fairness Strategy and Action, the Dundee Fairness Commission offers the opportunity to make a significant contribution to tackling poverty in the city.

8. **CONSULTATIONS**

The Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Head of Democratic and Legal Services, have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

9. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

David R Martin
Chief Executive

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Dundee Fairness Commission

Summary Session and Contribution to Cabinet Secretary Visit – 12 August 2015

Priority Issue	Interim Conclusion or Action	Message for Cabinet Secretary
Impact of sanctions and benefits reform	Ensure that people receive all the benefits they are entitled to by making benefits system easier to navigate locally	Increase support available to those facing sanctions
	Defend people who have been unfairly sanctioned	Challenge UK DWP policy
Living Wage and Zero Hours contracts	Desire to create Dundee as a Living Wage City	Greater Scottish Government commitment needed to Living Wage/reducing zero hours contracts
		Encourage/empower public bodies to demand these from contractors
Job Creation	Maximise opportunities generated through local public sector investment/procurement	Scottish Government to use all its powers to ensure jobs and apprenticeships are created from national public sector funding.
Difficulties encountered due to IT/literacy issues	Increase access to IT provided within different community venues. These can be public sector facilities based in communities	More commitment to easier access to IT. Increase efforts to address literacy issues.
Ease of access to benefits advice	Address the quality, level and co-ordination of advice available in Dundee	Increase availability and equality of advice
		Make longer term funding streams available to tackle poverty issues
Removal of existing barriers to enable people to help themselves	Support and advice available to people at local level	Ensure better pathways to assist people out of poverty and into work/education
Specific issues encountered by people with young children caused by economic downturn – long term consequences	Vulnerable families identified and adequate support given	Ensure all future policies are risk assessed to ensure that impact on vulnerable families with very young children is minimised

