

APPENDIX 1

PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Cost of Living Response Review

SCRUTINY MONITORING – PROGRESS UPDATE	
Review:	Cost of Living Response
Link Officer/s:	Haleem Ghafoor
Action Plan Agreed:	May 2024

Updates on the progress of actions in relation to agreed recommendations from previous scrutiny reviews are required approximately 12 months after the relevant Select Committee has agreed the Action Plan. Progress updates must be detailed, evidencing what has taken place regarding each recommendation – a grade assessing progress should then be given (see end of document for grading explanation). Any evidence on the impact of the actions undertaken should also be recorded for each recommendation.

Recommendation 1:	That findings from this review will inform the development of the Council’s Anti-Poverty Action Plan/Strategy as part of the ‘Powering Our Futures’ programme. This will be coordinated with partners and will advocate the importance of lived experience.
Responsibility:	A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees (FSOT) Team/ Anti-Poverty Project Group
Date:	April 2024
Agreed Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings from this review shared with Anti-Poverty Project Group and included in Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan. This work forms part of the ‘Powering Our Futures Programme’ under the ‘Communities’ Mission strand. (April 2024) • Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan to be presented to Lived Experience Group for comment and consultation. (April 2024) • Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan to be presented to Cabinet for approval in September 2024. (September 2024) • Implementation of Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan and continuing dialogue with Anti-Poverty Project Group and Lived Experience Group. (Ongoing)
Agreed Success Measure:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Poverty Project Group received findings from scrutiny review and findings included in Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan. • Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan approved by Lived Experience Group. • Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan approved by Cabinet. • Ongoing conversations with Anti-Poverty Project Group and Lived Experience Group to ensure Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan is fulfilling aims.


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<p>Evidence of Progress (November 2024):</p>	<p>The findings from this review have been presented to both the Anti-Poverty Strategy Project Group and Lived Experience Group (now titled the 'Positive Living Forum') and incorporated into the Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>The project group and Positive Living Forum received draft versions of the Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan and provided feedback.</p> <p>The Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan were approved by Cabinet in July 2024 and are a key component of the Council's Powering Our Futures Communities Mission.</p> <p>The Strategy 2024 to 2027 can be accessed here: https://www.stockton.gov.uk/article/15890/Foreword</p> <p>The Action Plan can be accessed here: https://moderngov.stockton.gov.uk/documents/s8168/Action%20Plan.pdf</p> <p>A two-page 'easy read' version of the strategy has also been developed.</p> <div data-bbox="608 920 1251 1368" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> </div>
<p>Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)</p>	<p>2 – On-Track</p>
<p>Evidence of Impact (November 2024):</p>	<p>Following Cabinet approval, an Anti-Poverty Strategy Delivery Group has been created and the findings from this review have been included in action plan discussions. Smaller project groups have been devised to focus on specific areas of the action plan.</p> <p>The Strategy and Action Plan have also influenced and been incorporated into the Council Plan 2024-2028.</p> <p>The Positive Living Forum (co-ordinated by the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Team) continue to meet regularly and provide feedback on the progress of the Strategy and Action Plan. Most recently, the Forum visited the new Health and Wellbeing Hub in Wellington Square,</p>

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	<p>Stockton Town Centre, for a tour and discussed the future direction of the Forum. The Council and the Positive Living Forum have recently won a Resolve Poverty for 'Lived experience engagement' in recognition that the Forum has 'directly shaped your (our) anti-poverty strategy'.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>
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Recommendation 2:	That the Council continues to work with schools and governors to address the issues around the affordability of school uniform and provide options to expand the provision of pre-loved uniforms are explored, through devising an action plan clearly outlining the steps to be taken to address these issues. The action plan will be shared with the Committee and progress reported as part of the wider recommendations. In addition, the Council will meet with Multi-Academy Trust school improvement leads to advocate the need for affordable school uniforms and the ongoing promotion of pre-loved ones
Responsibility:	Haleem Ghafoor/ Rebecca Saunders-Thompson/ Vanessa Housley
Date:	April/May 2024 – May 2025
Agreed Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Officers to develop action plan. (April/May 2024) • Action plan to be approved by People Select Committee. (May 2024) • Action plan to be carried out and progress reported to People Select Committee until completion. (May 2025)
Agreed Measure: Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action plan created. • Action plan approved. • Updates on progress and completion of action plan.
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	A School Uniform Action Plan was agreed by the People Select Committee in May 2024.

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Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	2 – On-Track
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	Please see below for progress on specific school uniform actions.

Recommendation 3:	That the income maximisation service is widely promoted through Stockton News and social media channels as a means of assisting residents with debt management and financial difficulties.
Responsibility:	FSOT Team/ Communications Team/ Revenues, Benefits and Welfare team/ SDAIS and Moneywise (delivery)
Date:	December 2024 – May 2025
Agreed Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This area of work is covered by the Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan. (May 2025/Ongoing) Pension Credit advice and support drop-in sessions to be held in Community Spaces across the Borough.(December 2024) Continued partnership working on debt management and financial support advice services with Stockton District Information and Advice Service (SDAIS) and Moneywise (Tees Credit Union). (Ongoing)
Agreed Success Measure:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy and Action Plan will be delivered as above (recommendation 1). Increase in residents accessing pension credit advice and support with applying for pension credits. Residents continue to be supported and access debt management and financial support services.
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	<p>Five Pension Credit Awareness Sessions have taken place in June 2024. The selected venues were: Stillington Village Hall, Thornaby Warm Welcome, West End Bowling Club, Ingleby Barwick Friendship Café, and Challoner House. There was greater engagement with the sessions at some venues, such as West End Bowling Club, who stated they would welcome another session. Other venues, such as Stillington Town Hall, stated that the single session was sufficient for their group/residents. Over 50 residents engaged with these sessions.</p> <p>Further Pension Credit drop-in sessions are to be held in November 2024 (venues to be confirmed).</p> <p>Officers from the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees (FSOT) Team attend Infinity Partnership meetings and work with external partners to ensure residents receive accurate and relevant advice and</p>



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	<p>support. For example, FSOT officers have committed to work with Stockton District Information and Advice Service and Northumbrian Water to assist residents with water arrears and make them aware of support available to reduce water bills.</p> <p>An article on the latest 'Here to Help' booklet will feature in the November 2024 edition of Stockton News and plans is currently underway for an income maximisation scheme, known as Money Angels', to be developed across the Borough. Further details will be provided in future updates.</p>
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	2 – On-Track
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	<p>Positive feedback from the Pension Credit sessions included the following example:</p> <p><i>“Just wanted to say a huge thank you for organising for Janet to attend our cafe yesterday. She was so lovely and I know a number of people talked with her. She fitted in beautifully. I would appreciate it if you would pass on our thanks and appreciation to her. She enjoyed the session herself so you are always all very welcome to come and join in with us. God bless you all.”</i></p>
Recommendation 4:	That, building on the success of previous staff drop-in sessions around Cost of Living this targeted approach continues where there is a need.
Responsibility:	FSOT Team
Date:	May 2024 / May 2025
Agreed Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FSOT Team stall at the Employee Engagement Day on 15th May 2024. (May 2024) • Staff drop-in sessions to be arranged across a range of services/workplaces. (May 2025/Ongoing)
Agreed Success Measure:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff provided with Cost of Living advice and support. • Staff provided with targeted support and advice on Cost of Living issues
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	The FSOT took part in the Employee Engagement Day on 15 th May 2024 and provided a range of staff with cost of living support and advice. There was also an option for staff to submit feedback on our current cost of living support offer or request further advice following the event. The FSOT stall also included a school uniform donation point so staff could donate any unwanted uniform which was distributed at the Going for Gold Summer event.

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	 <p>In addition, the FSOT team have been attending Community Services annual Employee Engagement days to provide information and advice on the cost of living. Events are being held at Billingham Forum and service areas which will be supported are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highways and Street Lighting (24th September 2024) • HVE (8th & 15th October 2024) • Refuse and Recycling (4th & 11th November 2024) • Street Cleansing (19th November 2024) • Grounds Maintenance (26th November 2024) 
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	2 – On-Track
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	The Fairer Stockton-on-Tees staff have engaged with staff from across the Council and provided advice and support on areas such as payroll saving schemes and debt support services. Council staff have also been provided with Cost of Living 'Here to Help' booklets and up-to-date foodbanks, pantries and The Bread and Butter Thing leaflets.
Recommendation 5:	That, building on the existing success of the work undertaken, to continue to build on best practice from across the country working alongside the LGA.
Responsibility:	FSOT Team

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Date:	Ongoing
Agreed Action:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to attend LGA Cost of Living Network. Consultation with LGA and other Council representatives, when developing projects and strategies, as appropriate. Consultation of evidence-based research when developing projects and strategies, as appropriate. For example from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Children North East Poverty Proofing <p><i>(For information – Manchester City Council have already been consulted during the development of the Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan.)</i></p>
Agreed Measure:	Success Future strategies and projects will be enhanced by continued engagement with the wider public sector.
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	<p>The FSOT team continue to attend a range of events, webinars and training relating to poverty and the cost of living.</p> <p>The FSOT Team continue to work with other Local Authorities and relevant external partners on projects. Most recently, there has been ongoing consultation with other Local Authorities, Policy in Practice and the North East Child Poverty Commission throughout the Free School Meals Auto-enrolment project.</p>
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	2 – On-Track
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	Discussions with neighbouring Local Authorities have directly influenced the delivery of the Free School Meals Auto-Enrolment project. For example, the key information to include in letters to parents/carers to inform them that their child/children may be eligible for free school meals.

Assessment of Progress Gradings:	1 Fully Achieved	2 On-Track	3 Slipped	4 Not Achieved
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School Uniform Action Plan Progress

Agreed Action:	Conduct research on school uniform policies to compare with previous research undertaken in 2020.
Responsibility:	Rebecca Saunders-Thompson
Date:	August/ September 2024
Agreed Measure:	Success Research will provide information on changes in school uniform policies across the Borough. This will inform a targeted approach to promote best practice schools and support schools to make uniform policies more affordable.
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	Research on school uniform policies has been completed.
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	1 – Fully Achieved
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	The findings from this research has been presented to Stockton’s Child Poverty Network in October 2024. This research will assist with the promotion of best practice and the targeted correspondence with schools to encourage a wider affordability of school uniform.

Agreed Action:	Building on existing research (conducted by Clare Branson, Catalyst), undertake mapping exercise of pre-loved uniform availability across the Borough.
Responsibility:	Rebecca Saunders-Thompson/ Emma Chudley/John Paul Stabler
Date:	August/September 2024
Agreed Measure:	Success Information on pre-loved school uniform to be updated on Council website to provide more support
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	At present, current information on pre-loved school uniform has been updated on the Council website. More information will be added following a redesign of the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees ‘Here to Help’ and Community Engagement webpages on the Council’s website. This is currently in the planning stages and uniform support has been included in this project.

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	FSOT officers are also working with officers from Citizens Advice Stockton to map the current provision of pre-loved uniform.
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	2 – On-Track
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	Current up to date information on a range of school uniform support is accessible via the following page of the Council website: https://www.stockton.gov.uk/school-uniform-support

Agreed Action:	Explore alternative projects to be delivered across the Borough to support families to access school uniform provision.
Responsibility:	Rebecca Saunders-Thompson
Date:	May 2025
Agreed Success Measure:	Potential increase in families accessing support with school uniform costs.
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	This issue has been raised at the Child Poverty Network which was launched in July 2024 and brings together Council officers and key partners in the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise sector. It has been agreed that this will be one of the Network's key priorities.
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	2 – On-Track
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	FSOT officers are currently working with members of the Child Poverty Network to explore options to provide pre-loved school uniform outside of school settings. Further information will be provided in a future update.

Agreed Action:	Correspondence sent to Multi-Academy Trust school improvement leads and Boards of Governors for all schools to advocate the need for affordable school uniforms and the ongoing promotion of pre-loved ones.
Responsibility:	Rebecca Saunders-Thompson/ Vanessa Housley
Date:	July/September 2024
Agreed Success Measure:	Support and feedback which details positive action received. Schools increase availability of pre-loved uniform and access to more affordable school uniform.

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	Schools increase co-location of pre-loved school uniforms across different venues to increase accessibility for parents/carers.
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	Correspondence will be sent in November 2024 due to the need to incorporate feedback from a Child Poverty Network workshop (24 th October) and feedback from a school uniform survey conducted by Stockton Citizen's Advice Service (expected early-mid November). The uniform survey is of particular importance because it has been completed by parents/carers and schools, so it will provide the most up to date indicator of the key issues surrounding school uniform costs.
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	3 – Slipped (see above for explanation and revised deadline)
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	N/A

Action Agreed:	Attend Closing the Gap, Personal Development Network and other relevant meetings to provide an update on scrutiny review and gather feedback.
Responsibility:	FSOT Team
Date:	December 2024
Agreed Measure: Success	<p>Senior school staff provided with recommendations from the review and encouraged to re-evaluate school uniform policies to increase affordability.</p> <p>Council Officers to receive feedback from schools on policies and procedures for children/families experiencing financial difficulties.</p> <p>Feedback will also assist with mapping exercise for pre-loved uniform promotion.</p>
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	FSOT Officers have attended Primary and Secondary Personal Development Network meetings in the Summer term of 2024 and are due to attend a Closing the Gap meeting on 30 th January 2025.
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	2 – On-Track
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	Pastoral leads have received information on the school uniform action plan and have been encouraged to engage with pre-

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	loved uniform collections and promotion as part of the Going for Gold event planning.
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Agreed Action:	Continued promotion of pre-loved school uniform including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School and academy websites - Newsletters (eg Cost of Living Newsletter) - Keeping You in Touch (KYIT) - SBC staff drop-in sessions - Stockton News - Via Community Spaces network - Via The Bread and Butter Hubs - Child Poverty Project Group events - Via Stockton Food Power Network (food pantries and foodbanks) - Family Hubs - Relevant events Social media channels
Responsibility:	FSOT Team (coordination and delivery) Emma Chudley/John Paul Stabler (delivery)
Date:	Ongoing
Agreed Success Measure:	Increased awareness and uptake of pre-loved school uniform.
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	The FSOT team continue to work with the Communications team to promote and support pre-loved school uniform projects as outlined in the agreed actions section above. For example, as part of the Going for Gold event, a communications plan was created to request donations of pre-loved uniform and promote the 'eco shop' where pre-love uniform could be obtained at the event. This included social media posts, KYIT articles, articles in relevant newsletters and promotion at other events.
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	2 – On-Track
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	Support from the Council's Communication team has been significantly valuable in promoting the availability of pre-loved uniform to the Borough's residents and to support and increased uptake.

Agreed Action:	Free pre-loved school uniform shop at the Summer Here to Help event, July 2024
Responsibility:	FSOT Team


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Date:	July 2024
Agreed Measure:	Success Residents provided with free school uniform
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	<p>The preloved school uniform 'Eco Shop' was very popular and gave parents the opportunity to stock up on uniform basics and branded items in preparation for the new school year in September. Uniforms were provided by Council staff and residents from across the Borough at collection points in SBC buildings, Tees Active, Family Hubs and libraries. A donation of £250 worth of new uniforms from Core Highways was also received and parents were so pleased to be able to take a new set of shirts or a new pair of trousers.</p> 
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	1 – Fully Achieved
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	<p>Around 300 items of preloved uniforms were given out to parents and around 150 brand new items from the Core Highways donations and other donations of new uniform from the public.</p> <p>People praised the recycling element, branding it as an Eco Shop and promoting the recycling element seemed to reduce the stigma around preloved clothing.</p> <p>Feedback included: <i>"It is great to be able to come out on hot day and we managed to get uniform for all of my kids from the Eco shop."</i> <i>"I can't believe you have these fleeces from my son's school. These fleeces cost over £25 to buy! I have never been able to afford one for my son, it was a luxury item. Thank you so much for allowing us to take one, now my son can fit in with the rest of the kids at school. He is over the moon, just look at his face he's buzzing! What a fantastic idea, this is really needed."</i></p>

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Agreed Action:	Free pre-loved school uniform stall at relevant staff and community events
Responsibility:	FSOT Team
Date:	Ongoing
Agreed Success Measure:	Residents provided with free school uniform
Evidence of Progress (November 2024):	<p>A family orientated event was held on 9th August 2024, to celebrate the refurbishment of Victoria Hall and Victoria Park and to provide fun physical, social and enrichment activities during the school holidays. As part of this event, the FSOT/Community Engagement stall provided free preloved school uniform.</p> 
Assessment of Progress (November 2024): (include explanation if required)	2 – On-Track
Evidence of Impact (November 2024):	<p>Over 100 families attended the Victoria Park event on 9th August and had access to free pre-loved uniform.</p> <p>Surplus uniform from July's Going for Gold event was collected by Thirteen and Family Action to distribute in communities. This also helped to promote the recycling of clothing and reduce the number of items sent to landfill.</p>