

## **Proposal for North Northamptonshire Council on the subject of a distinct Poverty Truth Commission**

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### **Preamble:**

Poverty Truth Commissions exist across the UK and shine a light on Poverty. Supported by the Poverty Truth Network, they are mechanisms for raising the profile of Poverty, evidencing the Lived Experience and supporting Anti Poverty Resolutions. A Poverty Truth Commission now exists in West Northamptonshire, a small seed fund being provided by NAVCA and supported by a further pledge of funding from West Northamptonshire Council. Geography is an important factor in the life of a Poverty Truth Commission, and this proposal looks to develop a construct specifically for North Northamptonshire, recognising the different circumstances and landscape of each Unitary Authority.

### **What is a Poverty Truth Commission?**

It's a coming together of individuals and organisations to raise the profile of Poverty. It takes as its starting point the telling of stories by individuals or (Community Commissioners as they are often known) within our communities who have experienced Poverty, and are prepared to talk about their struggles. By so doing, they help Public Sector, Health Partners and communities to design and deliver the best anti poverty strategies possible. Poverty Truth Commissions are now running across the UK and have been highly successful in bringing partners together and delivering the best possible anti poverty results. Everyone accepts that Poverty is not a single and one dimensional issue, and therefore different and innovative approaches are required to mitigate the often unintentional affects of policy making.

### **How do they work?**

Poverty Truth Commissions are best hosted by an organisation distinct from Poverty. Most Commissions across the UK are hosted by Infrastructure organisations or independent coalitions. Within West Northamptonshire, Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire is responsible for hosting the Commission, recruiting the Start Up Group (Stakeholders who come together from all sectors) and seeking out community commissioners. This model is accepted best practice and is supported by the Poverty Truth Network. In West Northamptonshire, Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire is both supported and mentored by the Leeds Poverty Truth Commission. This model could easily be translated to North Northamptonshire.



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## What are the benefits?

Poverty Truth Commissions seek to:

Raise the profile of Poverty (either absolute or relative) and provide a workable definition of Poverty supported through the Lived Experience.

Deliver Community Commissioners who are prepared and able to tell their stories of Poverty and its implications.

Impact on Local Policy Making by ensuring the best possible outcomes for those in Poverty.

Provide a mechanism where the Unitary Authority can engage with Poverty, Organisations working in the field of Poverty and Individuals who experience Poverty.

The Commission is easily flexible, is a bolt in addition to the VCSE Assembly and can dovetail neatly with the Assembly Thematic Groups.

## The Context?

The Voluntary Sector Emergencies Partnership (of which VIN was a Liaison Lead) evidenced two causal themes emanating from the Pandemic. These being Financial Hardship and Mental Health and Well-being. The two are clearly interlinked. Poverty has a major affect on an individuals well-being, dampens their aspirations and creates isolation and disconnection. Whole communities are at risk of this, unless the levelling up or building back better agenda succeeds.

The statistics on Poverty are frightening. The Social Metrics Commission (SMC) recently reported that 4.5 million people are experiencing the deepest levels of poverty in the UK and have been hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

The proportion of the UK population in “deep poverty” has risen more than a third from 5% to 7% over the last two decades, while the overall poverty rate has remained largely unchanged.

This means there are 1.7 million more people in deep poverty ( living on less than half of what they need to stay above the poverty line) compared to 20 years ago.



In West Northamptonshire, 78,000 individuals are suffering with income deprivation. Approximately 13,000 households are in fuel poverty and 12,000 children live in poverty.

In North Northamptonshire, 37,400 households are experiencing some form of income deprivation, with 11,530 households in fuel poverty. In 2018/19, 2,600 adults were homeless, with 2,949 living in overcrowded housing conditions.

Poverty has a cumulative negative effect on people's health throughout their life. During early childhood it influences cognitive and physical development...[and] has long-term implications for children's 'life chances' and health in adulthood. Unemployment, low-paid work, inadequate benefit entitlements, a lack of affordable and poor quality housing and living in deprived neighbourhoods have negative health impacts."

Michael Marmot (2020), Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years on.

In North Northamptonshire, Corby, Wellingborough and Kettering all fall within the top 20% of the most deprived LSOAs within the National IMD. Corby is seen as the most deprived with Wellingborough and Kettering following Northampton.

### **Our Proposal:**

Whilst VIN is not a North based Local Infrastructure Organisation, we have held the County Wide Infrastructure Contract previously and are now working with G4s to deliver a Health and Well-being Programme at HMP 5 Wells in Wellingborough. Groups and organisations from the North Unitary gravitate towards our training and network programme, simply because others are not providing. We have contacts into the North Unitary through our previous work and work in partnership with other organisations as required. As we have already received a pledge of funding from West Northamptonshire Council it seems both logical and practical to keep the Project Management function within VIN but working across both Unitary constructs, thus ensuring transparency, a uniform approach to both in Project Management and Oversight, whilst providing some efficiencies of scale. The proposal is costed as follows:

The Provision of a Poverty Truth Coordinator at Salary Scale SP12 to drive the work of the Poverty Truth Commission (North), directly working with all Stakeholders, supporting the recruitment of a Start Up Group and the identification of Community Commissioners (9144.00 with requisite On-costs).

The Provision of a bespoke North Unitary Poverty Truth Commission Website (1030.40).



Leadership and Confidence building for 6 Community Commissioners (recognising that these individuals may be some of the most disconnected and disenfranchised within our communities) at (1440.00).

Expenses for Community Commissioners to enable them to train, gain confidence, attend meetings and Partnership Forums (1500.00).

Project Management On-costs at 10% (1311.44)

Total (£14,426)

***Nothing about us, without us, is for us,' is the starting point for Poverty Truth Commissions. It identifies that lasting social change only happens when those who experience the struggle participate in generating that change.***

***Yet, if we want to go far we have to go together. People experiencing poverty should take this journey with decision-makers and organisational leaders. By listening to each other, sharing wisdom and building empathy, trusting relationships are formed to have difficult conversations and find the way forward.***

***Poverty Truth Commissions are places where those transformational relationships are formed and nurtured. The Poverty Truth Network supports this work.***

**Notes:**

Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire has existed for 30 years. Our new Operational Strategy can be viewed here:

<http://www.voluntaryimpact.org.uk/operational-strategy-2021-2023/>

We have as our Mission Position 4 Key aims:

To support community organisations with advice, information and training.

To support Volunteering Initiatives in all their forms, but particularly Volunteering at a Point of Place.

To advocate for and represent seldom heard voices.



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To deliver and support placed based social action.

**APPENDIX A**

**END**



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