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Jobs .. Fair Pay .. Equality for All .. Access to Education .. Equal opportunities ..  
.Training..Community Safety...Sustainable Futures..Poverty.. Health...Housing .  
.. Personal Development...Community Development ...Homelessness.. Unsafe  
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.Tackling Health..Neighbourhood Renewal..Multi Agency Working..Secure..  
Safe affordable Homes..Needs of the elderly..Local partnerships..,Young  
Credit Union.. Thanet Equality Network.. Improving Skills..Discriminatio  
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Thanet  
Anti Poverty Strategy

An Executive Summary

Public Consultation March 2001



# *Executive Summary*

This Executive Summary contains the recommendations contained within the Anti Poverty Strategy prepared by Adrian Rance of Rance Hemming Associates. The summary has been produced to enable all living or working within Thanet to contribute to the public review of the draft Strategy.

➤ **ALL are invited to comment and respond to this draft strategy.**

In considering the following recommendations it is important to note that:

- The Council recognises that tackling social and economic exclusion will require the active support and participation of all voluntary and statutory agencies working in Thanet
- The Council cannot alone fund or enable the activities necessary to combat exclusion.
- The Strategy must be recognised and supported by all in Thanet if exclusion is to be effectively addressed.
- Those who experience poverty must be engaged in the development and implementation of the Strategy.

The purpose of the Anti Poverty Strategy is to provide a framework for responding to the needs of individuals and communities in Thanet that experience high levels of disadvantage and deprivation.

In Thanet-

- 9,538 people are employment deprived
- 38,085 (31%) of the population are income deprived
- 7 Thanet wards are amongst the most deprived 10% in the country
- 21% of the Thanet population live in wards that are amongst the 10% most deprived in the country
- Pier ward is the 77<sup>th</sup> most deprived ward out of 8,414 wards in the country

- In the most deprived wards three quarters of the children live in poverty

Since 1997 the UK government has placed a high priority on tackling social exclusion, worklessness and neighbourhood renewal. The government strategy for tackling social exclusion, deprivation and inequality is wide ranging and the strategy seeks to reflect those government led initiatives.

Although the development of the strategy has been the initiative of Thanet District Council, the Council recognises that it is a Thanet strategy. This means that to be successful it has to be taken forward by the joint working of all statutory agencies, the voluntary and private sector and the community.

**"Overall Poverty - A lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods, hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterised by lack of participation in decision making and in civil, social and cultural life. It occurs in all countries, as mass poverty is in many developing countries. And as pockets of poverty amid wealth in developed countries."**

The strategy seeks to set out the principles through which anti poverty working and a strategic approach to social exclusion should be managed.

## **Recommendation 1**

- **That within Thanet there should be acceptance of the wider definition of 'overall poverty' or 'social exclusion'**
- **That the Council, through its community leadership role, accepts accountability for co-ordinating Strategy development and implementation.**
- **That the Council ensures effective corporate management of the Strategy.**
- **That the Council facilitates high-level multi agency and multi sectoral leadership of the Strategy.**
- **That the Council ensures full community participation.**

The Thanet Anti Poverty Strategy reflects the governments National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal published in January 2001, at the heart of which is the proposal for Local Strategic Partnerships to take forward ‘joined-up’ action on social exclusion and neighbourhood renewal.

#### **"Role of a Local Strategic Partnership -**

- *To develop and take forward the overall strategy on poverty and social exclusion*
- *To enable the development of a Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy*
- *To enable the development of a community strategy*
- *To agree priorities and enable services to be effectively aligned*
- *To agree targets for improving outcomes in deprived neighbourhoods and communities*
- *To bring together service providers and the people to whom they provide services*
- *To provide overarching co-ordination of inter agency working in Thanet "*

#### **Recommendation 2**

- **That a Thanet Local Strategic Partnership is formed to lead and direct a comprehensive response to poverty and social exclusion in Thanet.**

The Thanet Local Strategic Partnership would include

- Statutory sector organisations, such as
  - District Council
  - County Council
  - Health Authority
  - Primary Care Trust
  - Community Development Trust
  - Employment Service
  - Police
  - Benefits Agency
  - Private sector groups
- Community groups
- Voluntary organisations
- Faith communities
- Local councillors

The government plan for Local Strategic Partnerships envisages that they will set targets for how things should change over time in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and communities. These targets should be in terms of key outcomes for reducing worklessness and crime, improving skills, tackling health inequalities, improving housing and ensuring access to other key services. It is worth noting that Thanet already benefits from a wide range of community-based initiatives, regeneration initiatives, and examples of good inter agency working.

#### **Recommendation 3**

- **That the Local Strategic Partnership develops a framework for prioritising future initiatives to tackle poverty, social exclusion and neighbourhood renewal.**

Within the Council there should be forum for local councillors to take forward policy issues and to monitor and evaluate progress on the Anti Poverty Strategy.

#### **Recommendation 4**

- **That the District Council establish an elected member Working Party to develop policy and monitor progress of the Anti Poverty Strategy on behalf of the Council.**

Considerable emphasis is now given to the active participation and involvement of communities in the development of policy and in decisions affecting their lives. Community participation is at the heart of the Government’s National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. Consultation and participation must therefore also be at the heart of this anti poverty strategy.

Involvement of people with experience of poverty and social exclusion must be central to the development of a successful Anti Poverty Strategy.

## **Recommendation 5**

- **That the Local Strategic Partnership develops a co-ordinated approach to community participation and considers structures such as local forums and neighbourhood management of services.**

Managing this process will require resources which cannot be provided by the Council alone, and it will be up to the Local Strategic Partnership to identify how these resources can be ‘levered-in’ on an inter-agency basis.

There is a considerable amount of information on poverty and deprivation and the Council is well advanced with the collection of data and its mapping on a Geographic Information System. Other agencies, including the County Council and the Health Authority also have a wealth of relevant data. It is important that data collected by statutory agencies is supplemented with information ‘on the ground’. There is a need to understand the problems experienced by neighbourhoods and communities which must involve collecting ‘soft’ information based on peoples’ experience and knowledge.

## **Recommendation 6**

- **That a co-ordinated project for the mapping of information on neighbourhoods, including community-based information, is initiated by the Local Strategic Partnership.**

A major problem for people on low incomes and people living in neighbourhoods that are in need of renewal, is that of access to services.

Projects such as Sure Start in Millmead demonstrate the immense value in delivering of services within localities, responding to the needs of local people, particularly the needs of families with young children.

A theme of the anti poverty strategy is the need to develop local points of service delivery, where possible on a multi-agency ‘one-stop shop’ approach. Initiatives such as the Ramsgate Community Café and Resource Centre can be developed to assist in making services more accessible.

Building on existing area based initiatives already being developed in Thanet will enable the anti poverty strategy to provide a strategic framework for extending the local delivery of services.

## **Recommendation 7**

- **That all agencies should develop a commitment to the local delivery of services, if possible on a multi-agency basis, in response to identified local need.**

The Anti Poverty strategy needs to build on the wide-ranging regeneration projects already initiated. These projects focus on employment, employability and training. The Anti Poverty Strategy should support and complement these initiatives.

## **Recommendation 8**

- **That the Anti Poverty Strategy should support and complement existing employment and training initiatives, particularly by focusing on opportunities for people for whom work will not be the route out of poverty.**

Voluntary and Community organisations are now seen as the ‘third arm’ of service provision alongside the statutory and private sectors. There is widespread appreciation that the voluntary sector can play a unique role through its reliance on volunteers as well as paid workers and its closeness to the groups and people for whom it provides services.

There is evidence that the relationship between the voluntary sector and the various parts of the statutory sector in Thanet needs to be further developed to

ensure that the statutory and voluntary sectors are mutually self-supporting.

If this is not addressed there could be a weakness in the development of wider multi-agency initiatives in Thanet. Multi agency development of the voluntary sector, setting out agreed policies on roles, responsibilities and issues such as funding needs to be put in place.

### **Recommendation 9**

- **That a multi agency voluntary sector strategy or ‘compact’ is developed to ensure the development of the voluntary sector and its role in both service delivery and in advocacy on behalf on client groups.**

Research for this report identified a number of gaps in existing provision that should form the initial agenda for action when implementing the Thanet Anti Poverty Strategy.

The lack of relevant information, particularly about benefits and other vital services, was commonly identified as a major problem for many individuals and families. In many cases access to a phone number of a statutory or voluntary agency could make all the difference in a crisis.

The lack of information could be tackled by developing an inter-agency approach to the publication of information, advertising of services and entitlements and the provision of advice.

### **Recommendation 10**

- **That a network of community based advice centres, utilising trained local volunteers, is developed in conjunction with CAB’s and statutory agencies.**

### **Recommendation 11**

- **That the Local Strategic Partnership develops a co-ordinated information and publicity campaign about services available from statutory, voluntary and community groups and agencies.**

Although there is little systematic data on debt in Thanet, the information that is available, as well as anecdotal evidence shows that it is a deep-seated and widespread problem.

Although money, or the lack of it, is not the only factor in social exclusion, it is at the core and cannot be ignored. For many individuals and families in Thanet, work will not be the route out of poverty, and a strategy to maximise their income, to reduce the burden of debt and to gain access to financial services is vital. This will also need local financial institutions – banks and building societies – to be willing and committed to work with the other agencies to tackle financial exclusion.

There is an urgent need to understand and respond to the problems of low income, indebtedness and financial exclusion in Thanet. The response needs to include continued support for credit unions, action to tackle extortionate lending, equitable debt collection policies by statutory bodies and the privatised utilities, and the provision of money advice services.

### **Recommendation 12**

- **That urgent consideration is given to multi-agency support for a strategy to maximise income and to reduce the burden of debt experienced by people living in or at the margins of poverty in Thanet.**

As well as a secure income, people need the security of a warm, safe and affordable home.

Overall the condition of the public sector housing in Thanet owned by the Council and by Registered

Social Landlords is good. In view of the availability of former seaside hotel accommodation, homelessness (in the sense of rooflessness) is not a major problem – although it is present. The real housing problem in Thanet is the number of people living in unsuitable housing – principally in Houses in Multiple Occupation – bedsits and hostels.

This is a problem that is not new to Thanet although the make up of the population is changing due to the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees.

The statutory and voluntary sector response to the needs of people, often very vulnerable people, living in HMO's appears to be fragmented. There is no dedicated multi agency team to co-ordinated response. There is also no mechanism for tenants' views to be expressed and listened to by the Council and other agencies.

### **Recommendation 13**

- **That a multi-agency HMO team is established to integrate the public and voluntary sector responses to the needs of individuals and families living in Houses in Multiple Occupation.**

### **Recommendation 14**

- **That support is given to the formation of tenants' forums for people living in private sector rented housing, particularly in HMO's.**

There are particularly vulnerable groups of people living in private sector rented accommodation. These include older people; people with mental health problems, people who abuse alcohol and drugs and younger people, including care leavers. Agencies such as Moving Forward provide vital support services to younger people moving into private sector accommodation. However it is reported that there are serious gaps in provision that

could be met by a more co-ordinated approach, assistance with deposits through a Rent Deposit Scheme or through the development of purpose built facilities such as a foyer.

### **Recommendation 15**

- **That a multi agency co-ordinated strategy on homelessness including advice services, the provision of specialist accommodation such as foyers, a Rent Deposit Scheme**

It has not been possible in the course of this study to review in detail arrangements for Tenant Participation within the Council Housing Service. Tenant Participation is an important element of the Anti Poverty Strategy as it can lead to valuable initiatives in reviewing tenancy agreements to meet the needs of people on low incomes, including, for instance, part furnishing of properties where people are not able to afford carpets or furniture. Tenant Participation development needs to continue, and the March launch of the Tenants' Compact is very much the beginning rather than the end.

Thanet has a high proportion of households with older people. Older people are particularly at risk of poverty and it is estimated that 45% per cent of people in poverty in the UK are in receipt of the Basic State Pension.

The particular needs of an ageing population require further study. Some of the issues such as housing and care services are already the subject of detailed policies by both statutory and voluntary agencies. There remains a need to address issues such as benefit advice (to enhance the take-up of the Minimum Income Guarantee, and Attendance Allowance), transport, and the shortage of day care facilities.

### **Recommendation 16**

- **That the needs of the older people in Thanet who experience poverty, need to**

## **be better understood, and an inter-agency approach adopted to meet these needs**

Health and ill health is now widely understood to be the consequence of social factors (employment, education, housing, etc) as much as it is a consequence of bio-medical factors.

Poverty is now accepted as a major determinant of ill health and improvements to public health are no longer seen as the sole responsibility of the National Health Service. The policies and services of local authorities as much influence improvements to public health as they are by the health authorities.

The Anti Poverty Strategy seeks to provide a strategic framework for statutory, voluntary and private agencies to work together on improving the health chances of people in poverty.

All public and voluntary sector services should be subject to a health appraisal to establish the extent to which they contribute to the health of the people in Thanet, particularly people in poverty. Gaps in existing provision, such as food projects or gaps in primary health care provision need to be placed in the context of the Anti Poverty Strategy.

### **Recommendation 17**

- **That the Local Strategic Partnership envisaged in the Anti Poverty Strategy, makes health improvement a major focus of its work, identifying gaps in provision and seeking multi-agency approaches to funding initiatives.**

The Thanet Community Safety Partnership is an important initiative aimed at reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. Communities with high levels of poverty experience more crime and the work of this partnership is a vital contribution to the Anti Poverty Strategy.

It is important that the work of the Community Safety Partnership meshes with the Anti Poverty Strategy

and that initiatives such as Estate and Town Wardens are implemented in the context of a wider agenda on neighbourhood renewal.

### **Recommendation 18**

- **That mechanisms are found to link the work of the Community Safety Partnership, and the Youth Offending Inter Agency Steering Group, with a wider agenda on anti poverty and neighbourhood renewal.**

During the course of this study the Thanet Equality Network was established. The link between equal opportunities, discrimination and poverty is now well understood and should be a key theme of all the work of the Anti Poverty Strategy, as well as other publicly funded regeneration initiatives.

### **Recommendation 19**

- **That the Local Strategic Partnership develops an equal opportunities and anti-discrimination framework for all of its work and that support is given to the development of the Thanet Equality Network.**

The Strategy under consultation endeavours to provide an overview of poverty in Thanet, drawing attention to some of the major initiatives and making suggestions for a strategic approach and how some of the gaps in service provision can be filled.

The Strategy recognises that exclusion takes many forms and that there are inextricable links between the various forms of exclusion. Anti poverty cannot be effectively addressed without being integrated with policies and initiatives to tackle issues such as racial discrimination, learning difficulties and mobility issues. There needs to be strong links between this initiative and the Equality Network now established in Thanet.

# ANTI POVERTY STRATEGY RESPONSE FORM

Please use this form to provide any views or comments on the Anti Poverty Strategy published in March 2001.

Would you like a full copy of the strategy document?    Yes                      No

If Yes, please insert your details below (Please use block capitals)

Mr/Mrs/Miss	Initials	Last name	
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Address:	Town
	Post code

Do you wish to be involved in delivering the strategy?    Yes                      No

Do you think the strategy covers the key issues?                      Yes                      No

Would you like to offer any comments or suggestions for inclusion within the Strategy?

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Please return to:                      Anti Poverty Strategy  
    Thanet District Council  
    PO Box 9, Cecil St,  
    Margate Kent CT9 1XZ

By Friday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2001