

Chair's Statement*

June 2019

Response to the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights report

I welcome the publication of the UN Special Rapporteur report. It is hard-hitting, but it is evidence based. It concludes with a number of recommendation which if implemented could help make a significant positive difference to communities across the Wales and the UK.

The Committee met with the Rapporteur as part of his visit. I found he was very much in “listening mood”, willing to hear the different views from across the Committee.

This is a scathing report, and it is clear the changes the UK Government should be making to overturn the pernicious impact of austerity on too many people across the UK. In Wales, attempts to tackle the stubbornly high levels of poverty can be hampered by the fact that a number of key policy levers sit at Westminster.

On the role of benefits in supporting people in poverty, the Rapporteur highlights that the UK has had a “historically strong safety net” but that this has been “systematically and starkly eroded”. The Committee I chair have seen this in our work looking at poverty in Wales, and have recommended that the Welsh Government explore the feasibility of administration of some benefits which would enable us to take an approach better suited to communities in Wales.

The Committee also wishes to play it's part in developing a better understanding of how such devolution could work and we are currently looking at the issue in more detail. We hope to report later this year on our findings.

I am pleased that his findings in relation to Wales, very much chime with the key issues we highlighted to him. In particular, he highlighted our concerns about a lack of clear performance targets and progress indicators in tackling poverty in Wales.

Our Committee has twice recommended in the last two years that the Welsh Government publish a tackling poverty strategy to bring together the many



strands of poverty reduction work. We have called for this to try and bring a laser like focus to poverty reduction, as well as helping facilitate scrutiny, so we can better understand what works and what does not.

Such a Strategy should include clear performance indicators, as well as setting out the broader evidence base to help underpin effective evaluation of different approaches to tackling poverty.

* This statement is issued by the Chair of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee and does not necessarily represent the views of all Committee Members.