



FAMILY VOICE PROJECT

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

REPORT 49/19

10 JUNE 2019

The purpose of this Report is to inform Members of the proposals for the implementation and development of the Town Council's Family Voice Project.

No. DETAILS

1) BACKGROUND

- a) The Family Voice Project was one of many developed within the government's *Our Place* Programme the Town Council successfully accessed in 2014.
 - b) It was driven by the then Town Council's clear focus on the town's deprivation and a commitment to address it.
 - c) A copy of the original proposal for the Project is attached to this Report for Members' information.
 - d) It was to be based on Ventnor's Children's Centre but was overtaken by a major re-organisation of the Island's Children's Centre as their management moved from Spurgeon's to Barnardo's with the Ventnor Centre becoming established as a satellite of Sandown's Family Centre.
 - e) Following a discussion of the possibility of reviving the project at the Town Council's meeting of 11 February 2019 it was resolved in Minute 15/19 of that meeting that *the sum of £3,000 be included in the 2019/20 Budget for the Family Voice project.*
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2) IMPLEMENTATION

- a) During the course of a discussion among the project's lead team – Councillor Jason Mack with staff members David Bartlett, Tony McCarthy and Nick Cox - the possibility of the newly established Baby Box service as a potential base for the project became increasingly attractive as its users were central to the projects target audience of families with young children in relative poverty
 - b) The lead members of Baby Box confirmed their enthusiasm for the project and their willingness to be at the heart of it.
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3) BABY BOX

- a) Baby Box Isle of Wight was formally constituted on 1 March 2019.
 - b) Its purposes, as listed at the head of its constitution are: *to address family and child poverty on the Isle of Wight through the collection and distribution of clothes, food, toys and other supplies and equipment to families in need.*
 - c) The organisation encourages donations of all the items listed in its purposes that are then available for distribution during its Friday open sessions.
 - d) It currently operates from Ventnor Central.
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4) FRAMEWORK

- a) The initial stage of the Project will take the form of Focus Groups among the Baby Box users led by the Baby Box Team following details discussions with Tony McCarthy about them.
 - b) It is anticipated that these will provide the basis for more structured discussions providing anonymised narratives and usable data reflecting the lived-experience of residents at the centre of the town's deprivation.
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1) THE PROPOSAL

- a) As an element of its Our Place programme, and funded by it, Ventnor Town Council is proposing to commission from Ventnor Children's Centre a project to be known as Family Voice.
- b) Its purpose is to ensure inclusion of the experience of life in, and views about Ventnor of families with young children within the data developed through the Our Place programme that are likely to have been only faintly heard within the consultation processes deployed to date.
- c) We recognise that families with young children are likely to be deterred from participation in the customary consultation events by a range of factors including the timing and location of the events, unfamiliarity with or dislike or distrust of the adopted approaches, wider family commitments and the priorities of child care.
- d) We are also very aware of the relatively high levels of poverty among families with children as evidenced in the attached graph supplied to us by the Public Health research team as part of their preparation for us of a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment specific to Ventnor; and of the particular sensitivities of exploring the challenges that represents for many.
- e) We are particularly keen for this project and its participants not to be labelled by actual reference to poverty or deprivation, focusing absolutely on actual life experience.
- f) It is our view that the Children's Centre represents a unique context of established trust and confidence within which their voices can be heard clearly enough to be among those that guide and influence our future planning.

2) PROCESSES

- a) We will ask the Children's Centre Staff Team to advise on the details of the structure and processes of the project as well as being centrally involved in its delivery.
 - b) Our early imagining of the project is based on informal, professionally facilitated group meetings of parents held – perhaps weekly? – over a series of up to four sessions.
 - c) Our house-to-house survey has been coded to allow insight into the commonalities and differences in experience and expectations between the householders in each of the town's four Lower Super Output Areas and it would be particularly interesting if it is possible to organise the informal groups on that basis: we have post-code listings for each of the areas.
 - d) Completion by the group(s) of the 6-page questionnaire of the survey at some stage in the process would also provide useful insights into the views of young families and any variances in the particular of their current life experience.
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- e) Although notes of the group sessions will need to be composed and made available to us on a confidential basis, we are clear that they must be anonymised and the participants regularly reassured about that.
 - f) The detail of the subject matter for each group(s) meeting will need to be developed in joint planning between Children's Centre staff and the Town Council's Our Place team - Jason Mack, David Bartlett, Tony McCarthy and Nicky Cox – once the composition of the groups and their working styles are agreed.

3) FUNDING

- a) We have identified an initial budget from the Our Place funding of up to £3,000 to fund Children's Centre Staff time, including extra or overtime, external facilitators, room hire, refreshments for each group meeting and travel expenses for participants.
- b) The budget may be revised once the scale of the project is fully detailed.