Meeting:	Executive
Meeting date:	11/03/2025
Report of:	Director of Housing & Communities
Portfolio of:	Executive Leader, Policy, Strategy and Partnerships Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights, Equality and Inclusion Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education

Decision Report: Adoption and implementation of the York Poverty Truth Commission's Charter for Organisational Standards

Subject of Report

1. This report explains the work undertaken by the York Poverty Truth Commission (PTC) and how it led to the creation of the Commission's Charter and Organisational Standards. These aim to promote dignity and respect for those facing poverty.

2. It also provides an update on what has happened since the Charter was launched, and what the next steps are, including monitoring of the implementation of the Standards at the council and across the city.

3. The recommendations in this report will support the council in its vision to establish the conditions that would make the city of York a healthier, fairer, more affordable, more sustainable and more accessible place, where everyone feels valued. This work will also feed into the ongoing work to co-produce a 10 year Anti Poverty with residents and partners across the city.

4. The standards build on the council's existing values and support a more person centred approach and direction of travel across many council services. The standards are also a key part of the York

Neighbourhood Model approved by this Executive on 12 December 2024.

5.   The Executive is being asked to formally adopt the Charter and Organisational Standards and approve the next steps to embed the approach across all services of the council, along with the ongoing monitoring arrangements.

Benefits and Challenges

6.   The work of the PTC highlighted the difficulties people are experiencing who are in poverty with complex personal circumstances such as those dealing with homelessness, mental health challenges or are disabled. The new standards focus on making services more responsive to people's needs rather than expecting them to navigate complex systems alone. This approach is fundamental to future ways of working such as those outlined in the *York Neighbourhood Model* alongside the development of *Health's Integrated Neighbourhood Teams* and the *Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.* Many of the ways of working are integral to the development of the Family, Frailty and Mental Health Hubs across the city.

7.   As with any cultural change programme the challenge will be embedding the standards without identifying further organisational resources especially where corporate training or process improvement is required. This will be considered as part of the council's transformation plans, including an 'Improving Resident Experience' review.

Policy Basis for Decision

8.   The report responds to the *How the council operates* Council Plan 2023-2027 priority "Improving customer experience will drive everything we do". The PTC standards will directly benefit all residents accessing council services.

9.   In terms of the council's core commitments:

   o *Equalities and Human Rights* - services will be more accessible as a result of learning from those most affected by poverty.

o *Affordability* - Tackling the cost-of-living crisis - through implementing the Charter and Standards the council will find new ways so everyone who lives here benefits from the success of the city, targeting our support at those who need it most, supporting communities to build on their own strengths and those of the people around them.

o *Health and wellbeing* - the recommendations in this report are core to effective health early intervention and prevention activities in order to reduce health inequalities for those experiencing poverty.

Financial Strategy Implications

10. The proposals in this report in the main will be taken forward as underpinning standards as part of a forthcoming Customer Experience Review. Any activities to embed the standards into ways of working will need to be absorbed within existing budgets.

Recommendations and Reasons

11. The council's Executive is asked to:
    - Note the work of the York Poverty Truth Commission and the council to date in promoting and implementing the Organisational Standards;
    - Formally adopt the Charter for Organisational Standards developed by the York Poverty Truth Commission; and
    - Approve a published six-monthly monitoring report for the Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights, Equality and Inclusion.

Reason: to commit to and promote the work of the PTC and secure ongoing delivery and monitoring of the work into the future.

Background

Establishment of the Commission

12. A Poverty Truth Commission begins by putting those with direct experience of poverty first and asking them to share their knowledge about what is truly needed to make change. They set the agenda. It acts as a vital link between those with experience (Community Commissioners) and decision makers in the area (Civic Commissioners), building trusted relationships. It also removes labels such as 'service user' and 'professional' and humanises the system which is currently in place to tackle poverty. All people within the PTC should be heard, and everyone's opinions are valued.

13. Funded by key organisations in the city alongside the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the York Poverty Truth Commission officially launched on 9 March 2023. Prior to this the Community Commissioners had been meeting for some time to build trust and confidence ahead of selecting the Civic Commissioners they wanted to work with. The Civic Commissioners were chosen from local organisations such as City of York Council, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York CVS, Primary Care, Mental Health Trust and North Yorkshire Police.

Development of the Charter and Organisational Standards

14. Over a year Community Commissioners shared lived experience of existing culture, systems and processes affecting those in poverty, and focussed on what needed to change. In the end the Commissioners prioritised *'To be treated with kindness, understanding, honesty and respect when accessing services'*, as the scope of a set of conditions that would make the most difference to them whilst experiencing poverty.

15. From these discussions the Commissioners produced the following set of four organisational standards that if embedded into practice will make a significant difference to the people of York and beyond:

> Standard 1 - We listen
> Standard 2 - We are understanding
> Standard 3 - We are respectful and friendly
> Standard 4 – We are responsive, honest and care about getting you the right support

16. The full Organisational Standards including the actions that should be taken to meet them can be found in the Annex to this report and available here:

https://www.yorkcvs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/PTC-Organisational-Standards-Booklet.pdf

Launch and Progress to Date

17. ***The 'Charter for Organisational Standards – TOGETHER promoting dignity and respect for those facing poverty'*** was launched at a *Celebration and Next Steps* event held at The Priory Street centre on 24 April 2024. Civic Commissioners including those from the council publicly pledged to adopt and integrate the Charter into the working practices of their respective organisations and challenged others to do the same.

18. In January 2025 the PTC met to review progress and heard the feedback and progress from Civic Commissioners:

19. **Actions by the council:**

- In July 2024 the work of the PTC was presented in public at the statutory Health and Wellbeing Board.

- In Housing and Communities - around 500 staff across Customer Services, Communities Teams and Housing (repairs, options, allocations, and housing management officers) have received an overview of the standards and watched the celebration event video.

- The Director of Public Health (DPH) has devoted one of his all-staff sessions to PTC, including the video of the celebration event and asking all to read the PTC standards and reflect them in their practice. This included around 70 staff who are frontline and customer facing, a large proportion health visitors and school nurses. Additionally, the standards are highlighted and the summary reprinted in the Director's independent DPH annual report.

- In Childrens Social Care and Education both their practice model and trauma informed training relate to the standards of the Poverty Truth Commission and the Corporate Director has encouraged services informally to adopt them.

- Trauma informed training has been delivered by the regional Mental Health Trust to the Executive and council management team to inform a plan for roll out across the whole council with pilot training already taking place in some services.

- The introduction of a new policy around managing customer relations will be launched with a trauma informed focus and ensure that the core principles of the PTC are embedded.

- Building on the feedback and examples from Civic Commissioners of council correspondence, the council is working on making letters and communications easier to understand, with a project in collaboration with the University of York.

20. **Examples of actions by other organisations:**

- Introduction of a Kindness Charter;

- Meeting with teams on a monthly basis and discussion of the standards to remind people that they exist and should be used;

- A range of activities to improve digital inclusion;

- Organisational values and complaints procedures have been updated to reflect the standards.

21. **Partnership Digital Inclusion Work:**

The Digital Friendly York (DFY) partnership which is facilitated by the council and other partners such as Joseph Rowntree Foundation met with a smaller group of the Civic Commissioners after its main work was completed. They talked about the digital inclusion priorities the partnership should be thinking about - around providing skills, data and access to equipment. The group identified a number of solutions, but the key one was for a local business accreditation or registration scheme to provide safe spaces where people could access digital help, advice and information.

The outcomes from this work include:

- A Civic Commissioner sits on the new digital partnership steering group to give lived experience input and feedback on the experience of people they meet every day.

- Suggestions from Civic Commissioners led to planned actions around:

- o A Digital Friendly York Campaign to promote digital confidence and access to support.

- o A Digital Friendly York accreditation scheme for organisations offering digital assistance.

- o A Digital Friendly York Awards to showcase good practices.

The Civic Commissioners:

22. The Civic Commissioners have continued to meet as a group and are regularly invited to be involved with teams and organisations across the city to give their experiences and inform new thinking and changes across organisations. They continue to be available for this activity and are considering how they can deliver this as a service perhaps as part of a voluntary/community organisation and they are working with York CVS on this as a proposal.

Next Steps and Monitoring

23. Each organisation adopting the Charter will need to track its own progress against the Standards. It is proposed that in order to monitor progress the council will publish a six-monthly update for the Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, Human Rights, Equality, and Inclusion.

24. Further activities being planned include:

- o Leadership and cross-council briefing sessions;

- o Workshops and learning lunches; and

- o Embedding the standards in the council's transformation programme.

25. Other activity in planning from the Poverty Truth Commission, aside from securing the group's longevity, could include highlighting the Standards at planned events such as the Festival of Ideas, Health Mela and develop a roadshow approach. They wish to engage with the Good Business Charter organisations for them to consider adopting the Standards. They wish to create an ongoing network for people to continue to meet and as previously stated this may be formalised through a VCSE governance structure. Existing funding for the group comes to an end in March 2025

Consultation Analysis

26.   The entire report is based on the work of The Poverty Truth Commission and led by the experiences and proposals from Civic Commissioners.

Options Analysis and Evidential Basis

27. The options in relation to this report are:
- To approve the recommendations at paragraph 11 to maximise the opportunity to adopt the standards and deliver cultural change in line with the Charter commitment already made by CYC;
- To reject the recommendations, which would be to reject the fundamental foundation of the work to drive decision and policy making from lived experience and to fail to benefit from the expertise and insight derived from this work.

Organisational Impact and Implications

28.

- **Financial** - The overall cost of implementing the standards is not known. Therefore, it is assumed that any activities and costs arising from the recommendations in this report will need to be met from existing budgets.

- **Human Resources (HR)** -Training activities will be developed locally according to the needs of the services and their residents.
- **Legal**, There are no legal implications of this report.
- **Procurement** - There are no procurement implications of this report.
- **Health and Wellbeing** - Early intervention and prevention activities outlined in this report will contribute to reducing health inequalities caused by the wider determinants of health. Residents accessing a range of services including housing and care will all benefit from an improved experience when communicating and engaging with the council helping to improving health and wellbeing outcomes and reducing health inequalities.
- **Environment and Climate action** - The role of the PTC can support the city's climate change ambitions in relation to

facilitating a just transition towards net zero and addressing issues associated with food and fuel poverty. The York Poverty Truth Commission should be included in future consultation on updates to the climate change Action Plan.

- **Affordability** - the focus of this report is on improving standards when engaging with residents who are in poverty and may have other complex needs, supporting them to access services, support, advice and information positively to improve their outcomes.
- **Equalities and Human Rights** - A full Equalities Impact Assessment is considered unnecessary as the outcomes for all protected groups is overwhelmingly positive. Whilst the charter and standards have been developed by those experiencing poverty – they were also representative of people with many complex experiences and a number were from the disabled community. The standards relate to behaviours that will benefit all residents.
- **Data Protection and Privacy** - there are no implications of the recommendations and options in this report as there is no personal, special categories or criminal offence data being processed to set these out, there is no requirement to complete a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) at this time. However, this will be reviewed following the approved recommendations and options from this report and a DPIA completed if required.
- **Communications** - Communications supports the recommendations of this report, recognising its links to the core council commitments of EACH, and the city's wider status as a Human Rights City. Communications will support the adoption and implementation of the PTC charter with a robust communications and stakeholder engagement plan, as well as being prepared for any reactive statements that are needed.
- **Economy -** There is significant research that shows a direct link between lower confidence, lower self-esteem and social exclusion that all affect social mobility. By taking a cross-council cultural approach to improving residents interactions with the council is part of the council's commitment to early intervention that may improve their access to financial and employment support, and support broader social mobility.

Risks and Mitigations

29.	The main risk is that, without resources, the standards might not be properly implemented resulting in no change and no improvement or worsening of the experience of residents in poverty in the city. To mitigate this the work needs to be embedded in the transformation programme and a detailed process of change undertaken.

30.	As outlined in the financial implications section above, the cost of implementing the standards has not been quantified. Therefore, there is also a risk that costs may not be contained within existing budgets, requiring additional savings to be identified from other council services in future.

Wards Impacted

31.	This work could affect all wards and residents in York

Contact details

For further information please contact the author of this Decision Report.

Author

Name:	Pauline Stuchfield
Job Title:	Director of Housing & Communities
Service Area:	Housing & Communities
Report approved:	Yes
Date:	18/02/2025

Background papers

Council Plan – Executive 14th September 2023
https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AIId=65632

York Neighbourhood Model/ Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2024-29– Executive 12th December 2024
https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MId=14503&Ver=4

Health & Wellbeing Board 24th July 2024
https://democracy.york.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=68444

Annexes

- Annex A – Extract from The York Poverty Truth Commission - Charter for Organisational Standards

Abbreviations

CVS	Centre for Voluntary Service
CYC	City of York Council
DFY	Digital Friendly York
DPH	Director of Public Health
DPIA	Data Protection Impact Assessment
EACH	The council's core commitments – Equalities & Human Rights, Affordability, Climate & Health
PTC	Poverty Truth Commission
VCSE	Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise