
Report To:	Policy & Resources Committee	Date:	11 August 2020
Report By:	Chief Financial Officer	Report No:	FIN/62/20/AP/LA
Contact Officer:	Alan Puckrin	Contact No:	01475 712223
Subject:	Use of Anti-Poverty Funds – Remit from the Policy & Resources Executive Sub-Committee		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the approval of the Policy & Resources Committee for various Anti-Poverty initiatives to be progressed in the current financial year.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 As part of the 2020/21 Budget the Council and IJB allocated £1 million for Anti-Poverty initiatives and in March 2020 a process was agreed through the Alliance Board and the Policy & Resources Committee as to how the sum was to be allocated and the use determined.
- 2.2 The intervention of the Covid pandemic changed matters and made progression of the process to identify the use of the originally approved £1 million impossible. Additionally extra funding from the Council and Scottish Government has supported a number of interventions during the Covid period to those most vulnerable within the community.
- 2.3 The Policy & Resources Executive Sub Committee has approved a number of projects to support families and vulnerable individuals and requested that Officers present a report to the August Policy & Resources Committee indicating how support could be maintained or developed during 2020/21 to ensure that the £1million funding allocated is utilised.
- 2.4 A Senior Officer group has considered options to deliver on the remit from the Policy & Resources Committee and these are detailed within the body of the report and supporting Appendix. The proposals total £1.5million and would largely be delivered over the next 12 months.
- 2.5 It would be intended that as part of the 2021/23 Revenue Budget that a review of these proposals takes place informed by the Covid Recovery Plans to ensure that supports provided are sustainable and help drive a real reduction of levels of poverty and deprivation within Inverclyde.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the proposals in the report for the utilisation of the Anti-Poverty £1million and other funding received from the Scottish Government.
- 3.2 It is recommended that the Committee notes that a follow up report providing more detail of the Food Insecurity, Digital Connectivity and Community Grants proposals will be presented to the Education & Communities Committee on 1 September.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 As part of the 2021 Revenue Budget the Council and IJB allocated £1 million from the recurring revenue budget to create a resource to progress sustainable initiatives to reduce poverty and deprivation within Inverclyde. The creation of this budget was partially informed by the SMID data which was released in February which showed Inverclyde had the most deprived data zone in Scotland and had the second highest number of data zones in the bottom 20% behind Glasgow.
- 4.2 A report was presented to the Inverclyde Alliance and the Policy & Resources Committee in March which proposed a timescale and methodology for identifying projects on both a locality and Council wide basis but unfortunately due to the impact of Covid this timetable and process was unable to be progressed.
- 4.3 Throughout the Covid period the Council and partners have been delivering a wide range of supports to vulnerable individuals and families around food, direct financial, digital and humanitarian aid. The funding for these initiatives has come from a number of sources including the Scottish Government, Council and IJB and has been significantly enhanced by the involvement of Community Groups and a large number of volunteers.
- 4.4 Whilst the number of Covid cases has greatly reduced within the population, the impact of the 4 month lockdown and the gradual withdrawal of Government funding will result in a high level of need within the Inverclyde Community for some time to come.

5.0 PROPOSALS

- 5.1 A Senior Officer group has reviewed options across a number of interventions and funding streams and the proposals are included in the following paragraphs.

Officers recognise the current need to get a balance between proposals which provide a sustainable improvement in the lives of those impacted by poverty and deprivation whilst also recognising that the need for many is immediate and therefore short term interventions will also have a significant part to play. Therefore work will take place during coming months to develop proposals which capture the themes of Homelessness and Addictions which were also included in the plans approved by the Alliance in addition to the proposals around Employment/Employability and Food Insecurity included in this report.

- 5.2 **Employment Opportunities and Employability £657,000** – Young adults (16-24) in Inverclyde are less likely to have a Modern Apprenticeship compared to Scotland. Overall participation rates for 16-19 year olds are comparable to other parts of Scotland but young people in Inverclyde are less likely to be in employment and more likely to be in education.

Last year the Council developed a pre-apprenticeship pilot for twelve pupils, primarily in S4, who were not fully engaged in school who may benefit from being taken out of school for vocational training purposes. Despite the impact of COVID-19, five of the pupils in the childcare group achieved an SCQF level 4 qualification in childcare whilst the Engineering and Construction cohort all achieved SCQF level 4 units in a variety of related topics.

The Senior Officer group proposes developing a bridge between school and the success of the Council's existing modern apprenticeship programme. It is proposed to offer the pre-apprenticeship programme for a second cohort of twelve pupils from across Inverclyde between August 20 and June 21. In addition it is proposed to offer a level 2 apprenticeship to the year 1 cohort in the area of last year's development over a period of 18 months from August 2020. Finally it is proposed to offer the five modern apprentices who are due to finish on the Council's existing modern apprenticeship programme a two year contract at an entry level post to allow them time to gain further experience and enhance their job prospects.

The above is estimated to cost £532,000 (Spend in 2020 - £233k, 2021 – £299k).

It is also proposed to create an Inverclyde Furlough Scheme which would support 20 employees with 50% of their wages for 6 months in those sectors where jobs are most at risk. If approved this scheme would commence in October at a cost of £125,000. The scheme is clearly scalable should Members wish to allocate greater resources.

- 5.3 **Food Insecurity £210,000** – The Council has provided a £25 per fortnight payment to every child/young person entitled to receive free school meals throughout the Covid period. The current scheme costs approximately £80,000 per fortnight and is due to end on 28 August and has benefited approximately 3,700 children. The Senior Officer group recognises that the Christmas period puts a major financial strain on families with limited income and would propose that a one off payment made in the middle of December to each child/young person in receipt of free school meals and would allow qualifying families to buy healthier food over the Christmas period. On the basis of a one off payment of £40 this would cost approximately £150,000.

In addition to the FareShare community food initiative already being funded for a further 12 months, there is an opportunity to establish local Food Pantries across the 3 localities with the greatest inequalities. The Food Pantry organisation is offering to support local authorities and third sector organisations develop a concept and build on their framework of good practice. The Food Pantry is set out as a shop and displays a variety of good quality food, sourced from FareShare Glasgow, where members of the community can choose from a subscription and/or membership fee. The pantry model targets those on a low income and/or recovering from crisis providing fresh and healthy food at a price that is affordable.

The initial cost of membership to the Food Pantry will be £500.00 plus £60,000 start-up costs to recruit, support and facilitate and co-ordinate volunteers, costs associated with leasing premises. It would be intended to provide more detail of the proposals around this initiative and an update on use of the Food Fund at the next meeting of the Education & Communities Committee.

- 5.4 **Welfare Support £370,000** - The Scottish Government allocated £5 million as a one off sum to Councils to allow more generous Discretionary Housing Payments to be made during the Covid period. The Council received £71,000. Following analysis of the current Housing Benefit and DHP data it is proposed to award DHP up to 100% of the difference between Universal Credit Housing costs or Housing Benefit entitlement and the eligible rent capped at £200 per month with the payment being made for a period of no more than 6 months. This will provide short term help which is in line with the purpose of DHP and would allow households time to improve their circumstances by finding employment or moving to more affordable homes. This payment would be applicable in the Private Rented Sector. The estimated cost of this scheme would be capped at £150,000 with the balance of £80,000 coming from the existing DHP budget.

The Council maintained the payment of Crisis Grants throughout the Covid period and took the decision in March to increase payments by 20% to provide greater financial support to those in most need. It is recommended that the 20% enhanced payment is continued. In addition it is proposed that the Community Care Grant which assists with individuals setting up home be paid to not only high priority cases but also medium priority cases. This will allow payment to be made to more individuals and for additional items for the home including washing machines, floor coverings and additional furniture. The cost of the 2 proposals together for the period to 30 June, 2021 is approximately £220,000 and would be contained in the one off extra funding allocation by the Scottish Government for Crisis Grants.

- 5.5 **Digital Connectivity £60,000** – Community feedback has identified that digital exclusion is a significant issue which has been highlighted by the need for on-line communications during lockdown. A short life officer working group has been formed to look at how the Council could best provide support to individuals and it would be intended to report back to the Education & Communities Committee on 1 September to get approval for a locally delivered scheme. At this time the Committee is asked to agree in principle to the allocation of £60,000 to provide connectivity and support to this project.

In addition the Council has received an allocation of £433,000 from the Scottish Government to ensure that all secondary school pupils in receipt of free school meals have access to an appropriate device and connectivity. This makes significant inroads into many households suffering from digital exclusion. The Council has previously approved an £80,000 investment from the Anti-Poverty earmarked reserves to provide free Wi-Fi for a five year period in 8 Community Centres in addition to the existing infrastructure within the Council Libraries estate.

5.6 **Strengthening the Community/3rd Sector Base £200,000** – There is an opportunity to build on the excellent Community response to the Covid pandemic to improve capacity and resilience. Many groups received financial support from time limited Scottish Government schemes and it is proposed that the Council creates a fund to receive applications for support to allow projects which support the vulnerable and isolated to continue and that distribution be linked to the Covid Recovery Action Plans.

5.7 **Financial Inclusion £5000** - The Tail of the Bank Credit Union does not receive NDR relief due to the level of rateable value. NDR represents a considerable drain on resources and it is proposed to allocate £5,000 as the Council's contribution towards 100% relief from 2020/21. There are discussions regarding other actions which could be taken to support increased uptake of Credit Union services and developments will be reported to Committees as part of the regular Welfare Reforms report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Finance

It would be proposed that any unspent sums from the £1million allocated to Anti-Poverty initiatives in 2020/21 at 31 March, 2021 be added to the Anti-Poverty Earmarked reserves and utilised as outlined in this report.

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
Anti Poverty Initiatives	Various	2020/21	£1.072million		£72,000 to be met from the Anti-Poverty EMR For Food Pantries
Finance	DHP/SWF	2020/21	£0.370million		
Food Fund	Various	2020/21	£60,000		

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

6.2 Legal

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.3 Human Resources

There are no HR implications arising from this report.

6.4 Equalities

Equalities

- (a) Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES (see attached appendix)
X	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required

- (b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
X	NO

- (c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
X	NO

6.5 Repopulation

All these initiatives will encourage individuals and families to remain within Inverclyde and help stabilise the population.

7.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 The Corporate Management Team support the proposals in this report.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 None

Anti Poverty Proposals

<u>Employment/Employability</u>	Lead	Funding Source		
		£000	£1million	Other
a) Young Persons Jobs Scheme	S Jamieson	532	532	
b) Inverclyde Furlough Scheme	S Jamieson	125	125	
<u>Food Insecurity</u>				
a) Christmas Holiday Hunger	R Binks	150	150	
b) Food Pantries	R Binks	60		60
<u>Discretionary Housing Payments</u>				
a) Increased support, private rental sector tenants	A Puckrin	150		150
<u>Scottish Welfare Fund</u>				
a) Amended criteria - Community Care Grants	A Puckrin	220		220
<u>Digital Connectivity</u>				
a) Connectivity for 360 Devices for 12 months	R Binks	60	60	
<u>Strengthening Community/3rd Sector Base</u>				
a) Build on support and engagement provided by community/3rd Sector	R Binks	200	200	
<u>Financial Inclusion</u>				
a) NDR Support - Tail of the bank Credit Union	A Puckrin	5	5	
		1502	1072	430

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