

<b>Report of:</b>	<i>Director of Finance</i>
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<b>Submitted to:</b>	Executive Member for Finance and Governance
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<b>Date:</b>	14 December 2022
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<b>Title:</b>	Corporate Food Poverty Policy
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<b>Report for:</b>	Decision
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<b>Status:</b>	Public
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<b>Strategic priority:</b>	Vulnerability
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<b>Key decision:</b>	Yes
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<b>Why:</b>	Decision(s) will have a significant impact in two or more wards
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<b>Urgent:</b>	No
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<b>Why:</b>	N/A
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### **Executive summary**

The Executive Member for Finance & Governance is asked to approve the following:

- Adoption of the Corporate Food Poverty Policy.

## **Purpose**

1. This report seeks approval for adoption of the Corporate Food Poverty Policy. The purpose of this new policy is to provide clear guidance for all Council Officers on addressing the causes and effects of poverty whilst enhancing signposting of vulnerable residents and customers to the most appropriate existing free and discounted food provision throughout the borough. It forms a road map to help someone who is in food poverty to address their immediate situation and support them to become self-sufficient, food-secure and not reliant on temporary aid.

## **Background and relevant information**

2. Middlesbrough's existing high levels of multiple deprivation factors have been exacerbated first by the impact of Covid-19 and more recently by the energy and cost of living crises, resulting in growing numbers of residents presenting to the council and its partners in food poverty as a result of complex, diverse and manifold financial support needs.
3. In recognition of this impact on the town, the council's refreshed Strategic Plan 2021-2024 outlined a Priority to "address the causes of vulnerability and inequalities in Middlesbrough and safeguard and support those made vulnerable."
4. To support this Priority and address these local financial support needs, on 12 July 2022 Executive approved the council's Welfare Strategy. The overarching Strategy combines within a holistic single-touch approach a wide collective of support policies to help Middlesbrough's most vulnerable residents, incorporating debt management solutions, crisis support, Council Tax Reduction, benefits maximisation and hardship relief, facilitated by the Resident and Business Support Service.
5. This Corporate Food Poverty Policy forms the final segment of that Strategy, and links very closely to the Crisis and Vulnerability Policies in tackling food poverty in the borough.

## **Corporate Food Poverty Policy**

6. The Council's food poverty policy has the following objectives:
  - To help the council achieve its Strategic Plan 2021-2024 Priority to "address the causes of vulnerability and inequalities in Middlesbrough and safeguard and support those made vulnerable."
  - To provide a structured approach to ensuring a professional, consistent and timely response to the identification and resolution of food poverty across all of the Council's functions.
  - To fortify local food, financial and welfare support partnership links.
  - To improve long-term food security for the residents of Middlesbrough in order to reduce dependency on temporary food aid.

7. The outcomes expected from this policy are:

- Promotion of understanding of the drivers of food poverty;
- Ensuring employees and partners are confident in identifying a food need;
- Creation and maintenance of clear signposting routes for residents experiencing food insecurity towards available immediate food aid within the borough;
- Addressing the underlying poverty cause by providing clear navigation for residents who access any of the Council's services presenting with an underlying food poverty situation, to be able to access existing council support mechanisms including the Welfare Strategy and associated financial assistance, advice and support;
- Development of a multi-agency Food Poverty Action Plan (FPAP) to build long-term food security for Middlesbrough.

#### **What decision(s) are being recommended?**

8. That the Executive Member for Finance and Governance approves the adoption of the Corporate Food Poverty Policy

#### **Rationale for the recommended decision(s)**

9. The Corporate Food Poverty Policy outlines the council's long-term role and approach in addressing the underlying poverty element of food need and insecurity (through the provision of financial assistance, advice and signposting support), in order to support individuals in freeing up disposable income to enable families to feed themselves and to therefore break the cycle of dependency on temporary and emergency food and crisis aid.

10. The Policy clearly sets out how the Council will identify and holistically support residents who are in temporary and long-term food poverty, utilising the established Welfare solution. It provides structured guidance to employees about the council support services available to residents who access any food provision portals that can help with the root cause of the underlying poverty. It also covers how the council will improve signposting about the specific types of direct food support available locally.

11. Adoption of the Policy will ensure a clear, consistent and individual-centred approach when responding to residents who present themselves in food poverty, and will help the council to achieve its Strategic Plan 2021-2024 Priority to "address the causes of vulnerability and inequalities in Middlesbrough and safeguard and support those made vulnerable."

#### **Other potential decision(s) and why these have not been recommended**

12. N/A.

## Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

### *Legal*

13. There are no legal implications regarding this report. There is no legal requirement to have a Corporate Food Poverty Policy, however the rationale for this is outlined above.

### *Strategic priorities and risks*

14. The proposed scheme will contribute as follows to the Council's strategic plan:

<b>People</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Business</b>
Address the causes of vulnerability and inequalities in Middlesbrough and safeguard and support those made vulnerable	N/A	N/A

15. This Policy will have a positive mitigating impact on the following risks:

- **08-059 Incorrect assumptions in the MTFP** – by helping those who are vulnerable, the strategy will aim to support residents to be able to access additional financial support (where appropriate), which is intended to free up disposable income so that residents can meet their Council Tax obligations;
- **08-075 Reduction in Council Tax Collection** – as above.

### *Human Rights, Equality and Data Protection*

16. An impact assessment has been completed and is attached within the supporting documents. It found that there were no concerns that the policy could have a disproportionate impact on individuals or groups because they hold one or more protected characteristics.

17. The Corporate Food Poverty Policy should be applied in conjunction with any equality and diversity policies.

### *Financial*

18. There are no financial implications regarding this report. The proposed Policy has been designed to utilise the council's adopted Welfare Strategy to support the town's most vulnerable residents experiencing food poverty.



## Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Adoption of Corporate Food Poverty Policy	Janette Savage	Immediately following approval.
Initiate development of the multi-agency Food Poverty Action Plan (FPAP)	Janette Savage	31 March 2023.

## Appendices

19. Appendix 1 – Corporate Food Poverty Policy

## Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
Middlesbrough Council	Impact Assessment – Level 1.	 Impact Assessment - Corporate Food Pc
Middlesbrough Council	Welfare Strategy	12 July 2022  Welfare Strategy Executive Report 12.

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