

Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to: Economy Scrutiny Committee – 10 November 2022

Subject: Poverty Strategy Update

Report of: Director of Inclusive Economy

Summary

This report provides an overview of the work undertaken to date to develop a refreshed poverty strategy for the city which for the purpose of this report will be referred to as the 'Manchester Anti-Poverty Strategy'. The report will set out the approach and engagement process for developing the strategy, the evidence base, emerging themes and the suggested priorities and actions that will be included in the final strategy.

This report also sets out the relationship between the new strategy fits and existing work on Making Manchester Fairer, developing a more inclusive economy, tackling the Cost-of-Living Crisis and other linked areas of work.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to consider and comment on:

1. The overall approach to the development of the Strategy including consultation and engagement process
2. The proposed priorities of:
 - Priority 1: Preventing Poverty
 - Priority 2: Mitigating Poverty
 - Priority 3: Pathways Out of Poverty
 - Priority 4: Good Governance and Effective Delivery

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

The report recognises that it is important to ensure a just transition to a zero-carbon economy. Some measures, such as retrofit of housing to increase energy efficiency and reduce energy costs, should be targeted at the households with the lowest incomes. The Anti-Poverty Strategy commits to doing this within our existing zero-carbon work and climate change action plan.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments

A full Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed, see appendix X.

The focus of the anti-poverty strategy will consider the impact of poverty on the different protected characteristics. As discussed in this document, poverty has a disproportionate impact on people with protected characteristics and therefore the strategy will seek to include priorities which will be aimed at mitigating and or lessening the impact of poverty on these groups.

To inform the priorities for the strategy, consultation will be undertaken with the relevant VCSE groups across the protected characteristics.

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The report recognises the importance of good quality employment and commits to working to connect residents on low incomes to better quality employment opportunities.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	The report recognises the importance of skills and employment as a route out of poverty.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	As a citywide Strategy, the Manchester Anti-Poverty Strategy will directly support the delivery of this Our Manchester Strategy priority by contributing towards making Manchester a more equal and inclusive city.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	See environmental impact assessment section above.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Working via the city's Digital Strategy, tackle digital exclusion and ensure access to digital services. Working via the City Centre Transport Strategy work to ensure access to accessible and affordable transport.

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

None proposed.

Financial Consequences – Capital

None proposed.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact one of the contact officers above.

- Manchester Family Poverty Strategy – Executive, 13 September 2017
- Manchester’s Support for Families Living in Poverty – Economy Scrutiny, 9 September 2021 & Executive, 15 September 2021 including the appended Poverty Truth Commission final report.
- Family Poverty Strategy Update – Economy Scrutiny, 6 March 2019
- Notice of Motion Cost of Living Crisis – Council, 5 October 2022
- Making Manchester Fairer, Tackling Health Inequalities in Manchester 2022-2027 – Health Scrutiny Committee, 12 October 2022
- Build Back Fairer – COVID-19 Marmot Review: Housing, Unemployment and Transport – Economy Scrutiny, 14 October 2021
- Our Manchester Strategy, Forward to 2025 – Executive, 12 February 2021

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Manchester has long recognised the significant challenge of tackling and reducing poverty in the city. In 2017, a new Family Poverty Strategy was launched which focused on families with children and young people up to the age of 19. A significant amount of partnership work has been undertaken to deliver this Strategy over the past five years against a backdrop of health and economic challenges which have highlighted and exacerbated poverty in Manchester. The new Anti-Poverty Strategy provides an opportunity to take account of the impact of these challenges and extend the strategy to cover all households in the city, those with and without children.
- 1.2. This report will highlight some of the work that has taken place over the last five years, examine what poverty looks like in Manchester today including who is most affected, discuss definitions of poverty that we may wish to consider, and present the work that has taken place to develop a new Anti-Poverty Strategy.
- 1.3. The report sets out proposed priorities in section 7. These are subject to further refinement with our stakeholders as well as formal consultation but are an accurate indicator of the likely final content of the strategy. The proposed priorities are:
 - Priority 1: Preventing Poverty
 - Priority 2: Mitigating Poverty
 - Priority 3: Pathways Out of Poverty
 - Priority 4: Good Governance and Effective Delivery

2. Background

Family Poverty Strategy 2017–22

- 2.1. The Family Poverty Strategy was adopted in 2017 with the aim of addressing child poverty. The Strategy is based on the three themes of:
 1. Sustainable Work as a route out of poverty – focuses on moving residents towards and into employment and more secure/more highly paid employment.
 2. Getting the basics right – focuses on supporting families with everyday living costs including food and fuel.
 3. Boosting resilience and building on strengths – works to enhance the resilience of communities by giving them the tools they need to empower themselves.
- 2.2. The Family Poverty Core Group has overseen delivery of the Strategy and is chaired by the Director of Inclusive Economy and is attended by the Deputy Leader of the Council with responsibility for poverty and a range of internal and external stakeholders. Working groups on each of the three themes are chaired by Council officers and are attended by partners from across the statutory, voluntary and community sector. Efforts have been made to include residents with lived experience of poverty on each of the working groups, although consistent engagement of this group has proved challenging due personal circumstances of these residents.

2.3. In 2020, the Family Poverty Strategy went through a reprioritisation process to ensure that it was fit for purpose and could continue to meet the needs of children and families living in poverty and support families that were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Family Poverty Strategy Reprioritisation was agreed in December 2020 and can be found in background documents above.

Family Poverty Strategy Outcomes

2.4. Over its lifetime, the Strategy has been well supported by partners and has delivered a wide range of activity, with highlights over the life of the strategy including:

Sustainable Work	Basics	Boosting Resilience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for and development of a network of 50 work clubs • Support for and development of affordable and flexible childcare including capital investment and grant support. • Achieving Living Wage City recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council and Groundwork partnership delivers energy efficiency and income advice to almost 1,000 low-income households • Produced winter warm homes leaflet in 17 languages and delivered to 1,250 households in at risk areas • Set up and managed food distribution hubs and carried out research into “food deserts”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to “poverty proof” the school day together with Cedar Mount Academy. • Produced a pocket guide of support information distributed by voluntary organisations across the city.

2.5. Delivering the Family Poverty Strategy has led to some lessons which can be applied to the new Anti-Poverty Strategy. These include:

- The importance of partnership working: There is an opportunity to widen the range of stakeholders involved and to ensure that delivery is led and co-owned by these stakeholders, not just the Council.
- The need for additional delivery resources: Extra funding during the COVID-19 pandemic allowed additional temporary support measures to be established to support vulnerable residents, however, we do not currently have a dedicated team of officers working on poverty so must consider ways of adequately resourcing the delivery of actions in the new Strategy.
- Ensuring that actions are supported by clear and measurable targets and indicators.
- Considering place and using data more effectively to understand the specific needs of areas in more detail.

- Utilising evidence from work during the pandemic has highlighted the wider vulnerability and poverty of single adults and all adult households which has resulted in agreement to focus the new Strategy on all households, not just those with children.

Manchester Living Wage Place

Manchester gained Living Wage Place recognition in September this year which was marked at a civic event at full Council on 5 October 2022. The recognition was approved by the Living Wage Foundation following the submission of a three-year action plan which was collectively developed by Manchester's Living Wage Action Group, a group of employers and anchor institutions committed to paying the real living wage. The plan sets targets for increasing the number of living wage employers in the city including those sectors which experience greater challenges in paying the real living wage.

The targets include increasing the number of living Wage employers in Manchester from 162 to 300 and the number of living wage employees from 63,908 in 2022 to 118,348 by 2025. Given the current economic challenges, the group's initial focus will be to support and maintain existing living wage employers.

This work has highlighted the importance of working in partnership with anchor institutions and other large employers from different sectors to tackle poverty and particularly in-work poverty.

3. Defining Poverty

- 3.1. Poverty and the impacts of poverty are complex and nuanced. It is experienced differently by different people and is not always recognised and acknowledged by the individuals affected. People with multiple protected characteristics are amongst some of the most impacted resident groups as identified by the Equalities Impact Assessment (appendix 1). There has been considerable debate about how to define poverty as well as the use of the term itself. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation define poverty as:

“Poverty is when your resources are well below your minimum needs. Poverty affects millions of people in the UK. Poverty means not being able to heat your home, pay your rent, or buy the essentials for your children. It means waking up every day facing insecurity, uncertainty, and impossible decisions about money. It means facing marginalisation – and even discrimination – because of your financial circumstances. The constant stress it causes can lead to problems that deprive people of the chance to play a full part in society.”

- 3.2. Quantitative definitions of poverty include:

- **relative income poverty** - where households have less than 60% of contemporary median income
- **deep poverty** - where households have less than 40% of contemporary median income

- **material deprivation** - where households can't afford certain essential items and activities
- **destitution** - where households can't afford basics such as shelter, heating and clothing

3.3. Qualitative definitions of poverty include:

- not being able to fully participate in the life of the city e.g., its leisure and culture offer
- not being able to do some of the things that other people take for granted
- lacking hope for the future
- feeling that it is impossible to make a change
- difficulty meeting basic needs.

3.4. For the purposes of Manchester's Anti-Poverty Strategy we are proposing to use the Relative Income Poverty rate as the headline figure, supplemented with information using other data sources (see section eight).

4. Poverty in Manchester

4.1. Whilst Manchester has experienced many successes over recent decades, poverty remains a significant and deeply entrenched problem that affects too many of the city's residents. It is a complex problem which is driven by many external factors and one that has persisted despite the best local efforts to reduce it. Recent national and international issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Cost of Living Crisis and economic uncertainty have further exacerbated the problem.

4.2. Manchester was ranked as the 6th most deprived local authority in the country in the 2019 index of multiple deprivation and as of March 2021, the End of Child Poverty Coalition estimated that 46,700 children (42%) in Manchester were living in poverty, the third highest rate amongst core cities.

4.3. The most significant drivers of poverty in Manchester today include:

- Unemployment and under-employment (working less hours than desired)
- Relatively low household incomes and earnings (including pensions)
- High and increasing household costs including food, utilities and housing. On average increased costs for food and home energy have increased £2,076 leading to combined total extra costs for renters of £2,796 per year.
- Low skills or few qualifications
- The "poverty premium" which is the extra costs people on low incomes and in poverty pay for essential products and services
- Changes to the social security system since 2012, for example the five week wait for Universal Credit payments
- Historic and current labour market changes and challenges, include those brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit

4.4. The Committee have received several updates on the Family Poverty Strategy, the Cost-of-Living Crisis and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on poverty in the

city. A key point from these updates is that many of the drivers of poverty in Manchester are external factors that are beyond our direct control, and that recent events have increased demand on services and reduced the resilience of our residents and the organisations that support them. This situation is likely to get worst as we are experiencing the most significant economic uncertainty and challenges in recent times at an international, national, regional and local level.

4.5. Some of the features of poverty in Manchester today include:

- A reversal of progress on reducing inequalities resulting in a deepening of existing inequalities.
- Increasing demand for services, in particular for food and advice, at a time when these services are also impacted by inflation and increasing energy costs which reduce their capacity to provide support.
- Rises in loneliness and mental health concerns, particularly amongst people who were already vulnerable.
- A concentration of issues in some spatial areas, particularly the north and east of the city, as well as some small areas where the concentration of poverty is extremely high.
- A rise in in-work poverty, mainly due to low paid and insecure work.
- The further impact on the city's most deprived communities, people from ethnic minority backgrounds, disabled residents and those already living in poverty.
- Around 100,000 households in the city whose income won't cover the cost of increasing food and energy costs this winter.

4.6. It is important to recognise that the two most important factors contributing to poverty is unemployment and dependency on benefits, with the most effective intervention in many cases being to secure a route into fairly paid and secure employment.

5. Strategic context and fit

5.1. The Our Manchester Strategy 2016 –2025 provides the overall strategic framework for the city. As a citywide Strategy, the Manchester Anti-Poverty Strategy will directly support the delivery of the Our Manchester Strategy priority *"We will strive to create a truly equal and inclusive city, where everyone can thrive at all stages of their life, and quickly and easily reach support to get back on track when needed"* and in particular its cross-cutting priority of improving equality in the city.

5.2. In addition, there are other citywide strategies which are closely linked to this work. The following section shows how the new strategy correlates to Manchester's existing strategies, particularly the Making Manchester Fairer Action Plan.

Making Manchester Fairer

5.3. Professor Sir Michael Marmot's report, *Build Back Fairer in Greater Manchester: Health Equity and Dignified Lives*, sets out systemic and structural inequalities and the wider social determinants of health impacting life outcomes in Greater

Manchester. At a Manchester level, a multi-agency group has developed the *Making Manchester Fairer Action Plan* which sets out how Manchester will respond to the recommendations by adopting a whole system approach to addressing health inequalities across the five-year period 2022-27. The action plan focusses on the key areas of:

- Giving children and young people the best start in life
- Lifting low-income households out of poverty and debt
- Cutting unemployment and creating good jobs
- Preventing illness and early death from big killers- heart disease, lung disease, diabetes and cancer
- Improving housing and creating safe, warm and affordable homes
- Improving our environment and surroundings in the areas we live, transport and tackling climate change
- Fighting systemic and structural discrimination and racism
- Strengthening community power and social connections.

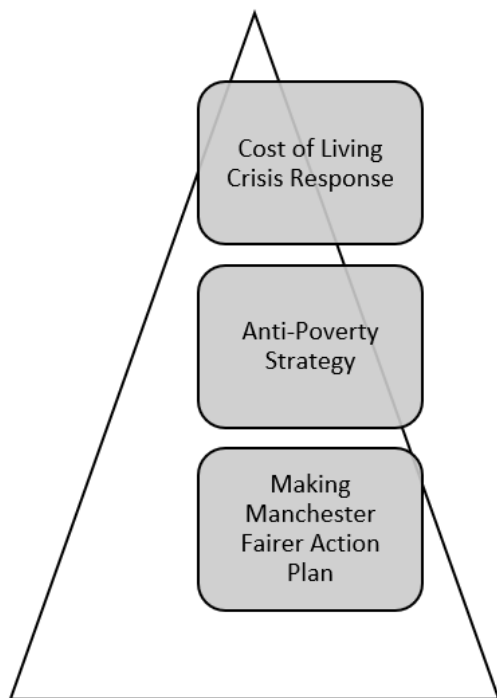
5.4. The plan includes tackling poverty and debt as one of the most significant routes to improving health outcomes in Manchester. The actions to address poverty, income and debt identified in the plan include:

- Developing the refreshed 'Manchester Anti-Poverty Strategy'
- Ensuring best use of data to support the development and delivery of VCSE services to people experiencing poverty and debt
- Embedding the Real Living Wage City to ensure more residents are paid 'a real living wage'
- Mitigate against and reduce poverty
- Ensuring families can access the city's culture and leisure offer to improve quality of life
- Ensuring a strong eco-system of food organisations giving access to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food for residents who are food insecure via the Our Manchester Food Partnership
- Increase financial management advice in schools and workplaces
- Embed 'Skills for Life' into Manchester Adult Education Service
- Maximise the take up of the 'Multiply' numeracy programme via working with GMCA
- Promote good quality advice
- Support VCSE Debt Advice Services to ensure benefit take up and incomes are maximised and support the sector via working to ensure great certainty of funding streams
- Ensure residents with Council Tax arrears are supported with advice and support

These actions will be included in the new strategy and are referred to in section 7 of this report.

5.5. Given the strategic relationship between poverty and health inequalities, the Manchester Anti-Poverty Strategy will sit under the Making Manchester Fairer Plan and will support the delivery of these priority actions, along with other key actions identified through the development of the Strategy.

5.6. Figure 1 (below) illustrates how the Manchester Anti-Poverty Strategy supports delivery of Making Manchester Fairer and provides a longer term focus than the current emergency response to the Cost of Living Crisis.



The **cost of living crisis** is putting immediate pressure on residents of Manchester who will be unable to afford the basics of daily life – food, fuel and shelter. This is the tip of the iceberg that requires a rapid and collaborative response to support those most at risk whilst continuing to work on the longer term solutions that will improve lives and address inequalities beyond the immediate crisis.

The Anti-Poverty Strategy is focused on delivering three positive changes to tackle poverty in the long-term; lessening the chances of a person experiencing poverty, lessening the impact of poverty on people who do experience it, and increasing the chances of a person being able to move out of poverty. It will be a plan that focuses on deliverables, but also which signposts to other areas of work that are relevant and linked.

Making Manchester Fairer provides the leadership, framework and whole system level change building the foundations for long-term improvements in life chances for Manchester’s residents. Addressing the causes of poverty is critical to improving health equity, and MMF will also influence the delivery of the poverty strategy. We cannot improve health equity without tackling poverty.

Figure 1: Relationship between Poverty Strategy, Making Manchester Fairer and Cost of Living Crisis

Cost of Living Response

5.7. At the same time as developing Manchester’s strategic response to poverty, the immediate impact of the Cost-of-Living Crisis has resulted in the establishment of a working group that is bringing forward a number of support measures for residents. Some of these measures are based on feedback from the development of the Anti-Poverty Strategy, Making Manchester Fairer and experience from implementing the existing Family Poverty Strategy. The new strategy commits to continuing these measures should they still be required and subject to the availability of ongoing funding.

Other relevant strategies

5.8. A number of other strategies are relevant to this agenda including:

- **Manchester Work and Skills Strategy** – focuses on linking Manchester residents to better quality local employment opportunities, and creating the learning and training pathways that enable residents to access these opportunities. Also focuses on Manchester’s most vulnerable residents including those in poverty and so forms the main delivery vehicle for employment and skills related outcomes.
- **Housing Strategy** – includes objectives to increase affordable housing supply, reduce homelessness, ensure housing is affordable and accessible

to all. Also seeks to address spatial inequalities between neighbourhoods and improve the energy efficiency of new and existing homes.

- **Children and Young People's Plan** - sets out eight priority actions and underpinning KPIs to improve children and young people's outcomes, several of which relate to addressing poverty and deprivation. Specifically, the plan commits to challenging poverty and inequality by ensuring everyone in the city has the same opportunities and life chances no matter where they are born, live or their ethnicity.
- **Climate Change Action Plan** - includes several work areas that are relevant to Anti-Poverty work including housing retrofit and energy efficiency measures, improved access to active travel which reduces transport costs, the creation of an action plan for 'green' jobs (links to Work and Skills Strategy).

6. Approach to developing a new 'Anti-Poverty' Strategy

6.1. Early conversations with key stakeholders and partners helped to shape the development of the new Strategy as well as understanding the lessons from the Family Poverty Strategy as outlined in section 2. The main difference for the new Strategy is that it is not solely focused on families (i.e. households with children) but also on all adult and single adult households.

6.2. The broad actions undertaken as part of the refresh have included:

- A review of recent literature concerning poverty, including published reports and research to collate recommendations from other sources.
- A review of the Council's existing consultation and engagement responses to pick out any information relevant to anti-poverty work.
- Conversations with other Core Cities to understand their approaches to tackling poverty and taking on board any lessons learned and best practice.
- Detailed conversations with partner organisations and stakeholder groups to understand the particular issues in their areas of work and to collect ideas for inclusion in the final strategy.
- A wider online engagement event to speak to a larger group of stakeholders.
- Resident engagement via front line workers and existing networks to test out ideas and findings and to gain input from people with lived experience of poverty.

6.3. Based on early conversations there was a strong desire from partners to develop a strategy that:

- Is action focused – saying what we are going to do and who is going to do the work, ensuring clarity on what is going to be delivered and when.
- Is measurable – helping to better understand the direct impact of our actions.
- Makes good use of data – to help understand where the problem of poverty is most acute and also the circumstances and demographics of the people affected.
- Is responsive to the needs of different people and communities

- Is flexible enough to respond to a rapidly changing (and worsening) economic context.
- Is owned and delivered by a strong partnership – recognising that poverty cannot be tackled by the Council alone and that action requires buy in from a wider network of partners.

Consultation and engagement findings

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 6.4. Prior to beginning work on the strategy, an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken in June 2022. The EIA examined qualitative and quantitative data to identify how poverty impacted on different communities of identity. The EIA indicated that all communities of identity were more likely to live in or experience poverty. The biggest impact was felt by disabled residents, people from Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority backgrounds, the over 50's and younger. People with one or more protected characteristics were also most likely to live in or experience poverty.
- 6.5. The EIA has been used to inform the engagement process of the Strategy, particularly engagement undertaken with residents. A copy of the full assessment has been included in appendix 1.

Developing a robust evidence base

- 6.6. In developing the strategy, a comprehensive mixed methods approach (guided by the EIA) was developed to map the process for collating qualitative and quantitative data to inform the key themes and priorities for the new Manchester Anti-Poverty Strategy. This included the following:
- 6.7. **Data/quantitative analysis** – an analysis of national and local data which are pertinent to poverty. Some of the findings have been included in section 3, and generally show a worsening overall picture of poverty in Manchester, widening inequalities and greater impact on already vulnerable communities. At the same time new cohorts are being affected by poverty in some parts of the city who may have no previous experience of accessing the type of existing support and services available.
- 6.8. **Literature review** – an extensive literature review was undertaken looking at national, regional and local literature pertinent to poverty. This included literature produced by the Joseph Rountree Foundation, the Resolution Foundation and the Centre for Cities. Key issues identified include:
- The way Universal Credit is administered and the amount of money available
 - The cost of housing
 - The impact on children and young people
 - The rise of low pay and insecure employment and in-work poverty
 - The increase in food insecurity and the impact of malnutrition
 - The disproportionate impact of poverty on communities experiencing racial inequalities
 - The disproportionate impact of poverty on disabled people

- The affect of education and social mobility on life chances and the likelihood of experiencing poverty.

Manchester Poverty Truth Commission (MPTC)

- 6.9. The Manchester Poverty Truth Commission was launched in June 2019 and concluded its work with a final event in June 2020. The MPTC published their final report regarding main findings in July 2021. The findings of the report were utilised to help inform the priorities of the strategy and are included in the background papers to this report..
- 6.10. One of the main learning points from the MPTC was the concept of “nothing about us without us”, referenced earlier in this report. The findings covered the themes of child and family poverty, exploitation and council tax and benefits. Findings have been incorporated into the development of priorities and actions for the Strategy.

Partner engagement and key stakeholders

- 6.11. Consultation was undertaken with most of Manchester’s major partnership boards to identify their priorities based on their respective areas of expertise and interests. These included the Our Manchester Forum, the Age Friendly Board and the Children’s Board. Additional conversations took place with 25 different groups of stakeholder organisations networks that included:
- Children and young people’s organisations
 - Food organisations
 - Health organisations
 - Housing organisations
 - Advice and guidance (including debt advice) organisations
 - Equalities organisations
 - Food organisations
- 6.12. A number of “must have” organisations were also identified and conversations took place to obtain more specific information on their particular circumstances, the types of issues that they and their services users are experiencing, and potential actions to take forward into the final strategy.
- 6.13. Council officers also ran an online engagement event to reach a wider audience than possible with only individual and small group conversations. The online event was held in September 2022 and allowed organisations to give feedback on the work to date and to make suggestions for actions to include in the final strategy. The online event was attended by over 70 individuals representing around 50 organisations and departments.
- 6.14. A full list of organisations engaged and consulted with is included in appendix 2. The total number of organisations consulted at the time of writing is over 70.
- 6.15. A final list of themes and priorities will be circulated to partners for consultation prior to inclusion in the final draft of the strategy.

Resident engagement

- 6.16. The work undertaken to date has enabled us to develop a list of proposed themes and priorities to take forward into the final strategy. In order to finalise these, the next phase of engagement work will test these out with Manchester residents who are affected by poverty. Recognising the sensitive, personal and nuanced nature of poverty and the need to build on established and trusted relationships, it has been agreed that partners and organisations with existing relationships with residents would provide the best route to gaining input from residents.
- 6.17. In addition, due to the inequalities described earlier in this report, those organisations representing and working with people who are disproportionately impacted by poverty will be targeted.
- 6.18. The targeted approach includes working with the following colleagues, partners and stakeholders:
- Manchester Adult Education Service
 - Covid Health Equity Manchester sounding boards
 - Trussell Trust Food Banks
 - Neighbourhood Teams delivering Cost of Living events
 - The Council's Cost of Living Advice Line
- 6.19. A broader online consultation will be undertaken to allow all residents to respond to the draft themes and priorities.

7. Emerging priorities

- 7.1. As outlined in Section 5, The Making Manchester Fairer Action Plan sets out the strategic approach to tackling poverty in Manchester. As set out in Figure 1, the Anti-Poverty Strategy should be focussed on delivering positive changes to tackle poverty in the long-term. The Strategy will be a plan that focusses on deliverables that can add value to existing work across the Council and partner activity. The Strategy will also signpost to other areas of relevant work.
- 7.2. The Strategy should focus on:
- **Preventing poverty** - lessening the chances of a person experiencing poverty
 - **Mitigating poverty** - lessening the impact of poverty on people who do experience poverty
 - **Pathways out of poverty** – increasing the chances of peoples being able to move out of poverty
 - **Good governance and effective delivery** – making sure that we are working in a way that maximised the use of the resources and partnerships that we have available

Priority 1: Preventing Poverty

- 7.3. Preventing poverty should focus on reducing household costs and increasing access to financial advice and support, as well as accessing those early intervention services that can help people manage smaller pressures that can

build up to become more serious problems. Initial analysis shows that additional priorities should focus on:

- Increasing access to financial advice in different settings, including community settings, schools and workplaces.
- In particular ensure access to debt advice and debt management services as part of the wider financial advice offer.
- Maximising the uptake of the Government's "multiply" numeracy programme in Manchester as part of improving adult numeracy.
- Expanding access to more affordable credit to reduce reliance on unaffordable or illegal money lenders.
- Target retrofit activity at the lowest income households via the Housing Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan.
- Include EPC ratings as an element of selective licensing to ensure that licensed homes meet a minimum energy efficiency standard.
- Support residents to reduce and manage their energy usage to reduce costs as far as possible.

7.4. Things that are already being delivered and will continue are:

- Embedding "Skills for Life" into Manchester Adult Education Service to help improve learners' financial management and budgeting skills.

Priority 2: Mitigating Poverty

7.5. Mitigation is about trying to make life easier for people who are experiencing poverty and making sure that their basic needs are met. Initial analysis shows that priorities should focus on:

- Reviewing the local welfare assistance scheme with a focus on making it as accessible as possible with a "cash first" approach being a core part of the offer.
- Creating and maintaining a single source of information for practitioners in all sectors to access up to date information regarding poverty and the services that can be accessed to help support people experiencing poverty, including those services that are specific to certain communities or spatial areas.
- Providing additional support to advice providers in Manchester through improved sharing of information, improved connections between services and working to improve access to and certainty of funding.
- Ensuring advice provision is of the highest quality throughout the city by upskilling front line workers to be able to offer support and signposting.
- Providing training to front line staff in all services to recognise the signs of poverty and offer appropriate support and signposting.
- Working with schools to ensure that they have a single point of contact for parents experiencing poverty who can signpost to appropriate advice and services.
- Implementing a "breathing space" period that pauses enforcement action taken against residents for non-payment of fines or other charges when they are accessing professional help or support.

- Building capacity in the VCSE sector by working to increase grant funding, particularly from private sector sources, and through better use of social value commitments.
- Ensuring information is available in accessible formats.

7.6. Things that are already being delivered and will continue are:

- Building on initial work to “poverty proof” the school day, ensuring that all Manchester schools are included.
- Working to reduce the cost of school uniforms.
- Repeating work to make available high quality printed advice and guidance that can be made available through public buildings such as schools and GPs.
- Continuing to provide free SIM cards and low cost refurbished devices to residents to enable them to access digital services via the Digital Strategy and the Council’s digital inclusion work.
- Ensuring a strong eco-system of food organisations giving access to healthy, affordable and culturally appropriate food for residents who are food insecure via the Our Manchester Food Partnership.
- Ensuring that residents with Council Tax arrears are supported with debt advice.
- Supporting the continuing operation of cost-of-living crisis responses for as long as they are in place, including the Cost of Living Helpline. and the use of warm banks.
- Supporting and encouraging use of the money advice referral tool as a route to help people find where they can go for advice and income maximisation support.

Priority 3: Pathways Out of Poverty

7.7. Fundamentally, helping people out of poverty means increasing their income. For most people, getting out of poverty will mean raising incomes and manging debt. Pathways out of poverty will look different for different people, so it will be necessary to design specific pieces of work that focus on our most vulnerable residents, working with the organisations that are best places to reach them.

Initial analysis shows that priorities should focus on:

- Maximising uptake of benefits and other financial support schemes.
- Ensuring access to culture and leisure opportunities to make sure people experiencing poverty have a good quality of life.
- Ensuring access to good quality debt advice and support through Manchester’s advice provider network and commissioned services.
- Developing targeted and bespoke programmes of activity that focus on particular residents who are the most vulnerable:
 - Children and young people
 - Communities experiencing racial inequalities
 - Disabled people
 - Areas with the highest concentrations of poverty

7.8. Things that are already being delivered and will continue are:

- Targeting low-income residents to support them towards and into more secure, more highly paid work via the Work and Skills Strategy.
- Sustaining and increasing the number of employers in Manchester paying the real living wage and the number of Manchester residents being paid the real living wage.

Priority 4: Good Governance and Effective Delivery

7.9. The research and engagement work has led to a large amount of proposals for how we work on delivering this strategy, and a recognition that in many ways this is as important as the actions themselves. For this reason, we propose a fourth section of priorities that describe how we will take the strategy forward in a way that is collaborative and involves our partners. In order to make delivery of the new strategy a success, we will:

- Work across public and voluntary sectors to share the information that helps us better understand residents' needs and target interventions accordingly, creating new data products to share with partners to help them understand and respond to inequalities in income and debt.
- Pro-actively target funding and interventions according to data and intelligence.
- Work with relevant support organisations to ensure tailored supports for groups most affected by poverty, such as communities experiencing racial inequalities and disabled people.
- Establish a Manchester-wide poverty forum that enables all stakeholders working on poverty issues to connect, share information, learning and best practice and work together on shared priorities.
- Develop effective working groups on key issues that are task and finish orientated
- Embed the socio-economic duty in decision making via the Poverty Impact Assessment tool, which will be revised and updated to make it more useful.
- Bringing more organisations with expertise of working on poverty issues plus residents with lived experience of poverty into the governance systems and processes for delivery of the strategy.
- Reconfigure existing grant funding to better support work on poverty
- Reconfigure existing volunteering programmes to better support work on poverty.
- Create a poverty "virtual team" within MCC to formalise resources that are currently ad-hoc.
- Work to bring in funding contributions from private sector funders to help add resource into the system.

8. Measuring Success

8.1. Measuring the impact and success of the new strategy is one of the most difficult challenges that we are facing for two main reasons. Firstly, the worsening economic context is likely to put more pressure on household budgets for at least the medium term, while constraining the ability of the Council and our partners to deliver effective support. Secondly, the action that we are collectively able to take

is already limited in scope when compared to the scale and complexity of the factors driving poverty in Manchester. For example, the way the welfare system operates and how it is funded remains an important factor, but our influence over this system is essentially restricted to campaigning and lobbying which have had little impact on policy.

8.2. There are several indicators that we can use to understand the scale of poverty in Manchester. These include:

- Relative Poverty Rate (After Housing Costs)
- Absolute Poverty Rate (After Housing Costs)
- Relative Child Poverty Rate (After Housing Costs)
- Absolute Child Poverty Rate (After Housing Costs)
- Free school meals eligibility
- Households in receipt of Universal Credit
- Households in receipt of Child Tax Credit
- Households affected by the two-child policy
- Average amount of debt of those seeking debt advice
- Fuel Poverty Rate
- Food Poverty Rate
- Residents paid at least the real living wage

8.3. For the actions taken to deliver the Family Poverty Strategy, we will undertake specific monitoring and evaluation work to understand the impact of specific initiatives.

8.4. To ensure a deep understanding of the impact of poverty on Manchester's diverse residents and communities, gathering quantitative and qualitative data will be an important part of delivering the new Manchester Anti-Poverty Strategy. A Manchester Inequalities Data Development Group has been established to provide a vehicle for information analysts and intelligence specialists across the Manchester Partnership to ensure that work in respect of measuring and monitoring various forms of inequality is more joined up. The group aims to embed an 'inequalities' view into performance reporting that enables monitoring over time to drive a reduction in inequality through influencing more equitable delivery of services. In doing this it will ensure that reporting tools and processes have inequalities built into them in ways that help individual organisations and the wider system to understand better and track changes in a range of inequalities over time and between areas and groups within Manchester in a regular and robust manner.

8.5. We will input into the ongoing development of new methods of monitoring and evaluation as part of our support for the Making Manchester Fairer Action Plan, which commits us to:

- Placing greater emphasis on changes in the inequality gaps between geographic areas and communities within the city.
- Narrowing the gap between Manchester and the national average and reducing inequalities in wider determinants of health between areas and communities within the city.

- Measuring progress with more emphasis on evidence from local residents and communities to complement intelligence from big quantitative data sets.
- Being more transparent by routinely publishing the information we're using to develop and monitor this action plan in ways that local people can understand and take back to their local communities.
- A robust evaluation of the activities, processes and systems underpinning the development and implementation of the action plan so that we are not only measuring what has changed but also understand why things have changed in the way they have.

9. Governance

9.1. Learning from our experience with the Family Poverty Strategy 2017-2022, and taking into account the information we have gathered from research and our conversations with partners, there is an opportunity to make some changes to the governance for the new strategy to ensure that it is as effective as it can be. Specific actions relating to governance and delivery are included under priority 4 under section seven of this report. The principals that inform the design of this model are:

- “Nothing about us without us” – the idea that people who are experiencing poverty have the right to be involved in the decisions that are made about them.
- Building a strong partnership – the idea that in order to be successful, we need support and buy in from a very wide range of organisations, not just those that work on poverty.
- Being action focused – the idea that the governance model should promote a programme management approach to taking forward and delivering actions according to agreed timescales.
- Responding to data – the idea that use of data should more strongly inform decision making, allowing us to target and adjust our approach and to judge impact.

9.2. In addition, governance of Manchester's Anti-Poverty Strategy should align with governance arrangements around the Make Manchester Fairer Action Plan, recognising that anti-poverty is an important workstream of the action plan. It is proposed that the Anti-Poverty Strategy is overseen by the Make Manchester Fairer Task Group, the body that oversees delivery of the wider Make Manchester Fairer Action Plan. This group includes senior staff from MCC and our partners and can aid with resolving issues and removing barriers as well as providing strategic oversight.

9.3. Themed action groups (similar to the current working groups) would be established to work on the different themes of the strategy and would be made up of MCC and our partners to progress the delivery of the strategy's priorities and actions.

10. Resource

10.1. While anti-poverty work is an important priority for the city, we do not currently have the resources to fund a dedicated anti-poverty team or officers. Financial and human resources for this agenda are extremely limited, and at present are focused on what is effectively crisis response due to the Cost-of-Living Crisis. For this reason, the “delivery” priorities outlined in section seven look at how we can make better use of existing resources by reconfiguring existing funding streams and formalising the input of staff from across MCC and our partners.

10.2. In order to create some capacity to deliver on the priorities set out in the new strategy, we propose taking two actions:

- Firstly, to embed the relevant priorities of the Anti-Poverty Strategy the Team Around the Neighbourhood (TAN) work plans. TANs already bring together services at a local level and are best placed to manage delivery in a way that is responsive to local needs.
- Secondly, a wider “virtual team” of officers will be formalised to create some additional capacity to work on the anti-poverty agenda. This recognises that in the absence of a dedicated anti-poverty team, we are reliant on the contribution of officers and partners from across services and different areas of expertise. The concept of a virtual team is to formalise existing arrangements to ensure that relevant officers have enough time to dedicate to anti-poverty work, and to make sure that there is a dedicated anti-poverty lead person within each relevant service.

10.3. The team will also continue to look for opportunities to bring in funding or other resources to support anti-poverty work. This has also been included as a priority in the “delivery” theme in section seven.

11. Next steps

11.1. We are currently in the process of gaining feedback on these proposals from our partners and wider stakeholders. An event has been scheduled to discuss these proposals with our partners in more detail, and the responses will be incorporated into a full draft strategy.

11.2. A formal online consultation on the draft strategy will be carried out in mid-December, with the final strategy being taken to Executive in January.

11.3. At the same time as developing the new strategy, colleagues have been working to address the immediate pressures of the Cost of Living Crisis. Building on the model established through the COVID-19 Pandemic, a group of officers has been assembled and a work plan developed covering the following themes and issues:

- Cost of Living Advice Line
- Funding & support for households
- Community Food Response
- VCSE and Covid Health Equity
- Neighbourhood Response
- Schools
- Manchester Local Care Organisation Health and Social Care

- Housing
- Advice and Debt
- MCC Staff
- Comms, Engagement and Campaigns
- Digital Inclusion

11.4. This group is focussing on immediate, short term measures to tackle to Cost of Living Crisis in Manchester, whereas the Anti-Poverty Strategy is focused on medium to long term outcomes. In practice the two will be closely aligned with many of the same officers and partners working across the two workstreams.

12. Conclusion

12.1. Current economic circumstances mean that poverty will remain a significant challenge for Manchester in the coming years, however the City Council and our partners remain strongly committed to doing everything we can to tackle poverty in the city, and to reduce the impact that poverty has on the lives of our residents. We also recognise that in some areas our powers to tackle the problem are limited, but we are prepared to work to find new solutions to achieve do the maximum amount possible. We will also continue to make the case to UK Government for the legislative change that we believe is required to create the right conditions to effectively reduce poverty in our city.

13. Recommendations

13.1. Refer to the front page of this report.

14. Appendices

The following appendices have been referred to in this report:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment
2. List of consulted organisations