

West Cheshire Poverty Truth Advisory Board

22 September 2020, at 3pm – 4.30pm

Online MS Teams

Attendees: Clare Roberts, Cllr Mandy Clare, Mark Grady, Debra Webb, Barbara Dean, Gus Cairns, Susan Whitfield, Kay Finnerty, Antony Spurway, Susan Taylor, Wayne Gales, Alexis Redmond, Alison Dimelow

Apologies: Liz Dickinson, Cllr Rachel Williams, Steph Ellis, Tracy Goodwin, Shirley Rigby, Linda Brooks, Tyra Goodwin, Clare Harrison, Peter Middleman

Item 1: All welcomed and apologies noted.

Meeting to be facilitated by Mandy and Clare until co-chairs are in place.

No amendments to note from last meeting.

All happy with current membership but need a health representative. May need to review once poverty emergency is called and as priorities evolve.

Item 2: Update on Leaders Champion role and Poverty Emergency

Mandy has been putting the wording together for the motion to take to full Council on 22 October, it's still not there and has been tricky. It needs to get cross-party support and important that it makes a difference. Both Mark and Debra offered support with this.

Item 3: Working group updates

Data collection and analysis – Gus has been sending through some really useful information. Mandy has contacted University of Chester and Council's Insight and Intelligence team as it's important to establish what is already available and what is doable to set a baseline before we progress. Working group to meet before next PTAB meeting. WVHT also commission a data report which Wayne will share.

Transport Review - The group had met and heard from Kristy Littler the lead officer for the review. Initial thoughts and comments have been fed back and were welcomed. The group have agreed to draft a report summarising our comments with evidence from our lived experience and making recommendations. The group also feel it is important to meet with the consultancy engaged by the Council.

COVID-19 Hardship Fund – There has been two meetings of the group so far. Agreed approach that will support all who are entitled to the £150 grant plus 25% of their Council Tax arrears. Projections at this stage are that this will leave funding that the group will consider in January how to utilise in a targeted approach in line with the guidance to support those with the greatest need.

Website design and content (new) - Mandy updated the Board on plans to have a dedicated web presence where crucial information could be accessed about the poverty emergency and link into other groups to share what they are doing. We could produce a regular newsletter with input from Inspirers, blog etc. for the Poverty emergency.

Debra offered to work with Mandy on this and Antony offered support as a critical friend to “test” anything before it went live.

Item 4: Current and emerging challenges

This will be a standing item on the agenda and is an opportunity for members to share anything they are aware of in their communities.

Gus commented about the extra mental health support people are going to need, especially as Christmas approaches as this can often be an already difficult time for people, especially if you are living alone.

Debra - There are no daytime facilities for the homeless population now that Share has closed (due to the overnight withdrawal of our facilities by Forfutures and CWAC). There is currently nowhere to go and shower and wash clothes, resulting in a pitiful loss of dignity and morale. Also, there is that huge loss of meaningful daytime activities that kept people away from the street and starting to engage.

How can we best promote the support available to give people a helping hand? eg. financial support if you need to self-isolate.

Other comments (Wayne) -

Uncertainty about the future impact of Covid-19 – especially local spikes and a second wave.

- Uncertainty about the economic recovery from Covid-19
- The continuing uncertainty about the post-Brexit relationship with the EU and its implications for the workforce and supply chains
- Affordability and supply issues in the local housing market
- Pressure to respond to the need to deliver more homes – especially the need for really affordable (social) housing and issues about design and construction quality
- Heightened awareness of the homelessness problem with additional funding now available
- Continued uncertainty about funding for social care
- Continuing problems with the implementation of welfare reform

Item 5: How can lived experience influence change across the Council?

PTAB aim to inform and influence policy, strategies, action plans across the Council, ensuring that lived experience is front and centre but how do we ensure this happens and how can we keep check our suggestions are followed up?

Mandy to discuss with Cllr Gittins (Leader).

Item 6: Electing a co-chair – Interest from Barbara, Gus and Antony. Clare to email details and all members to vote by Monday 5 October.

Agreed actions:

1. Clare to produce a list of “who’s who” to share with PTAB members.
2. Data analysis working group meeting date to be arranged. (Mandy)
3. Wayne to share date commissioned by WVHT with Mandy and Clare.
4. Clare to draft report re Transport review and share for comment.
5. Clare to request meeting with consultancy.
6. Debra to catch up with Mark outside of meeting re Covid-19 hardship fund.
7. Clare to share updated web page link
8. Mandy to look into the issue of no daytime/welfare facilities for homeless in Chester city centre.
9. Mandy to discuss how we embed our approach (item 5) with Cllr Gittins.
10. Clare to email co-chair details and all members to vote by Monday 5 October.

Dates of next meeting:

- Tuesday 3 November 1 - 2.30pm
- Tuesday 24 November 11am - 12.30pm.