



There are no financial implications to report at this stage, further to those previously reported to Cabinet:

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Likely cost level</b>
Develop a commitment and a proactive strategy to tackle food poverty in Slough.	No cost
Create a directory of (and promote) all available services.	No cost
Start to monitor household food insecurity.	Low cost
Coordinate with schools to ensure all children have access to food 365 days a year.	High cost
Explore ways to reduce fuel poverty using regulatory tools such as the Housing Act 2004 and through the effective promotion of the various energy company obligation schemes already in operation in Slough.	High cost
Increase the capacity of the LWP team and provide customer service training.	High cost
Support and develop financial advice services.	High cost
Develop community orchards and plant fruit trees around the borough.	Low cost
Engage retailers and voluntary groups.	No cost
Consider more collaboration with probation services.	No cost
Improve working conditions and opportunities for Slough residents.	High cost
Organise an annual conference on food poverty.	low cost

There may be further costs identified with the proactive food poverty strategy, once this has been developed, which will be presented to Cabinet.

(b) Risk Management

There are no identified risks to the proposed recommendation.

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

Whilst the Council does not have a specific duty around food poverty, the issue links with a number of other duties and powers. For instance, the Council has a duty to safeguard and promote children's welfare and has a power to provide services in furtherance of this duty, public health duties, including in relation to healthy weight services for children, duties in relation to the care and support needs of adults and housing duties and powers, both in relation to those at risk of homelessness and to those living in unfit private sector housing.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

The work of the Task and Finish sought to address the effects of food poverty on health inequalities in Slough. Food poverty is more likely to impact on certain groups than others, including as follows:

- Low-income households;
- Black and minority ethnic groups;
- Men living alone;
- People suffering from mental health issues;
- Frail and poor older people;
- People with disabilities.

As of 2018-19 16.3% of Children under 16 in Slough were living in families with absolute low income and 18.5% were living in families with relative low income. As of 2018, 8.9% of households in Slough experienced fuel poverty.

One of the recommendations of the Task and Finish group is to have a monitoring system in place to ensure the Council has accurate data on which residents are most likely to be impacted by food poverty – and measures are being put in place to implement this (see recommendation 2, section 5.1).

(e) Workforce

The implementation of the Task and Finish Group's recommendations will require significant staff time and the support of senior leaders.

## 5 Supporting Information

### 5.1 Background

The findings of the Task and Finish Group were taken to the Cabinet at its session on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2020, and the group made 12 recommendations for SBC:

1. Develop a commitment and a proactive strategy to tackle food poverty in Slough Borough Council.
2. Create a directory of (and promote) all available services.
3. Start to monitor household food insecurity.
4. Coordinate with schools to ensure all children have access to food 365 days a year.

5. Explore ways to reduce fuel poverty using regulatory tools such as the Housing Act 2004 and through the effective promotion of the various energy company obligation schemes already in operation in Slough.
6. Increase the capacity of the LWP team and provide customer service training.
7. Support & develop financial advice services.
8. Develop community orchards and plant fruit trees around the borough.
9. Engage retailers and voluntary groups.
10. Consider more collaboration with probation services.
11. Improve working conditions and opportunities for Slough residents.
12. Organise an annual conference on food poverty.

At its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> October, the Cabinet decided that recommendations 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10 and 12 should be agreed and actioned, noting that the specific mechanisms may be revised e.g. the annual conference proposed in recommendation 12 may be better achieved by similar means such as an annual summit. The other recommendations would require more detailed work to understand the service and financial implications.

## 5.2 Agreed recommendations

- **Recommendation 1**

A project is currently underway to develop a new strategic framework for Slough Borough Council, following on from the Slough 2040 Vision and Five Year Plan. The project team will consider options for how the proposed strategy might best be included within this framework, and ensure it is factored in to 2021/22 service planning. It is anticipated that the development of this strategy will be led by the new Associate Director for Community, once appointed.

The Slough 2040 Vision includes a commitment from partners to work together to alleviate poverty and ensure that everyone in Slough will have the opportunity to flourish and live well. Over the next year partners will be working to agree implementation plans, progress measures and plans to monitor progress in delivery.

- **Recommendation 2**

The Local Welfare Provision (LWP) team has ensured that information is being provided to relevant support agencies. The LWP team has also been developing working arrangements with other SBC departments - including debt and welfare rights, children and families. They are currently working with schools officers to build closer contacts with family support workers operating in schools. Commencing 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021, officers will be working on a directory looking at support and financial assistance to families, and how these will function in the new operating model.

- **Recommendation 3**

Data on the food support given to LWP customers is now being captured on a weekly and monthly basis. Officers are currently exploring how SBC can deploy the new Policy in Practice tool to establish gaps in income and identify individuals and households who may require additional support. This will allow for a more targeted approach to assist those most in need.

As part of the Our Futures programme and SBC's new operating model, the council is developing a new insight function, that will support its capability to prioritise interventions and further develop our ability to take preventative action. As part of this work the council has recently gained access to the Local Insight data tool, which is created by team who produce the Index of Multiple Deprivation. This tool will give the council a greater ability to examine key indicators at a ward and neighbourhood level.

Officers are also considering opportunities for using Free School Meals data to improve insight in this area.

- **Recommendation 8**

This recommendation will primarily be taken up in the planned new Parks and Allotments Strategy.

Community gardens and allotments have been identified as one of the 'inspired ideas' from residents that has been factored into the development of the Slough 2040 Vision, and access to allotments has been incorporated within the objectives that sit under the vision's second priority statement – 'Slough will have attractive, green neighbourhoods, which bring people together'.

There may also be further opportunities to pursue this recommendation through the Slough Urban Forest programme, which is currently being delivered, and will see thousands of trees planted across the borough.

- **Recommendation 9**

Over the last year the council has scaled up our collaboration with community groups, volunteers and retailers as part of our response to the pandemic, through the OneSlough group. The initiative has seen approximately 15,000 hot meals delivered to vulnerable people throughout the pandemic.

The council will explore opportunities for building on these relationships to implement this recommendation. Specific proposals will be brought through via the proactive strategy referenced in recommendation one.

- **Recommendation 10**

This recommendation will be incorporated within the proactive strategy referenced in recommendation one.

- **Recommendation 12**

This recommendation will be incorporated within the proactive strategy referenced in recommendation one, although alternatives to a conference format will also be examined.

### 5.3 Recommendations requiring further consideration

- **Recommendation 4**

The Winter Grant Scheme, introduced in December 2020, has enabled the council to support those most in need with the cost of food, energy, water bills and other essentials.

Funding from this scheme has been used to provide vouchers for the Christmas, February Half-Term and Easter holidays - providing £15 a week per child to help cover the extra expense of feeding children, who receive free school meals. They are redeemable in a large variety of supermarkets and small shops including Asda, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Waitrose and McColl's. Children who receive free school meals or early year's pupil premium can receive the vouchers. These are given out via their school or early years setting, which can then claim back the cost from the council.

Further funding from the scheme was distributed via SBC's family support and social care services, to ensure that those families in most need had access to additional help, such as for food or utility bills.

The council has also now launched the DfE funded Holidays, Activities and Food Programme which will provide free holiday clubs for those eligible for Free School Meals. The council is working with a range of providers (private, voluntary, independent, and charities) to offer places where children will be able to eat more healthily over the school holidays; be more active and be safe and have fun. Evidence suggests that holiday clubs can have a positive impact on children and young people and they work best when they provide consistent and easily accessible activities, for more than just breakfast or lunch, and when they involve children (and parents) in food preparation. The holiday clubs will also be available to any children not eligible for free school meals, who can pay to attend.

SBC's Early Help Hub supports families with access to a range of grants from local charities, and the council is continuing to issue food bank vouchers from all our children's centres.

Officers will also be discussing this recommendation with the Slough Education Partnership Board, to consider further action that can be taken in partnership to address this issue.

- **Recommendation 5**

This recommendation will need to be incorporated within the proactive strategy referenced in recommendation one.

- **Recommendation 6**

The number of staff in the LWP Team has been increased from 1 FTE prior to November 2020 to 1.5 permanent FTEs and 2 temporary FTEs. There is also a team leader (1 FTE) who is supporting the LWP operations and reporting.

- **Recommendation 7**

Officers are working on a directory that will cover support and financial assistance services to families, which will incorporate the changed arrangements under the council's new operating model.

- **Recommendation 11**

The council is currently working with our partners on the Slough Regeneration, Economy and Skills Board to implement the Slough Inclusive Growth Strategy, the first priority of which is 'Creating Secure & Productive Jobs'.

The Slough 2040 Vision includes a commitment that 'local people will be employed in good jobs - jobs that offer them fulfilment, fair wages and support their wellbeing.

SBC's COVID Recovery Strategy includes a suite of measures designed to support residents in finding good jobs – including new job search tools and the creation of the FutureSkills Hub in partnership with the Windsor Forest Colleges Group and Royal Holloway University.

Preliminary work is now underway on a new Task and Finish Group which will look in detail at skills and employment in the context of COVID-19, which will:

- Identify the current processes in place that provide support to Slough residents in terms of skills, upskilling and employment;
- Identify the current challenges to skills and employment in Slough due to the pandemic;
- Hold evidence gathering workshops with specialist support officers (DWP, NEET, Slough Academy, the voluntary sector and other partners);
- Identify areas requiring further investigation or consideration; and
- Present recommendations and proposed policy/project changes to Cabinet.

Officers will also consider how Slough's commissioning and procurement systems can improve working conditions and opportunities for Slough residents, in the development of the proactive strategy referenced in recommendation one.

## 6 **Comments of Other Committees**

This report is yet to be seen by any other committee.

## 7 **Conclusion**

This report summarises the actions taken to date, and proposed next steps, for implementing the recommendations of the Food Poverty Task and Finish Group.

## 8 **Background Papers**

- '1' - Agenda, decisions and minutes, Cabinet, Monday, 12th October, 2020
- '2' - Slough 2040 Vision