

Subject: Poverty Truth Commission**Report of:** Director of Policy and Performance**Portfolio:** Education, inclusion and skills

Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to confirm the appointment of Children North East to deliver the Poverty Truth Commission for the North of Tyne, in-line with the Cabinet decision of 24 November 2020.

Recommendations

The Cabinet is recommended to approve the award of a contract to Children North East as detailed in the body of the report.

This is in-line with the original Cabinet recommendation to authorise the Director of Policy and Performance, in consultation with the portfolio holder, to finalise next steps in taking forward the Commission, including securing appropriate funding.

1. Background Information, Proposals and Timetable for Implementation

- 1.1** At Cabinet in November 2020 NTCA received a report proposing a Poverty Truth Commission for the North of the Tyne. Cabinet agreed to authorise the Director of Policy and Performance, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to finalise next steps in taking forward the Commission, including securing appropriate funding. A business case and appraisal summary were subsequently presented to Investment Panel for consideration (January 2021). Investment Panel recommended the business case for funding, subject to a procurement exercise run by NTCA in line with its financial regulations.
- 1.2** Poverty Truth Commissions are models of direct citizen engagement in decision-making. They bring people with real or 'lived experience' of poverty together with decision-makers and other influential leaders from the public and private sector and wider civil society. Poverty Truth Commissions work alongside other established forms of resident engagement, such as local authority ward committees, reaching residents who are often furthest from traditional forms of engagement and consultation, as a result of economic exclusion. The main benefits of PTCs are therefore:
- Enabling residents with 'lived experience' of poverty to directly inform and shape the policies and programmes of local authorities and wider partners.
 - Improving the quality, relevance and impact of policies and programmes, as a consequence.
 - Supporting co-design and co-production objectives, as well as, in the case of NTCA the Combined Authority's socio-economic duty obligations (part of the Combined Authority's Public Sector Equality Duty, as outlined in our Equalities and Diversity Policy).
 - As a result, directly supporting NTCA's Economic Vision and Inclusive Economy ambitions.
- 1.3** Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland local authorities all have established programmes of work seeking to address the unique characteristics of poverty and exclusion in their areas. A Poverty Truth Commission for the North of Tyne in 2021/22 would build on this learning and expertise by providing additional capacity to understand better how the unique pressures of the COVID-19 crisis are affecting residents, especially those most vulnerable to the financial, social and health effects of the pandemic.

2. Potential Impact on Objectives

2.1 NTCA’s Vision is of a “dynamic and more inclusive economy...[which narrows] inequalities”.¹ We are committed to giving everyone the opportunity to thrive – to achieve a fair wage, and access good jobs, and by working in partnership with business, civil society and our residents to achieve this. Our Inclusive Economy Policy Statement reinforces this by committing NTCA to taking a people-focused approach to support every individual to succeed.²

3. **Key Risks**

Area	Risk	Mitigation
Scope of work	Proposed activities fall outside of NTCA’s powers & accountabilities.	NTCA officers have sought advice from the Portfolio holders and NTCA’s Directors to ensure the proposed activities are appropriate and proportionate. It is not the intention that NTCA will directly host the Poverty Truth Commission (PTC), only that it will enable its establishment via developing a funding partnership and identifying a suitable host organisation for delivery.
Lack of engagement of commissioners	A PTC fails to engage a sufficient breadth or number of commissioners	Presentation at NTCA’s Inclusive Economy Board has indicated there is support for a PTC from a wider range of partners and stakeholders.
Challenges to delivering a PTC on-line	Continued on-line working presents additional barriers to mobilising a PTC	A prudent budget has been developed which includes technology and data for individual commissioners. NTCA will build on our own digital inclusion project and the work of VCSE organisations to understand and address the barriers to digital engagement affecting a PTC during COVID-19.

4. **Financial and Other Resources Implications**

4.1 Funding was requested to the value of £80,000 from NTCA’s £12m Inclusive Economy Innovation Fund. It is anticipated the financial profile for the funding will be as follows:

	20/21	21/22	22/23	Total
NTCA Funds	£0	£40,000	£40,000	£80,000
Match	£0	£10,000	£10,000	£20,000
Total	£0	£50,000	£50,000	£100,000

4.2 In December 2020, in advance of Investment Panel, match funding of £20,000 (20% leverage) had been secured from the Community Foundation for Tyne and Wear and Northumberland, a significant local grant-making organisation. In total this provided a budget of £100,000 for PTC work.

4.3 In May 2021, based on advice from Investment Panel, NTCA ran a procurement exercise for a host organisation to deliver the PTC over two years. This was based on the £80,000 of NTCA funding only. As a result of legal advice, the Community Foundation for Tyne and Wear and Northumberland will liaise with the appointed delivery partners separately on their matching funding contribution.

¹ Home of Ambition: The Vision for the North of Tyne Combined Authority, November 2018, p3

² Inclusive Economy Policy Statement, North of Tyne Combined Authority, December 2018, p4

4.4 The evaluation panel met on 7 June 2021 to consider the bids received, and, based on an evaluation exercise in-line with NTCA's procurement framework recommended charity Children North East for appointment. See Appendix A - Report of Contract Evaluation Exercise: NTCA Poverty Truth Commission.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 The comments of the Interim Monitoring Officer have been incorporated in this report.

6. Equalities Implications

6.1 It is anticipated that NTCA's PTC will have specific positive impacts for groups experiencing protected characteristics, under the terms of the Equality Act 2010. Residents with protected characteristics are more likely to experience the effects of socio-disadvantage which result in poverty. By creating a mechanism to directly improve the relevance, responsiveness and quality of interventions by the Combined Authority, our constituent authorities and wider partners and stakeholders for people experiencing poverty a PTC will specifically deliver the aims of the 2010 Equality Act: to advance equality of opportunity for all, especially for residents experiencing low pay/socio-economic disadvantage.

7. Inclusive Economy Implications

7.1 The PTC is part of NTCA's Employability and Inclusion policy priority, developing activities and interventions which achieve local economic resilience via strengthened communities, and more and good jobs. The PTC will specifically support the development of an inclusive economy in line with the following characteristics:

- Participation – Delivering a people-centred approach to local economic development by co-designing responses to COVID-19 which are based on the lived experience of our residents, especially those whose voices are least heard.
- Equity – Tackling inequality in the North of Tyne by creating a mechanism whereby the voices and view of residents experiencing poverty and socio-economic disadvantage are given parity with the experience of public sector and business and civil society commissioners.
- Growth – Informing the quality of NTCA policies, programmes and projects to target and effectively address poverty, directly targeting poorer communities, families and individuals.

8. Climate Change Implications

8.1 There are limited climate change implications to this report.

9. Consultation and Engagement

9.1 Under the direction of Portfolio holders, NTCA officers presented these proposals to the Inclusive Economy Board in September 2020 for early advice and support. To develop this proposal officers have also held meetings with Salford Council's senior policy lead with experience of the area's successful PTC, and with council officers, development workers and commissioners with lived experience involved in Gateshead's new PTC. Finally, officers have worked closely with both the independent Poverty Truth Commission Network and JRF as an experienced PTC partner and funder, to build on best practice. The three constituent local authorities have been actively involved throughout, as has the Mayor. The Portfolio holder received regular updates from the Head of Inclusive Growth and officers.

10. Appendices

10.1 Appendix A - Report of Contract Evaluation Exercise: NTCA Poverty Truth Commission.

11. Background Papers

- 11.1 NTCA Inclusive Economy Board, Poverty Truth Commission Report, September 2020
- 11.2 NTCA Cabinet Report, Poverty Truth Commission, November 2020

12. Contact Officers

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13. Glossary

13.1 PTC – Poverty Truth Commission

14. Sign-off

1) Mayor and Portfolio holder Yes	2) Director/SMT Yes	3) Chief Finance Officer: Yes	4) Monitoring Officer: Yes	5) Head of Paid Service: Yes
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Appendix

A – Report of Contract Evaluation Exercise: NTCA Poverty Truth Commission

In relation to contract award (above) valued at £80,000, this relates to the summary information provided by North Tyneside Council Procurement team.

In accordance with Standing Orders with Respect to Contracts:

- An open tender opportunity was published on the NEPO Portal on 7th May 2021 with a return date of 1st June 2021
- 2 compliant bids were received
- 5 opted out and
- 25 no responses

An evaluation meeting took place on 7th June 2021 where scores and feedback comments were jointly agreed between the evaluation panel. The following officers were in attendance:

- Rhiannon Bearne Inclusive Economy Advisor (NTCA)
- Ruth Redfern Director of Policy and Performance (NTCA)
- Rob Williamson Chief Executive (Community Foundation Tyne and Wear Northumberland)
- Judith Robson Moderator (NTC Procurement)

It is recommended that the organisation Children North East be accepted as the most economically advantageous option and a contract be entered into accordingly.

Estimated value £80,000.