
Report To:	Policy & Resources Committee	Date:	17 November 2020
Report By:	Chief Financial Officer	Report No:	FIN/105/20/AP/LA
Contact Officer:	Alan Puckrin	Contact No:	01475 712223
Subject:	Anti-Poverty Fund - Update		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee regarding the latest position of the anti-poverty related initiatives and funding and to seek decisions on future initiatives for the period to 31 March 2021.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 As part of the 2020/21 Revenue Budget process the Council and the IJB agreed to allocated £1 million towards anti-poverty initiatives on a recurring basis. Proposals on the use of the £1 million were agreed by the Policy & Resources Committee on 11 August 2020.
- 2.2 As part of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Scottish Government has utilised elements of the UK Government consequentials to fund a number of national initiatives which have supplemented, and in some cases duplicated, areas where the Council had already allocated funding. Within the Anti-Poverty monies this has occurred in relation to free school meals over the holiday period.
- 2.3 In late October the Scottish Government announced £30 million funding to tackle financial insecurity including the provision of free school meals over the October, Christmas, February half term and Easter holiday periods. At the time of writing the report the Councils share of this funding has to be confirmed but it is expected to be in the order of £450,000 to £500,000 which has to be spent by 31 March, 2021 with the exception of the Easter holiday free school meal funding.
- 2.4 In light of the need to spend the money by 31 March 2021 the Corporate Management Team has recommended a number of initiatives to utilise the Scottish Government funding and this in turn will result in an underspend in 2020/21 Anti-Poverty monies. In order to ensure that this funding remains allocated to meeting the undoubted need within the Inverclyde Community it is proposed that any underspend in the £1 million recurring Anti-Poverty budget be allocated to the already existing Anti-Poverty Earmarked Reserve at the year end.
- 2.5 On the basis that the Committee approves the proposals then Officers will liaise with relevant parties to ensure the distribution of funding as quickly as possible.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Policy & Resources Committee considers the proposals set out in Section 6 of the report and, if approved, remits it to Officers to implement the distribution of funding prior to 31 March 2021.
- 3.2 It is recommended that the Committee agrees that any underspend on the recurring Anti-Poverty Revenue Budget be added to the Anti-Poverty Earmarked Reserve at the year end and carried forward into 2021/22.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 As part of the 2020/21 Revenue Budget the Council and the IJB allocated £1 million on a recurring basis 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 2020 which showed that Inverclyde had the most deprived data zone in Scotland and the second highest number of data zones in the bottom 20% behind Glasgow.
- 4.2 On 11 August the Policy & Resources Committee agreed a number of initiatives around employability, food insecurity, digital inclusion and strengthening the Community/third sector base. Officers are progressing the relevant projects with an update on progress attached as Appendix 1.

5.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 As part of its response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Scottish Government has allocated significant sums towards specific initiatives around food insecurity, financial insecurity and supporting the Community. In a number of cases these initiatives have duplicated actions already taken by the Council and to which funding has been allocated.
- 5.2 The Scottish Government funding is largely ring fenced and time limited and as such Officers would strongly advise that this money be utilised first and that the relevant Council funding be utilised to either continue the initiative beyond the Scottish Government end date or that it be returned to specific reserves on which Members would take decisions at a later date.
- 5.3 Specifically in this regard on 23 October the Scottish Government wrote to Councils advising of a £30 million Financial Insecurity Fund. The Fund has been split by the Scottish Government with £10 million to provide free school meals over the October/Christmas/February half term and Easter holidays with the remaining £20 million to be spent flexibly by Councils in tackling financial insecurity. The suggestions within the Government letter for utilisation of the funding are to supplement the Scottish Welfare Fund, to provide cash based support to tackle food insecurity or alternative provision where this is more appropriate, support to meet fuel costs and further funding for Discretionary Housing Payments.
- 5.4 Based on existing funding levels and activity experienced to date, Officers would not recommend any further allocation of funding at this time to the Scottish Welfare Fund or Discretionary Housing Payments. Updates on both these areas are provided in the regular Welfare Reform report which is earlier in the agenda.
- 5.5 The Council had already allocated £150,000 from the £1 million Anti-Poverty budget to provide a £40 per pupil payment for those in receipt of free school meals over the Christmas period. Clearly the Scottish Government funding duplicates this albeit at a lower funding level and as such it is proposed that the £150,000 now be scored against the Scottish Government funding.
- 5.6 In view of the need to spend the Financial Insecurity Funding by 31 March 2021 (with the exception of the Easter holiday free school meal funding), the Corporate Management Team is recommending proposals to utilise the estimated funding which the Council can expect to receive from the £30 million fund. The proposals are set out in Section 6.
- 5.7 In order to deliver the proposals there will require to be close liaison with certain key partners and therefore an early decision from the Policy & Resources Committee on the allocation of the funding is required to ensure the funds can be allocated by 31 March 2021.

6.0 PROPOSED USE OF THE FINANCIAL INSECURITY GRANT

6.1 School Meals over the Holiday Periods – Cost £ 320,000

The Council had already allocated £150,000 from the Anti-Poverty budget to make a £40 payment at Christmas for each child in receipt of Free School Meals. This was to cover the October and Christmas breaks at the previously agreed £25/fortnight rate. It is proposed to meet this cost from the Financial Insecurity Grant and to increase this payment to £50 in recognition of the specific pressures over the Festive Period in 2020 in particular. Cost £188,000.

Thereafter, it is proposed to allocate a further £35/child in Easter to cover the February Half-Term and Easter breaks. Based on previous up take this will cost £132,000.

6.2 Older Persons Support – Cost £130,000

The Council and the IJB usually organise a Christmas lunch event/voucher scheme for the elderly. This year it will not be possible to hold the Christmas lunches but with the assistance of Your Voice it is proposed to provide a voucher for £15 to each elderly applicant. This is estimated to cost around £30,000.

In addition the Council has provided has provided iHeat with £40,000 from the Welfare Reform monies for many years to provide advice and grants to qualifying older persons with the financial support being £75. For 2020 it is proposed to increase the support to £150/person to recognise the fact that with fewer opportunities to leave the home to visit friends and family or go to day centres/cafes/restaurants etc, then it is likely utility bills will be higher. If agreed, officers will liaise with iHeat to finalise proposals and to ensure the money is fully spent by the end of March. Extra cost £100,000.

6.3 Other Supports – Cost £50,000

Starter Packs - Starter Packs have been a long standing partner funded via the Welfare Reform monies. Demand for support is as high as ever and it is proposed that one off funding of £15,000 will help support families and individuals access essential goods for setting up a home.

Belville Gardens - The organisation has an outstanding £18,000 invoice for the provision of connectivity “dongles” for the 300 laptop devices which they allocated out over the Covid period.

Contingency – The estimated balance of £17,000 would be allocated to meet any increase in costs or to support relevant projects/bodies.

6.4 In the event there was an overspend on the above proposals, the costs would be allocated against the Anti-Poverty £1million budget in 2020/21.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Finance

The Council already has an Anti-Poverty Fund Earmarked Reserve which was created a number of years ago as part of the Welfare Reform response. It is proposed that any underspend in the £1 million recurring Anti-Poverty Fund be allocated to this earmarked reserve at 31 March,2021 and the uses of this earmarked reserve be decided by the Policy & Resources Committee.

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
Covid	Financial Insecurity	20/21	£500,000		SG funding level to be confirmed.

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

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

7.2 Legal

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7.3 Human Resources

There are no HR implications arising from this report.

7.4 Equalities

Equalities

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

<input type="checkbox"/>	YES (see attached appendix)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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?

<input type="checkbox"/>	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO

(c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

<input type="checkbox"/>	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
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X	NO
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7.5 **Repopulation**

The provision of appropriate support to many of the most vulnerable in our community will assist with the Council's repopulation agenda by encouraging families and individuals to stay within the area.

8.0 **CONSULTATIONS**

8.1 The proposals in this report have been developed by the Senior Officer Anti-Poverty Group and endorsed by the Corporate Management Team.

9.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

9.1 None

Anti-Poverty Fund – Actions Update

Appendix1

	Issue	Lead	Update – 27/1020
(a)	<u>Employability £657,000</u> – Develop proposals for 2021/23 in line with Covid Recovery Plan Budget.	Scott/Stuart	The new apprentice opportunities for Cohort 1 are being rolled out and will be deployed by January. Cohort 2 is fully populated and the former apprentices have all commenced their temporary contracts. The Inverclyde furlough scheme remains a source of funding which Inverclyde will support businesses who cannot access mainstream interventions.
(b)	<u>Holiday Hunger £150,000</u> - £40/child to be paid by Christmas 2020.	Ruth/Louise M	Systems ready to make the payments but funding route and amount to be clarified following Scottish Government funding announcement.
(c)	<u>Digital Connectivity £60,000</u> – Devices and connectivity to help address Digital Exclusion	Ruth/Louise M	<p>Multi Agency Working group is meeting 6 weekly sessions to share information on funding opportunities. The strategy will continue to be driven forward and monitored as part of the 3 year Community Learning and Development Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>The working group has identified that target groups who will receive digital support provision from this funding source is people over the age of 16 years not in school, lone parents, people with disabilities and people who have English as a second language and are engaged in further learning, training or employability, but do not have access to online or internet provision.</p> <p>This funding will purchase approximately 150 laptops with built in WIFI connectivity linked to support from Community Learning and</p>

	Issue	Lead	Update – 27/1020
			<p>Development officers to improve knowledge and capacity. These laptops will be purchased through Inverclyde Council ICT services.</p> <p>The client/customer will be identified through the many public, community and business sector organisations who require access to digital kits, which will be loaned to them throughout the period of their learning, training or employability programme.</p>
(f)	<p><u>Strengthening Community Base £200,000</u> – Application and allocation process approved at the September E&C Committee</p>	Ruth	<p>Process approved and first application submitted to the E&C Committee for approval. Officers liaising with other organisations on potential support.</p>