

MINUTE OF EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 21 OCTOBER 2021

58 **FOOD INSECURITY**

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Operating Officer as contained on pages 465 to 512 of the Book of Reports which was to share with Members the findings report following a research study into food insecurity within West Lancashire and to recommend actions for implementation that will help tackle food insecurity within the Borough in a dignified way and help address the root causes.

The Service Improvement & Special Projects Manager outlined the report and explained that Iconic Consulting were appointed for the commissioning of a study to examine food insecurity within the Borough. This was due to start in March 2020, however this was paused due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The research began in September 2020 involving several tasks listed at paragraph 4.3 of the report, which also included a number of feedback sessions.

He went on to outline the key findings from the research and the impact Covid has had on food insecurity and informed that the established food banks in the Borough had distributed an average of 405 food parcels per week between the start of July to the end of December 2020.

He informed that a number of opportunities could be implemented relatively quickly, including the establishment of a cross-sector food insecurity forum, led by a WLBC Officer.

In discussion comments and questions were raised in respect of:

- Trussell Trust food bank users In West Lancashire 2020 (Wards data)
- Drivers of food insecurity and food bank use
- Significant increase of foodbank use during Covid-19 pandemic
- Thanks to Citizens and Businesses for their support and generous donations to the foodbanks in the Borough

The Chairman had received a statement from Councillor R Cooper, which was read out to the Committee on his behalf:

"I have a special interest in Food Insecurity, as my wife, Claire Cooper initiated this research when she was Community Portfolio Holder. I had a number of questions/challenges after having read this report, which Peter Morrison kindly answered in a conversation on Wednesday morning. Peter assured me that he had looked to identify a local organisation before putting a tender out nationally for this research contract. We agreed that it would be of great benefit to have a register of local businesses and the goods and services that they could provide. Then

commissioning officers could look to that register first before searching for organisations in the wider regional/national area.

Another of my concerns was that the statistics were not detailed enough. Peter assured me that regular consultations were held which covered details that could not be included in the report.

We both agreed that we have a good understanding of the issue in our towns, but not so much in the Northern Parishes and the more rural areas. Hopefully, the new cross-sector forum will investigate this further as it takes the recommendations forward.

I'd like to express my thanks to Peter for finding time to answer my queries on this report".

RESOLVED: That the Committee thank all involved and fully support the report for presentation to Cabinet for their consideration.

(Note: The Chairman declared a non-pecuniary interest at this item in respect of café Birchwood in relation to his position as a Trustee of the Birchwood Centre, and explained that he would not partake in consideration of this item if detailed discussion should occur in respect of this).