

The City of Edinburgh Council

10.00am, Thursday 28 June 2018

Edinburgh Poverty Commission

Item number	8.5
Report number	
Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	All
Council Commitments	45

Executive Summary

This paper proposes the key stages to establish an Edinburgh Poverty Commission to define the long-term actions and responses needed to reduce poverty and inequality in Edinburgh.

The paper gives an overview of the case for a commission in Edinburgh, a summary of the aims and structure of a commission, and a proposed timescale built around a first meeting of a commission during Autumn 2018, with a final report and forward action plan delivered by Autumn 2019.

The paper sets out a new and agile approach to delivery of the commission, focused on ensuring the project is directly informed by citizens with experience of living on low incomes in Edinburgh, and on ensuring the project delivers early practical actions for testing and implementation.

Edinburgh Poverty Commission

1. Recommendations

It is recommended that City of Edinburgh Council:

- 1.1 Approve the establishment of an Edinburgh Poverty Commission;
- 1.2 Agree that recommendations proposed by the commission will be used to inform the Council Change Strategy, and future Council policies and actions to prevent, reduce, and mitigate poverty in Edinburgh;
- 1.3 Agree the principles for identifying an area to support the agile, action research element of the project;
- 1.4 Agree the proposals for commission membership and in particular that a chair will be sought from Edinburgh's business community; and
- 1.5 Note that progress is dependent upon identifying sufficient resources, including support from partner agencies, to support this commission approach.

2. Background

- 2.1 Edinburgh is well recognised as an affluent and a growing city, but is also a city with wide levels of inequality and home to some of the most deprived communities in Scotland. An estimated 22% of Edinburgh children grow up in poverty, with these rates as high as 35% in some areas of the city. Despite high average incomes, a wide base of evidence shows Edinburgh to be a city with poverty rates similar to the Scottish average, and with pockets of poverty and material deprivation as severe as any other area in Scotland.
- 2.2 The case for public sector response to these issues is clear and can be articulated on Strategic, Social and Economic grounds.

The strategic case

- 2.3 The Scottish Government's Programme for Scotland, and the range of policies and strategies which follow from it, provide a clear direction to improve the co-ordination and impact of public sector interventions to reduce the scale and impact of poverty in Scotland. These include specific requirements for local government arising through the Fairer Scotland Action Plan, the Socio Economic Duty for public bodies, and the Child Poverty Act and associated delivery plan.
- 2.4 Within Edinburgh, the Council Administration and Edinburgh Partnership set out a clear direction for action to reduce poverty, inequality, and their impacts on

communities in Edinburgh. The Programme for the Capital in particular includes specific Council commitments to tackle child poverty, to address food poverty and food security, to promote the living wage and fair rents, and to improve access to affordable housing, amongst other actions.

- 2.5 The Council Change Strategy, currently in development, sets out a new approach to meeting the challenge of improving Council performance and delivering a sustainable budget. Within this context, action to address poverty in the city is identified as key to the strategy's themes of prevention, inclusive growth, and high-quality services.

The social case

- 2.6 The 2050 Edinburgh City Vision project facilitated a conversation with citizens, communities, and organisations across Edinburgh to help describe the type of city we aspire to be by 2050. A strong emerging theme was the ambition for Edinburgh to be a fairer city. In 2050, Edinburgh citizens aspire to live in a city without barriers to achievement, where poverty is reduced and a good quality of life is a basic requirement enjoyed by all.

The economic case

- 2.7 Reports published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimate the total cost to the public sector of addressing the impacts of poverty – including cost of addressing poor health, poor education outcomes, lost economic output, criminal justice outcomes – at some £69bn per annum across the UK as a whole. On a simple pro rata basis, this puts the cost to the public sector of addressing the impacts of poverty in Edinburgh at some £408m each year.

Current plans and activities

- 2.8 In response to this context, strategies and plans in all council services incorporate action to reduce living costs, increase incomes, and address the effects of poverty and inequality – examples include the City Housing Strategy, Edinburgh Economy Strategy, the Integrated Children's Services Plan, the Child Equity Framework, the Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan and others.
- 2.9 Despite this activity, analysis of the strategic interventions currently in place suggests that more work is needed to:
- 2.9.1 Fully meet the requirements of new legislation and respond to the challenge set by the Fairer Scotland Action Plan and embed fairness, respect, and dignity as meaningful core principles in policy design and implementation;
 - 2.9.2 Engage and respond to those with lived experience of poverty and inequality in the city and ensure that policy responses are designed to respond to their needs;
 - 2.9.3 Improve integration of service delivery, and deliver new ways of working to address pockets of deep seated, multigenerational deprivation, poverty, and inequalities in Edinburgh;

- 2.9.4 Co-ordinate policy to deliver an appropriate and integrated response to reducing poverty and inequality, incorporating all areas of public policy in the city including economy, education, health, housing, transport, community safety and other service areas; and
- 2.9.5 Deliver a programme with a genuine long-term perspective, with a strong and meaningful emphasis on poverty prevention as well as mitigation.

3. Main report

- 3.1 One approach taken by many local authorities across the UK to address these challenges has been to establish Poverty or Fairness Commissions. Often independently chaired or facilitated, these commissions gather evidence from local people on the experience of living in poverty in their area, analyse actions and opportunities to improve the impact of policy interventions, and make recommendations based on the available opportunity and evidence. Recommendations, and the strategies and action plans which follow from them, are designed to be delivered in partnership, and focused on making a difference for people living in poverty at a local level.
- 3.2 A New Economics Foundation report reviewing 23 Commissions across the UK concluded that the approach had “succeeded in generating fresh initiatives and a renewed commitment to action among local authorities and their partners”, and had “built fresh insights and developed initiatives that can lead to real change”.
- 3.3 An early example of this approach was the Commission on Social Exclusion launched in Edinburgh twenty years ago in late 1998. This commission published a number of recommendations to tackle inequality and exclusion in the city and resulted in, amongst other initiatives, the establishment of the One City Trust.

An Edinburgh Poverty Commission

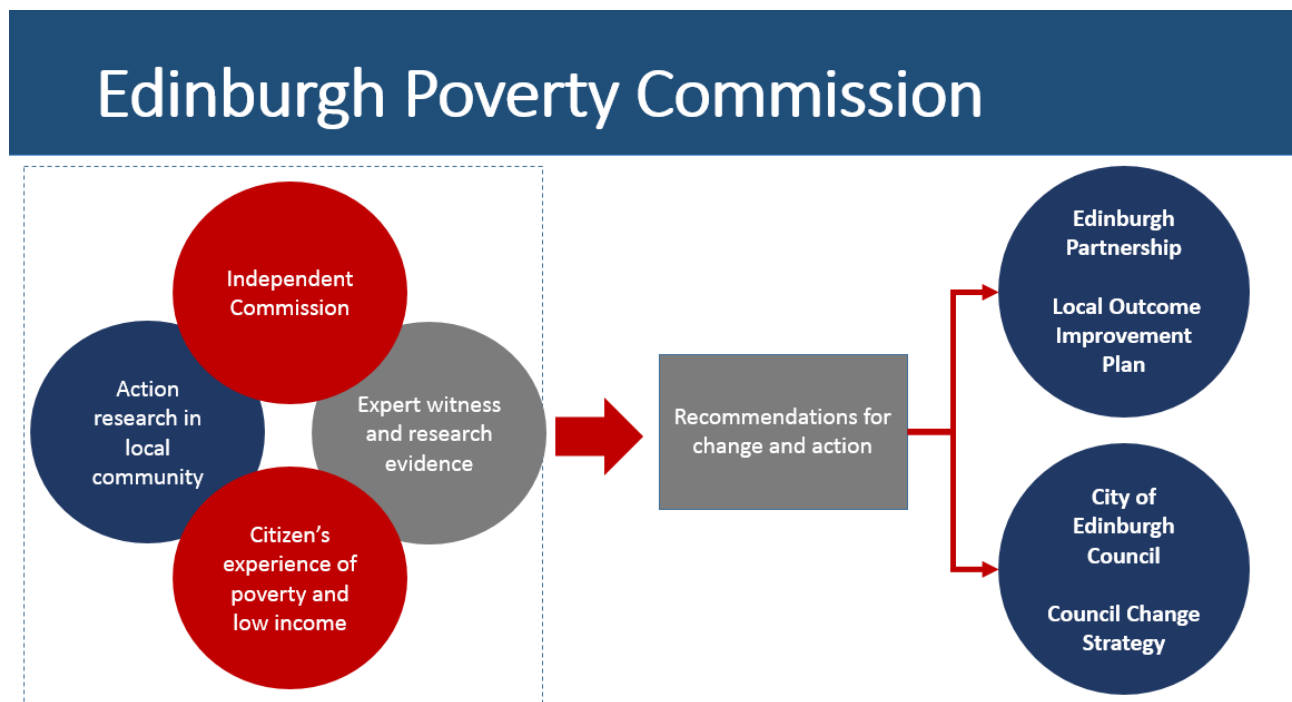
- 3.4 To address the issues raised above, it is proposed that an Edinburgh Poverty Commission is established, with aims, structure, membership and work programme as described below.
- 3.5 The Edinburgh Poverty Commission should aim to:
 - 3.5.1 Take a strategic overview of the scale, scope, and nature of poverty in Edinburgh and the effectiveness of activity currently undertaken to address such poverty;
 - 3.5.2 Build on the learning achieved by other poverty and fairness commissions across the UK to find best practice examples of interventions and approaches to be adopted in Edinburgh;
 - 3.5.3 Hear and respond directly to the experiences of citizens who live on low incomes in Edinburgh;
 - 3.5.4 Make recommendations to the Edinburgh Partnership and City of Edinburgh Council on a programme of actions and activities needed to: reduce levels of poverty in Edinburgh; reduce inequalities in experience of poverty between

citizens and areas of the city; prevent Edinburgh citizen's from falling into poverty; mitigate the damaging effects of poverty on people's lives in Edinburgh;

3.5.5 Make recommendations on the partnership structures and bodies needed to monitor and implement this programme of work over the long term; and

3.5.6 Provide evidence of high profile political and partnership commitment to the challenge of tackling poverty in Edinburgh.

3.6 In doing so, the commission should aim to provide recommendations and action plans which can be incorporated into current planning for key decisions such as the Council Change Strategy, the Council Budget, the development of a new Edinburgh Partnership local outcome improvement plan, and the development and implementation of the 2050 Edinburgh City Vision.



Action orientated – an agile process

3.7 The work of the commission will be designed to learn from and to direct a programme of action research carried out within a selected community or area of the city. This programme will seek to address specific issues identified by the commission and invite local citizens living in poverty in the city to work with locality service providers in the co-design and piloting of potential coordinated place based solutions.

3.8 An appropriate community or area of the city for focus during this action research process will be selected based on a number of criteria and agreed by the commission during its first meeting. This selection process will seek to ensure that the action research activity is focused on an area which:

3.8.1 Shows evidence of need and high concentration of individuals in poverty;

- 3.8.2 Provides an opportunity to build on and add value to partnership activity to address poverty already underway (including building on small area priority actions outlined in Locality Improvement Plans); and
- 3.8.3 Provides an opportunity to build on and add value to existing community capacity working in the area.
- 3.9 The results of this research will be reported back to the commission for recommendations on next steps and on further issues for research and testing. At the end of the Commission, this learning will be used to drive more strategic city-wide recommendations.
- 3.10 This process will ensure that the commission and its findings are directly informed by the views of citizens with lived experience of poverty in the city and that the actions and recommendations made by the commission are implemented quickly and with the co-operation of the communities on which they aim to have an impact.

Structure and membership

- 3.11 In line with best practice from commissions established in other areas, it is proposed that the Edinburgh Poverty Commission be formed of 11 commission members, supported by evidence provided by a wide range of expert witnesses (local, national, and international), and facilitated by secretariat and research support provided by City of Edinburgh Council and partners.
- 3.12 It is proposed that the Commission is chaired by an independent commission member from the business community. Commission members will be selected through a process of nomination and appointment with final decision on commission membership to be made by the chair. Appointment of commission members will be undertaken to ensure the mix of members provides:
 - 3.12.1 Strong expertise from policy, practice, research, and direct lived experience of poverty;
 - 3.12.2 Nationally recognised experience and expertise in designing new approaches to tackling poverty in UK cities, but with at least 1/3 local representation;
 - 3.12.3 Experience of participating and/or facilitating poverty or fairness commissions in other UK areas;
 - 3.12.4 An appropriate representation of commission members across age, gender, and ethnic backgrounds; and
 - 3.12.5 A wide and strong collection of commissioners bringing experience from a range of sectors and backgrounds, including business, the third sector, public sector agencies, local and national government, and specifically in respect of children, housing, inclusive growth, advice and welfare.
- 3.13 All members will be appointed subject to their ability and agreement to commit time to actively participate in Poverty commission sessions discussions, and lead or participate on specific workstreams identified by the commission process.

Supporting and resourcing the Commission

- 3.14 The work of the commission will be supported by research, data and policy analysis provided by City of Edinburgh Council and partner agencies. This support will be co-ordinated by the Council's Strategy and Insight Division, drawing on a working group of officers representing key service areas across the Council and partner agencies.
- 3.15 In addition to this support, evidence to be considered by the commission will be provided by expert witnesses invited to participate in the commission process. The range and purpose of expert witness sessions will be agreed with the commission on inception, but will include evidence from: key national research groups; academic institutes; think tanks such as Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Poverty Alliance Scotland, Child Poverty Action Group will be approached alongside local community groups and individuals with experience of poverty.

Process and timescale

- 3.16 The work of the commission is being designed to launch during Autumn 2018, with a final report with recommended actions to be published and agreed in Autumn 2019.
- 3.17 This work programme incorporates an induction meeting and four formal full-day meetings of the commission, with outputs at each stage designed to help inform the development of major policy decisions needed during this period, such as the development of the Edinburgh Partnership Local Outcome Improvement Plan.
- 3.18 As noted above, these four meetings will inform, and be informed by, a programme of action research carried out in low income communities in the city.

Key next steps

- 3.19 **Agree council and partnership support:** In order to be successful, this project needs explicit support from City of Edinburgh Council and Edinburgh Partnership. From a Council perspective, this needs to include agreement that the recommendations made by the commission will be used to inform future plans (including the Council Change Strategy), and an agreement to monitor and report regularly on the implementation of commission recommendations.
- 3.20 From a partnership perspective, on 7th June the Edinburgh Partnership Board agreed a recommendation to support the establishment of an Edinburgh Poverty Commission, and agreed that recommendations made by the commission would inform the future development and implementation of the new Edinburgh Partnership Local Outcome Improvement Plan.
- 3.21 **Identification and appointment of commission members and expert witnesses:** Experience from observation of other cities emphasises the importance of securing a strong, diverse group of dedicated individuals willing to actively participate in the commission process, either as full commission members or as expert witnesses and advisors to the commission. As well as diversity across gender, age, and background, securing a mix of commissioners and advisors from

within the local authority, and those with strong experience from elsewhere in the UK is important to ensure that the process delivers both external expertise, and internal knowledge and accountability.

- 3.22 **Identify and organise Council and partner resources:** The full cost of establishing and running the commission is dependent on a range of factors. Evidence from experience from other commissions, and an assessment of research costs associated with capturing citizens' experience of living in poverty in Edinburgh suggests that a core budget of around £50,000 for running a commission will be required. This covers the costs of conducting research activities, holding public events and meetings, but does not include staff time. All commissioners have been volunteers who have not been paid for their time.
- 3.23 In addition to core financial costs, in order to carry out the action research and secretariat support needed to make the commission a success, a strong virtual team of council and partner officers will be needed.
- 3.24 To secure these resources, the programme will draw on support and capacity from partner organisations and stakeholders. The Scottish Government, for instance, have already signalled their intention to provide support for the commission and its work. The project team will work to develop and draw on similar commitments as the commission work programme develops.
- 3.25 **Communication and participation:** Learning from other local authorities shows that to be a success, the commission needs to involve and draw on the views of a wide range of local individuals and community groups. Good communications, including good use of press and social media, are key to raising awareness of the commission, and its purpose. Building on this, in addition to the four scheduled meetings of the full commission, the project needs to engage with communities through a series of satellite activities. This may include inviting individual commission and project team members to visit local places or to attend meetings of local organisations and partnership forums. Towards this, a key early priority in the commission design is to develop a strong communications and participation plan for the project.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 A key output for this programme of work will be the development of a monitoring framework including measures of success.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 No additional costs to the Council are associated with this report.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 No adverse risks or policy impacts have been identified as associated with this report. Outputs from the programme of work outlined in this report will be used to identify and mitigate potential risks to the Council.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 Equalities impacts arising from the commission will be considered as part of a Integrated Impact Assessment.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 Sustainability impacts arising from the commission will be considered as part of a Integrated Impact Assessment.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Development of this proposal will be a collaborative process involving elected members, public sector partners, third sector organisations, and local communities. This commitment to partnership working, consultation and engagement will continue throughout this programme of work.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 [Fairness Commissions: Understanding how local authorities can have an impact on inequality and poverty, New Economics Foundation, July 2015](#)
- 10.2 [Fairness Commissions: The Role of Fairness Commissions in the Enabling State, Carnegie Trust, June 2017](#)

Andrew Kerr

Chief Executive

Contact: Laurence Rockey, Head of Strategy and Insight

Email: laurence.rockey@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 469 3493

11. Appendices

None