

**Customer & Corporate Services Scrutiny  
Management Committee**

**10 June 2019**

Report of the Assistant Director – Legal & Governance

**Food Poverty Scrutiny Review Scoping Report**

**Summary**

1. This report asks the Committee to consider a request by Members the previous administration's Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee (CSMC) that the new Committee undertakes an in-depth scrutiny review into the causes of and responses to food poverty.
2. They requested that any review should take into account key elements of the York Food Poverty Alliance report at Annex A.

**Background**

3. During the previous administration, CSMC agreed to carry out a scrutiny review into Financial Inclusion in York with the aim of understanding the impact of Universal Credit on the city's citizens and the activities being run to promote Financial Inclusion.
4. In September 2018 CSMC agreed an initial remit for the review. However, in November 2018 CSMC considered a request that a 19 July 2018 Motion to Council on Food Poverty be added to the review remit. This was agreed and the following objectives were added:
  - i. To understand how the above issues are linked to apparently increasing levels of food poverty in York, including work on the following:
    - the background to food poverty in York including any available local statistics and how local measurement might be improved;

- the current role of crisis support in York in mitigating food poverty;
  - a range of options for the Council and its partners to improve the city wide response to food poverty in York.
5. While gathering information for the Financial Inclusion Scrutiny Review the Task Group established by CSMC to carry out this work on the Committee's behalf began to investigate food poverty and learned that much of the work in this area in York is co-ordinated through York Food Poverty Alliance, which works with groups, organisations and individuals in the city to strengthen the ability to reduce food poverty and tackle its causes.
  6. The alliance recognises that food poverty is the result of a complex set of structural issues relating to but not restricted to problems of insecure, inadequate and expensive housing, insecure and low paid employment, insufficient social welfare provision, poor health, and an environmentally unsustainable food production and distribution system. Its aims include identifying and raising awareness about the systemic drivers of food poverty, improving access to advice services and ensuring those eligible for financial support are in receipt of it.
  7. Both Foodbank use and informal community food aid usage are rising in York and there are more than 30 organisations providing variations of food aid across the city.
  8. These cross-sector organisations deliver a range of different versions of community food aid provision from traditional soup kitchens to food and advice projects and the rise in volunteer-led community cafes. Of these:
    - 13 said food poverty was part of their rationale for setting up;
    - 17 are open regularly (more than once a week);
    - 12 are open one day per week;
    - 25 have an open-access policy
    - 7 serve targeted populations only (gender, age, area/based, disability, income.)
  9. The Financial Inclusion Scrutiny Review Task Group noted that while both formal and informal initiatives are available for those who need support there were no robust measures for gathering information. It is difficult to measure unique users of food aid by those who are experiencing food poverty at projects which are open on a continuous,

all-inclusive basis or where food is embedded alongside other services.

10. Available data from the weekly community cafes/informal food banks, such as Red Tower, Planet Food, YourCafe / Luke's Larder, Bell Farm Community Assoc, Chapelfields and Foxwood Community Hubs and Lidgett Grove, shows that the weekly customers to each of these projects range from 35-70 meaning around 360 people each week use open-access cafe provisions across the city. This does not capture the full level of usage when you consider Chill in the Community CIC's informal food bank in Acomb, is also open 7 days per week.
11. York Foodbank, which has locations in Acomb, Huntington Road, Tang Hall and Gillygate, is part of a nationwide network of foodbanks, supported by the Trussell Trust. Between April 1 – November 30, 2018, York Foodbank served 2,623 people, 1,008 were children. The previous full 12 months, April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018, 4,262 people received food assistance from York Foodbank; of this, 1,647 were children.
12. According to the Trussell Trust the primary referral causes to foodbanks for the period April to September 2017 were:
  - Low income – 26.52%
  - Benefit delays – 24.71%
  - Benefit changes – 17.90%
  - Debt – 8.29%
  - Other – 7.82%
  - Homeless – 5.41%
  - Sickness – 2.81%
  - No recourse to public funds – 2.74%
  - Domestic violence – 1.50%
  - Child holiday meals – 1.04%
  - Delayed wages – 0.83%
  - Refused Short-Term Benefit Advance – 0.40%
13. The Financial Inclusion Scrutiny Review Task Group had its final meeting on 13 February 2019 when it was agreed that issues around increasing food poverty in the city were complex and this should be the subject of a separate piece of work which could be picked up by the new administration after May's elections.
14. The review recommendations were agreed by Executive in March 2019 and these included a recommendation to the new administration that a

deeper scrutiny review into the causes of and responses to food poverty is considered, taking into account key elements of the York Food Poverty Alliance report.

### **Consultation**

15. Should the Committee agree to undertake a more detailed scrutiny review into food poverty there will be a need to engage with York Food Poverty Alliance, York Foodbank and informal providers of food aid.

### **Options**

16. Members can consider whether to undertake a deeper review of food poverty in York based on the aim and objectives in paragraph 4, or not.

### **Analysis**

17. There is no analysis in this report.

### **Council Plan**

18. This report is linked to 'a prosperous city for all' and 'a Council that listens to residents' priorities in the Council Plan.

### **Risks and Implications**

19. There are no risks or implications associated with the recommendation in this report.

### **Conclusions**

20. York may appear to be a 'rich' city with a booming tourist industry, but poverty is real – and growing – in a climate where food prices continue to rise and incomes remain stagnant.

### **Recommendation**

21. Having considered the information provided in this report Members are asked to consider whether they wish to undertake a deeper scrutiny review into the causes of and responses to food poverty in York.

Reason: To understand and help tackle issues related to food poverty in the city.

## Contact Details

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Report Approved  Date 11/04/2019

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

## Annexes

Annex A – York Food Poverty Alliance report