

Title of Report:	The Executive Anti-Poverty Strategy 2025-35 – Consultation Response
Committee Report Submitted To:	Leisure and Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	16 September 2025
For Decision or For Information	For Information
To be discussed In Committee	NO

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Healthy, Active & Engaged Communities
Outcome	The Borough comprises cohesive and stable communities which work collaboratively with a range of stakeholders to address issues and deliver on opportunities
Lead Officer	Head of Community & Culture; Community Development Manager

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	31 March 2026

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	N/A
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to provide the Committee with the consultation response to The Executive's Anti-Poverty Strategy that will be submitted on behalf of Council.

2.0 Background

The draft Anti-Poverty Strategy sets out the Executive's commitment to a joined up, long term approach to addressing poverty and opened for consultation on 17th June. Responses on the consultation are due by 19 September. These will be used to inform the final content of the Executive Strategy.

The Vision identified for the Strategy is:

'Working together, poverty and its impacts will be effectively and sustainably eradicated across our communities.'

This Strategy is underpinned by three key pillars which will be supported by a range of work areas and key actions. These three pillars are:

- Minimising Risks
- Minimising Impacts
- Exiting Poverty.

Section 28E of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 places an obligation on the Executive Committee to adopt and maintain a strategy to tackle poverty, social exclusion, and patterns of deprivation in Northern Ireland.

The Strategy had been developed over a period since 2020 and included the establishment and report of an independent Expert Advisory Panel (2020), an Anti-Poverty Strategy Co-Design Group (2022) made up of community and voluntary organisations and a Cross Departmental Working Group made up of senior officials from across all Departments.

The Executive's draft Anti-Poverty Strategy (2025-2035) can be read in full [here](#).

3.0 Consultation Response

Due to the timing of the consultation period, it was not possible to present a draft response to Council before the closing date of 19th September. Instead, a workshop for Elected Members was held on 19th August with a briefing paper provided in advance. Workshop papers were also circulated to members who were unable to attend, with an invitation to provide comments to help shape the Council's response.

In addition to the input from the Elected Member workshop, the response to the draft Strategy has been informed by the following engagement:

- Input from the Prosperity & Place and Community & Culture departments.
- Input from the Causeway Coast and Glens Anti-Poverty Stakeholder Group, facilitated by the Council's Community Development section.
- Attendance at a Department for Communities Central Policy Division workshop for Local Government officers.
- Attendance by Council Officer at a Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network workshop.

The consultation response, which will be submitted by Council in advance of the closing date of 19th September, is attached at **Annex A**. The key points of the response are summarised below:

We welcome the Strategy and its Vision to eradicate poverty through collective action. However, significant gaps remain in detailed action plans, local alignment, and resourcing.

Delivery & Accountability

- Develop a detailed delivery plan with clear timelines, measurable outcomes and flexibility to adapt to changing needs.
- Ring-fence a dedicated budget for new actions.
- Introduce independent monitoring and scrutiny to ensure accountability.
- Ensure buy in from Central Government departments, define the role of Councils and ensure meaningful collaboration between all partners.

Targets & Indicators

- Current measures are too narrow (e.g. housing measured only by “housing stress”).
- Develop new poverty indicators that reflect the breadth of issues that are contained in the strategy.
- Incorporate recommendations from the Expert Advisory Panel and the Co-Design Group, including welfare mitigations, Child Payment, and child-related benefits.

Local Economic Context

- Address seasonal, low-wage, and insecure employment in tourism, hospitality, agriculture, and retail.
- Strengthen links between training and emerging sectors (renewables, digital, green economy).
- Remove rural barriers to work and training: childcare, transport, broadband.

Housing & Infrastructure

- Recognise the impact of short-term lets and second homes on affordability in rural/tourist areas.
- Support innovative housing solutions such as community-led housing, co-operatives, restrictions on second homes.
- Invest in critical infrastructure (roads, rail, water, broadband) to attract higher-value jobs.

Community & Voluntary Sector

- Acknowledge the sector’s central role in crisis response and prevention and job creation.
- Commit to multi-year funding to provide stability, retain skilled staff, and plan long term.

Structural Gaps/ levers:

- No place-based industrial strategy for higher-value jobs.
- No procurement/social value commitments to grow local SMEs and social enterprises.
- No community wealth building approach to keep resources local.
- No resilience strategy for seasonal/tourism economies.

Timescale Risks:

With only 18 months left in the Assembly term, action plans and resourcing must be agreed urgently to avoid further drift.

ANNEX A

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

Response to the Executive's Draft Anti-Poverty Strategy (2025–2035)

Vision and joined up approach

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council welcomes the publication of the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy and supports its Vision that, by working together, poverty and its impacts can be eradicated across our communities. This is an ambitious and aspirational vision, and its success will depend on a genuine commitment from all partners and the resources to deliver. Central government, local government, statutory bodies, and the community and voluntary sector all have an important role to play.

At present, the role of local government in delivering the Strategy is not sufficiently defined. Greater clarity is needed on how councils can link with central government departments, and how meaningful buy-in from central government departments will be secured.

Pillars and action plans

We welcome the three pillars of the Strategy—Minimising Risks, Minimising Impacts, and Exiting Poverty, however, we have concerns that the strategic commitments outlined lack sufficient depth and detail.

A detailed delivery plan is needed, with clear timelines, measurable performance indicators, and flexibility to respond to changing needs.

The proposed indicators do not adequately capture the breadth of issues. For example, housing is measured only by the number of households in housing stress; this should also include indicators such as new social housing completions.

There is an over-reliance on existing available indicators, rather than developing new measures tailored to the strategic commitments.

Independent monitoring and scrutiny are essential to ensure accountability, particularly given that several recommendations from earlier advisory groups have not been carried through.

A ring-fenced budget should be attached to the delivery plan to ensure adequate resourcing.

The Strategy should incorporate the recommendations of both the 2021 Expert Advisory Panel on Anti-Poverty and the Anti-Poverty Strategy Co-Design Group, including measures around welfare reform, child-related benefits, and the introduction of a Child Payment.

Local Context: Causeway Coast and Glens

There are variations in contributing factors to poverty in different areas in N Ireland and the most effective interventions are often designed and delivered at local level – it is important that targeted place-based approaches can be taken where appropriate.

- **Employment:** Precarious, seasonal, and low-wage work dominates in tourism, hospitality, agriculture, and retail. While the Strategy references “good jobs” and the Sub-Regional Economic Plan, it lacks detail on interventions to stabilise employment in these sectors or diversify into higher-value industries. Local Economic Partnerships, as proposed in the Sub-Regional Economic Plan, will be key to tackling regional disparities.

ANNEX A

- **Skills & Pathways:** Although the Strategy emphasises education and training, stronger alignment with local labour market demand is needed, particularly in renewables, digital, and the green economy. Barriers such as transport and childcare—especially acute in rural areas—must also be addressed.
- **Rural Inequalities:** While the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework is acknowledged, the Strategy underplays structural rural challenges. Issues such as job creation, transport, broadband, childcare, and housing require practical, funded solutions.
- **Housing:** Local housing poverty is exacerbated by high levels of short-term lets and second homes, which inflate prices and restrict availability of long-term rental properties. This is a major omission in the Strategy. We welcome recognition of housing stress and the Executive's Housing Supply Strategy, but this must be matched by adequate funding and innovative approaches (e.g. community-led housing, co-operatives, restrictions on second homes).
- **Childcare:** We welcome the commitment to a childcare strategy and subsidy, but rural delivery challenges—low density, travel distances, limited providers—must be explicitly recognised.
- **Older People:** Our Borough has a significant population of older residents, particularly women and carers. The Strategy should give greater emphasis to their role and needs.
- **Role of the Community & Voluntary Sector:** Community and voluntary organisations are vital partners in both crisis response and long-term poverty prevention. Locally, they have delivered initiatives such as the Covid Access to Food Fund, Fuel Support, and the Hardship Fund, often in partnership with Council. However, many operate on fragile, short-term funding, relying on volunteers or staff on annual contracts. The Strategy should recognise the sector's strategic role and commit to multi-year funding agreements to enable stability, staff retention, and long-term planning.
- **Missing Economic Levers:** From a local economic development perspective, several structural levers are absent from the Strategy:
 - A place-based industrial strategy to grow higher-value, locally anchored industries.
 - Procurement and social value policies to support local SMEs and social enterprises.
 - A community wealth building approach to retain wealth within local areas.
 - A tourism and job resilience strategy to address seasonality and job insecurity.
 - Localised solutions in childcare, housing, and transport to support participation in quality work.
 - Investment in infrastructure—roads, rail, water, broadband, and planning reform—to attract and sustain new industries.

Timescale and Delivery Risks

We are concerned about the timescale for implementation. With only 18 months of the current Assembly mandate remaining, the absence of agreed action plans risks further drift and delay. Without urgent progress on delivery planning and resourcing, the Strategy will fall short of its ambition.