

Cabinet Meeting – 8 February 2024

Written question from Cllr Michael Lilley to the Leader

In light of my annual review of the issue of poverty and particularly child poverty on the Isle of Wight, I wish to raise my concerns about the poorest ward on the Isle of Wight, Ryde South (Oakfield and Oakvale). As Chair of Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Health and Social Care, as IW Mental Health Champion and a Ryde Councillor, I am very concerned this ward and surrounding wards in Ryde, are neglected from a health inequality perspective. The Nicolson Road development including community development, job creation and social investment into the ward. The Pennyfeathers development (which was 50% future of the new ward population) is now not going ahead and Nicholson Road after millions of regeneration money being spent seems to be kicked into the long-grass. Ryde South as poorest ward on the Island is left in limbo. I would point out the ONS data reports this ward with one of the only IW wards with an increasing birth.

My question:

- (1) Why isn't IW Council departments including Public Health, Children's Services, Adult Social Care and Regeneration urgently identifying Ryde South as a priority area for a whole Council approach to tackle this deep need? I have been highlighting this since 2016 and there have been promises but no action!
- (2) Will IW Council work with Ryde Town Council in prioritising this ward to the proposed Ryde Town Board and a priority for funding?

Response

The Indices of Deprivation 2019 produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) show that Ryde South with a score of 38.7 is the 3rd most deprived IoW ward, with Osborne at 41.1, the 2nd most deprived and Pan & Barton the most deprived ward, with a score of 49.0. In Ryde South East, 27.8% of the population was income-deprived in 2019. This is slightly lower than Pan & Barton (28.8%) and Osborne (28.9%) which is the most income deprived ward on the IoW. The income deprivation measure is derived from the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

We work in a proportionate way with all areas of the Island to ensure services can meet needs and population can thrive and following discussion on this matter at Full Council we have been undertaking a collective approach to the creation of a sustainable and effective Anti- Poverty Strategy for the Isle of Wight over the next 5 years. There has been a significant increase in the cost of living over the past few years and the continued impact of the Covid 19 pandemic has exacerbated the effects of these increases on our islands most vulnerable residents.

Councils across the UK have been at the centre of coordinating and delivering targeted projects and programmes, such as the Household Support Fund, Energy Support payments and hardship funds during the cost of living pressure. Much of this support has been at the heart of local communities to support local people with escalating needs.

There is not one universal definition of poverty but for the Island we have worked together to define a summary definition of poverty as:

When a person's resources are well below their minimum needs, including the need to be part of our islands community.

The lack of an Anti-Poverty strategy for the Island has not stopped the Island from taking action during the Cost of Living crisis. The Islands statutory services and communities have delivered support, advice and additional funding to island residents who are in need. This has been achieved through collective efforts from across the councils directorates, (including schools), working with multiple stakeholders and community partners, and this partnership approach continues over the winter months through some of the schemes indicated above.

However, the council has committed to develop an Island Anti- Poverty strategy that would seek to include not only the here and now but also the longer-term aspirations to bring about action on poverty for all islanders.

Work to engage with community stakeholders and partners is being coordinated and will build on current work whilst beginning to engage our communities in the development of a new strategy tackling poverty and seeking to build resilience for all island communities.

3 Key Priorities have been set to aid the commencement of engagement and co-production of an Island Anti-Poverty strategy:

1. Priority one - Preventing our islands residents falling into poverty.
2. Priority two - Targeted support for our island's residents experiencing poverty now.
3. Priority three - Ensuring long term support is planned for our islands residents.

The activity to begin engagement is proceeding with a number of engagement events, survey and focus groups being scoped to be undertaken over the next few months.

It will be important that the new strategy compliments and references other important strategies and objectives that already exist.

In addition, the Ryde Town Board, using the Ryde Towns funding will be developing and overseeing delivery of a Long-Term Town Plan comprising a 10-year vision and 3-year investment plan and is an important route through which to address the issues raised by Cllr Lilley. The Towns Fund aim to cover 3 broad investment themes – 1. Safety and security; 2. High streets, heritage and regeneration; 3. Transport and connectivity and will need to demonstrate positive impacts on prosperity and quality of life of Ryde residents. It can also be used to lever in additional funding for initiatives.