

# Period Poverty Motion

Report of the Diversity and Inclusion Portfolio Holder

## Recommended:

1. That the Council makes provision for period products to be available free of charge for anyone who requires them in its customer toilets located in Beech Hurst, FMC and The Lights.
2. That a dedicated page on the Council's website regarding period poverty, which signposts to further support and provision available to members of the public, be developed.
3. That appropriate communications be sent to parish and town councils, businesses, charities, community and other organisations in the borough to raise awareness of period poverty.

## SUMMARY:

- In accordance with the Council's Constitution, if the subject matter of any motion comes within the province of the Cabinet (or any other Committee), it shall stand referred to the Cabinet (or relevant Committee) for consideration.
- A motion regarding period poverty was submitted to Council on 27 January 2021 by Councillor Coole and seconded by Councillor Harber. At the Council meeting the motion was referred to Cabinet as the subject matter falls within its scope.
- Following referral to Cabinet on 10 March 2021, Cabinet instructed officers to undertake a more detailed piece of work looking at the provision available both nationally and locally, where there might be gaps in provision and what further support the Council could put in place to raise awareness of the issue and support those affected.

## 1 Introduction

1.1 At the Council meeting on 27 January 2021, Councillor Coole proposed, and Councillor Harber seconded, the following Motion;

1.2 *That to combat period poverty, this Council will:*

*Provide free period products in Council owned/managed female and gender-neutral toilet rooms or cubicles.*

*Top up the Government's Period Product Scheme for Schools and Colleges in England provision from 35% to 100% by making available on application, a Period Poverty Payment of £17.30 per eligible student to Schools and Colleges in Test Valley, to help them provide free period products in their female and gender-neutral owned/managed toilet rooms or cubicles.*

*Invite and encourage all Test Valley Parish/Town Councils, businesses, charities, community and other organisations, to introduce free period products in their female and gender-neutral owned/managed toilet rooms or cubicles.*

- 1.3 The Motion was referred to Cabinet for consideration as the subject matter falls within the remit of Cabinet. Cabinet instructed officers to undertake further work to better understand the provision available in the borough and what support could be developed by the Council for those who may be affected by period poverty.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 Period poverty is a lack of access to sanitary products and menstrual hygiene education often due to financial constraints.

### National Charities and Organisations

- 2.2 There are a number of national organisations that raise awareness of period poverty and provide support to those in need. A few of these organisations are listed below along with links to their websites which provide further details of support and how people can access products.
- 2.3 The Gift Wellness Foundation [Period Poverty UK](#) aim to provide sanitary products to women and girls who can't afford them or access them.
- 2.4 The [Red Box Project](#) work to ensure no young person misses out on their education because they have their period.
- 2.5 The [Bloody Good Period](#) work with organisations across the country to provide education, deliver products and raise awareness of periods and menstruation.
- 2.6 The [Tricky Period](#) is a period poverty initiative that supply products to a number of women's shelters, refugees, mother and baby assessment units and other community facilities to support those who can't afford or access essential items.
- 2.7 In January 2019, NHS England committed to providing free sanitary products to women and girls in hospitals.

### Schools and Colleges

- 2.8 In January 2020, the Department of Education launched a scheme which provides free period products to all state-maintained schools and colleges in England.
- 2.9 Schools and Colleges are able to order a range of period products from the Personal Hygiene Services Limited Group who are delivering the scheme, making them readily available for all young people when they need them. Schools can sign up to this scheme via the PHS [period products portal](#).

- 2.10 All primary, secondary schools and colleges across Test Valley were contacted to understand their experiences with period poverty including what provision they have in place to educate and support students on the issue, and whether there were any gaps in provision.
- 2.11 Of those schools who responded, which broadly represent schools both in Andover, Romsey and in the rural parts of Test Valley, none indicated that there was a lack of provision or support available to them in providing their students with information or products.
- 2.12 Many of the schools used the Government portal to access product supplies. It was generally felt that there was low demand for this support within their education communities and they were not seeking any further support for provision at this time. The education facilities do not keep any statistics around their distribution to students.

#### Libraries

- 2.13 There is an existing scheme in place, run by volunteers across Hampshire Libraries, to make available period products in their public toilets to anyone who might need them.
- 2.14 At this time, Romsey Library were the only library facility in Test Valley who take part in the Hampshire Scheme. Romsey Library have been part of Tricky Period since 2018 and have a service to provide sanitary products to anyone who feels they need them, specifically people who are homeless, young and those from a low income family.
- 2.15 Products are donated by the public and are available in bags for people to collect. If there is a requirement, a member of the library staff will be able to assist people with their queries and offer support. The library does have a number of customers who access the service regularly and have plans to further promote their provision.

#### Other Local Provision

- 2.16 Andover Foodbank provide a range of period products for clients automatically as part of toiletries that are supplied. The Foodbank supply a number of clients with these products, although they do not maintain statistics around period products specifically. The foodbank does not have issues with supplies of period products which are received via donations. Prior to government funding the foodbank provided products to local schools and are also able to provide supplies to other local organisations should they require them.
- 2.17 Romsey Foodbank have a scheme to offer products directly to clients as well as clients with children who may need to access provision. The foodbank also offer support to local schools should they require it.
- 2.18 Salisbury Foodbank have a supply of products which they receive as part of regular donations from the public. The foodbank have contact with regular clients who use this service.

## Test Valley Borough Council

- 2.19 Details of a free education programme in partnership with Southern Water, Rethink Periods, has been shared with schools and youth groups via the Test Valley Borough Council youth network newsletter.
- 2.20 The Council recognises that period poverty is an issue that affects people in a number of ways and that there is often stigma attached which can prevent people from seeking the support they may need. The Council is fully supportive of everyone in Test Valley being able to access the education and products they need to manage menstruation.
- 2.21 There are a range of initiatives both at a national level and locally to promote awareness of period poverty and to provide support and access free period products. Contact with organisations and groups in Test Valley has not identified any specific gaps in provision however the Council is keen to ensure that this continues to be the case.
- 2.22 It is proposed that in order to increase the current provision available, the Council offers free period products in the customer toilets in its reception areas at Beech Hurst and the FMC and in customer toilets at The Lights for anyone who may need them. Products will be made available and monitored to ensure there is a supply for anyone who may need it. Should the take up of this provision be higher than anticipated, further work will be undertaken to see whether the scheme requires review.
- 2.23 As well as supplying a range of products free for those who need them, the Council will develop a specific area of the public website which sets out further information about period poverty. This site will provide further details about period poverty and sign post people to organisations that will be able to assist with further education on the subject as well as access to the products.
- 2.24 In order to further raise awareness amongst communities in the borough, appropriate communications will be developed and shared with parish and town councils, local businesses, charities, community and other organisations through the Council's existing networks to increase understanding of the issue and encourage them to promote access to period products.

### **3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities**

- 3.1 The Council, contributing to the free provision of period products supports the corporate objective of growing the potential of people to be able to live well and fulfil their aspirations.

### **4 Options**

- 4.1 Option 1, this is the recommended option. To approve the recommendation set out at the beginning of this report which aims to raise awareness of period poverty, signpost to further information and provide period products free of charge to those who need them.

4.2 Option 2. Not to approve the recommendation, and not take forward any initiatives regarding period poverty.

4.3 Option 3. Not to approve the recommendation but to make alternative provision for awareness raising and for supplying free period products to those in need.

## **5 Option Appraisal**

5.1 Option 1

5.2 There are a range of existing schemes and initiatives in place in order to provide free period products. These exist both at a national level, but also locally across Test Valley and the surrounding areas. No gaps in provision have been currently identified, however the Council supports the principles of the motion and recognises that no one should be without access to education and period products.

5.3 It is therefore proposed that the initiatives as set out in the report and recommendations, which aim to further increase awareness of the issue, signpost to further support and to provide products free of charge to those in need be agreed.

5.4 The provision of products at the Council Office's customer toilets and The Lights customer toilets will be regularly monitored to ensure any demand is being met and whether further review is required.

5.5 Option 2

5.6 The Council is supportive of period products being available to those who need them. Whilst the Council supports the principles of the motion, it is clear there is already existing provision in place.

5.7 Period products can be accessed across the borough, free of charge via schools and a number of charities and organisations who are working with support networks to provide products to those in need.

5.8 No gaps in provision have been identified and therefore the Council do not propose to take any further action at this time.

5.9 Option 3

5.10 Whilst there is a range of existing initiatives in place, as set out in the report the Council will make provision for free period products to be available in the customer toilets of its buildings at Beech Hurst, FMC and The Lights for anyone who should need them.

Period Products will be available free of charge in the customer toilets on a trial basis. The uptake of these products will be monitored by officers to ensure provision is available for those who are in need. Alternative arrangements may be implemented should the need arise.

## **6 Risk Management**

- 6.1 An evaluation of the risks indicate that the existing controls in place mean that no significant risks have been identified at this time.

## **7 Resource Implications**

- 7.1 The costs associated with providing period products will be met from existing budgets.

## **8 Legal Implications**

- 8.1 No legal implications have been identified.

## **9 Equality Issues**

- 9.1 This issue clearly relates to those who menstruate but no adverse equality issues have been identified in the proposals contained in this report.

## **10 Other Issues**

- 10.1 Community Safety – None.
- 10.2 Environmental Health Issues – None.
- 10.3 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate – None.
- 10.4 Property Issues – None.
- 10.5 Wards/Communities Affected – All.

## **11 Conclusion and reasons for recommendation**

- 11.1 The Council supports the principles of the motion regarding period poverty and notes that there is existing provision in place to provide free period products to those who may need them in Test Valley.
- 11.2 In order to further increase availability, the Council will make provision for free period products to be available in the customer toilets of the reception areas at its main offices and in the customer toilets at The Lights as well as signposting to further information and appropriate communications to local organisations.

Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)

[Motion to Council](#) – 27 January 2021

[Referral to Cabinet](#) - 10 March 2021

[Minutes from Cabinet](#) – 10 March 2021

Confidentiality

It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.

No of Annexes:	0	File Ref:	N/A
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Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	30 March 2022