
To: Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee

On: 1st February 2023

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Fairer Renfrewshire Programme

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Council and partners have a key focus on tackling inequality and improving wellbeing and have longstanding programmes of work and partnership arrangements in place such as the Tackling Poverty Programme and the change programme established in response to the findings of the Renfrewshire Drug and Alcohol Commission.
- 1.2. As agreed by Council on 3 March 2022, all activities will now come together to form a new Fairer Renfrewshire Programme in Renfrewshire. Officers are working with partners to develop this programme, with a more detailed programme of work being developed. Council agreed on 19 May 2022 to form the Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee to facilitate more scrutiny and oversight of issues relating to poverty and inequality in Renfrewshire.
- 1.3. Key priorities for the Fairer Renfrewshire Programme for December 2022-March 2023 are as follows:
- Winter Connections Programme
 - Advice Recommissioning
 - Tackling Poverty Programme Evaluation
 - Participation and engagement
 - New service governance and partnership arrangements to support the programme
- 1.4. This paper provides a progress update for all of the priorities listed above (with the exception of Winter Connections, which has a dedicated agenda item at the Sub-Committee). As agreed at Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee, this paper will also provide a more detailed progress report on work focussed on improving financial security.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that members of the Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee note the report

3. Background

- 3.1. In March 2021, Council considered the initial findings from a community impact assessment that had been undertaken across Renfrewshire, in order to develop a deeper understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on local people and communities. This provided strong evidence that the pandemic has impacted some people and communities more profoundly than others.
- 3.2. The starting point of local people in terms of the inequalities or challenges that they faced before the pandemic has been important, with issues such as low income, insecure employment, caring responsibilities and disabilities all being exacerbated by the pandemic and its associated restrictions. The community impact assessment process also identified a requirement to continue to listen and learn to the experiences of local people, recognising that the impacts of the pandemic may emerge over time.
- 3.3. In the report in March 2021, an initial Social Renewal Plan was approved by Council. The plan set out the high-level actions that the Council and partners will take as we move forward from the pandemic with a clear focus on tackling inequality and improving wellbeing.
- 3.4. Officers worked to bring all of these strands of activity together, and following an initial assessment have identified a number of actions which should be progressed by partners as a priority during 2021-22. Income, poverty and financial insecurity was identified as a key priority for the plan as a result of financial pressures households were facing during the pandemic, and this is likely to require a sustained focus due to the rapidly developing cost-of-living crisis.
- 3.5. The Fairer Renfrewshire Programme brings together a number of existing programmes of work focussed on achieving fairness and equity, including the Tackling Poverty Programme and Alcohol and Drugs Change Programme. These programmes are being brought together alongside the Council's Social Renewal Plan, mapping a fairer future for Renfrewshire's residents through the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the now rapidly developing cost-of-living crisis.
- 3.6. There are four key emerging themes which are shared across all elements of the Fairer Renfrewshire programme, and these are:
- Improving financial security
 - Advancing equality of opportunity
 - Building community capacity and resilience
 - Listening to lived experience

3.7. Key priorities for the Fairer Renfrewshire Programme for December 2022-March 2023 are as follows:

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4. Fairer Renfrewshire Programme – Improving financial security

Advice services in Renfrewshire

4.1. Income advice is a key support for households facing financial insecurity, with advice workers able to advise on issues such as benefit entitlement, debt management and budgeting. The Council's Advice Works service provides free, confidential and independent advice on a range of money and debt issues. In addition, the Council also commission general and legal advice services through a contract with Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau. Work is currently underway to put into place new contract arrangements with Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau for the financial year 2023/24 and 24/25. There are also a number of additional services commissioned from Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau in addition to the general advice contract, including a dedicated welfare rights service, employment service and schools advice service also in development.

Advice Partnership Renfrewshire

4.2. The Advice Partnership Renfrewshire continues to meet on a regular basis. This is a forum of advice providers operating in the Renfrewshire area and chaired and co-ordinated by Renfrewshire Council. The forum meets to share information on advice related issues and updates, and emerging local services. The members of the Partnership include;

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| • Social Security Scotland | • Renfrewshire Affordable Credit Alliance |
| • Improving the Cancer Journey | • FLAIR (Federation of Local Housing Associations in Renfrewshire) |
| • ROAR (Reaching Older Adults in Renfrewshire) | • You First Advocacy |
| • Renfrewshire Foodbank | • NHS GGC (Support and Information Service) |
| • UWS (Funding and Advice Team) | • Renfrewshire HSCP (Health Improvement) |
| • Renfrewshire CAB | • Engage Renfrewshire |
| • Advice Works | |
| • RAMH | |

Special Needs in Pregnancy service

- 4.3. Renfrewshire Council is working with Renfrewshire HSCP, NHSGGC and Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau to develop a Special Needs in Pregnancy service (SNIPs) at the Royal Alexandra Hospital and apply for external funding (initially Scottish Government Funding to support Child Poverty targets). This service, if established, will work with pregnant women who have complex needs, including alcohol or substance misuse; medical issues – being HIV positive or having a current mental health problem, who are under 16 or those disengaged from mainstream maternity services and where there are child protection concerns.
- 4.4. The service is intended to offer both income maximisation advice, but also individual support and advocacy around a range of issues and will also develop robust referral pathways with partners in the public and third sectors.

Advice in GPs

- 4.5. Advice Works are currently providing a service within two GP Practices in Renfrewshire, both in Paisley. The Tannahill Surgery in Ferguslie Park and the Mirin Medical Practice on Glasgow Road both have an advice worker embedded within the practice on a part time basis.

Improving the Cancer Journey

- 4.6. In April, the Improving the Cancer Journey Project began supporting clients with long term health conditions, along with those with a cancer diagnosis.
- 4.7. Since April, 197 clients have been referred to this service to the end of November 2022, with 167 Holistic Needs Assessments being carried out. While clients have reported 2424 issues, such as breathlessness and mobility issues, advice around money has gained these clients £213,303 within this period.
- 4.8. For the service working with those with a cancer diagnosis, 567 clients have been seen in 2022, an increase of 151 on the 2021 figures. Since its inception, the service has gained £1,411,326 for clients.
- 4.9. The Project has been asked to attend the next Advice Partnership meeting to help spread the word of both the cancer and long-term conditions strands of the project and ensure those in need of the service are referred in.

Affordable Credit

- 4.10. Renfrewshire Council initially funded Renfrewshire Affordable Credit Alliance for one year using Fairer Renfrewshire funding. This funding allowed the Alliance to recruit a staff member to work as an Affordable Credit Officer to access local community groups promoting affordable credit options to individuals as well as work with practitioners to ensure they had knowledge of affordable credit, but also for those within organisations working with service users who may have money worries to start a conversation around money.
- 4.11. Over the last year, RACA also worked closely with Trading Standards Scotland to prevent individuals from accessing illegal money lenders (loan sharks). In May 2022, RACA applied for funding from Trading Standards Scotland to continue their work, and funding for one year was awarded from January 2023. This year will continue the work of the Affordable Credit Officer allowing them to continue to build relationships in Renfrewshire, especially with clients within the Child Poverty priority groups and with our ethnically diverse communities.
- 4.12. Moving forward, RACA has supported Right Way Credit Union to install a benefit checker within its website and app, so that anyone applying for a loan and providing information

about their circumstances will have a benefits check done automatically, and will be advised if they are due any benefits they haven't claimed. This should be installed early in 2023 and Right Way intend to approach an advice service to make referrals to and work with these clients where appropriate.

Financial Insecurity Winter Payment

- 4.13. The Financial Insecurity Winter Payment (FIWP) continues to be paid to those who are struggling with the cost of essentials. As at 13 December 2022, there had been 3,391 awards made with £426,650 spent.
- 4.14. There are over 17 services and organisations which have made referrals to the fund, and this is consistently reviewed and updated. The largest referrers are Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau, Housing and Homeless Services and the Energy Management Unit.
- 4.15. At the end of last year, services statistics showed that:
 - Around half of payments had gone to single person households, and most of these were working age households
 - The majority of payments were made to social housing tenants, although payments had been made across a number of tenures including people in temporary accommodation or homeless.
 - Over 80% of payments were made to households with a household income of less than £15k
 - Payments have been made to people with a range of employment situations, with around a fifth of recipients in employment and over a quarter not working due to a disability or health condition.
 - Over 70% of recipients reported a having a disability, with a high proportion of payments going to those with multiple disabilities, closely followed by those with mental health issues.

Fuel Insecurity

- 4.16. Fuel costs have continued to be the most pressing issue for many clients seeking advice. Most clients contacting Advice Works, whether for a benefit check, a Foodbank voucher or any other reason mention energy costs as being an issue and for both Advice Works and Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau clients are coming forward to try to get other benefits, such as Adult Disability Payment to bolster their income against energy cost increases.
- 4.17. To support clients with emergency fuel costs, the Fuel Insecurity Pilot has continued, with fuel vouchers and debt reduction support provided by Renfrewshire Foodbank and Linstone Housing Association, backed up by energy advice from Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau. To the end of December, over £34,000 in financial supports have been issued to those struggling with energy costs. These include vouchers for credit and pre-payment meters and support with fuel debt reduction. Linstone Housing Association has also reported a rise in demand for draught proofing, to alleviate the impact the future energy costs in the longer term. The confirmed financial gain for clients ascribed to the Energy Adviser at RCAB for the period April to December 2022 is just under £111,500.

5. Tackling Poverty Programme evaluation

- 5.1. The Tackling Poverty Programme is now entering the final year of five year programme, with this portfolio now continuing as part of Fairer Renfrewshire programme as the umbrella successor programme.
- 5.2. There are eight projects currently running as part of the Tackling Poverty Programme, and most of these now represent ongoing service delivery, or additionality to existing services. All projects within the Tackling Poverty Programme are currently being evaluated in order to inform the future direction of this work. The first phase of this evaluation will focus on Energy Advocacy, Breakfast Clubs, Families First and Street Stuff, followed by Peer Health, Cost of the School Day, Skoobmobile and Healthier Wealthier Children in the second phase.
- 5.3. A paper will be brought to Leadership Board in February 2023 setting out proposed funding allocation for 2023-24. Any projects continuing as part of Fairer Renfrewshire will need to be reviewed and updated to sharpen focus as a poverty intervention and alignment to wider programme, including impact measurement and reporting.

6. Participation and engagement

Schools engagement

- 6.1. An initial engagement session was held with headteachers from a selection of primary and secondary schools in Renfrewshire, to discuss what impacts of the cost-of-living crisis headteachers have observed within their schools.
- 6.2. Key feedback included:
 - Schools are witnessing increases in scale of need and demand caused by households facing financial difficulty
 - In particular, two groups of families were highlighted, households who were struggling before and now facing impossible financial situation as well as working families ‘under the radar’ who are not eligible for financial support
 - Biggest impact on mental health and wellbeing, and impacts observed around readiness for learning
 - Collective approach is required to support referral and access to supports for families
 - Some areas identified to explore in further detail include breakfast clubs, free school meals and school transport
- 6.3. It was felt that session provided a valuable insight into the impacts faced by households, but also that there were a number of areas where actions could be developed to better support both communities and schools. The output from the session was presented to the Fairer Renfrewshire Officer Group in December, and will be taken forward as part of the work programme of the group.

Fair Food Renfrewshire

- 6.4. A Fair Food Renfrewshire meeting was held online on 14 October. Chaired by Renfrewshire’s Food Champion, Laura McIntyre, attendance was open to any organisation with an interest in food within Renfrewshire. This initial session had speakers sharing their knowledge and experience followed by time for stakeholders to discuss priorities for the food partnership. The speakers were Chris Scott from Renfrewshire HSCP presenting on nutrition and barriers to healthy eating, Rikka Gonzalez presenting on Glasgow’s Food Policy Partnership and

Simon Kenton-Lake from Nourish Scotland, presenting on Sustainable Food Places and the changing policy landscape in Scotland around food.

- 6.5. Attendees included representatives from local larders and pantries, as well as the Scottish Pantry Network; Renfrewshire Foodbank; representatives from growing grounds, surplus food distributor, FareShare and a number of other third sector organisations. In addition, Council services with an interest in food/food insecurity attended including Environment and Infrastructure, Advice Works and the Climate Emergency Lead Officer.
- 6.6. The priorities identified by the group were around:
- Baselining current provision (assets and gaps)
 - Emergency/Community Food (including referral pathways and ensuring dignity)
 - Health Improvement/Nutrition
 - Tackling food waste
 - Organisation/Governance of Fair Food Renfrewshire
- 6.7. Next steps to take these priorities forward will be supported by using the Sustainable Food Places Toolkit throughout early 2023.

Lived experience panel

- 6.8. The Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee has been given a number of updates relating to work to develop a panel of people with lived experience of poverty to inform the Council's policy and practice.
- 6.9. Panel members have now been recruited, and the work of the Panel is now underway, with the Panel formally meeting twice.
- 6.10. The Panel will continue to meet throughout early 2023, and it is hoped there will be opportunities to bring the Panel together with the Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee to discuss the Panel's deliberations and recommendations in March 2023.

7. Holiday Activities Motion

- 7.1. The following motion was proposed by Councillors G Graham and Gilmour at Council on the 29th September 2022;

"Child Poverty

It is widely recognised that holiday periods add to the stress of family poverty and results in less access to food and social activity for them than their peers. Foodbanks report increased demand during holiday periods.

18% of our children and young people live in relative low income families, whilst a15% live in absolute low income families. The impact of the cost-of-living crisis is hitting these working families the hardest.

Renfrewshire Council recognises these facts. To assist local families this Council agrees to establish a Holiday Hunger Fund of £1 million pounds to be utilised over the lifetime of this administration. This fund will be used to increase the provision of meals and social activities for school children over school holiday periods throughout Renfrewshire. The Council will commit £200,000 per annum from this fund to enable 3rd sector groups in our communities to apply for money to establish new provision in areas where there is a currently unmet need."

- 7.2. Council agreed the request be forwarded to the established Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-committee for consideration. It was agreed that the sub-committee should review the current provision over school holiday periods and seek to identify any gaps which may require to be addressed.
- 7.3. Renfrewshire Council currently provides holiday activities and meals for young people as part of the provision delivered by Street Stuff and funded by the Tackling Poverty Programme, and that this activity is also now further augmented by targeted funding from Scottish Government.
- 7.4. On 25 March 2022, COSLA leaders approved the allocation of £10 million to local authorities in line with the Scottish Government's commitment for targeted provision of accessible activities, childcare and food for 5–14 year old children from low-income families during the 2022 school summer holidays. The Scottish Government wanted a particular focus to be on 6 child poverty priority families (those at higher risk of experiencing poverty) which includes: lone parent families, ethnic minority families, families with a disabled adult or child, mothers under 25, those with a child under 1, and those with 3 or more children.
- 7.5. Renfrewshire Council was allocated £292,415 of the funding, which was used to deliver a programme of activities for children, families and young people, encouraging them to access a wide range of activities and healthy food. Almost 1,000 individual children benefitted from these activities over the summer period.
- 7.6. The approach taken was to develop a programme that would offer several core activities targeted to 5-14 years from low-income families throughout the summer, along with some youth work provision, a new project for Ukrainian refugees and family learning groups. The approach built on tried and tested programmes and interventions and the feedback on learning and engagement previously undertaken with young people from the Get Into Summer initiative of 2021.
- 7.7. An update on the 'Summer of Fun' programme 2022 was presented to Communities and Housing Policy Board on 25th October 2022, which provides details of the programme of activities for children, families and young people which was provided, as well of a summary of the evaluation submitted to Scottish Government. Officers are expecting imminent communications from Scottish Government with details of funding and criteria for the 2023 programme.
- 7.8. Work has commenced on a baselining exercise to determine the existing provision of meals and social activities throughout holiday periods throughout Renfrewshire. Officers are working across services and with partners to build a comprehensive picture of provision across sectors.
- 7.9. As detailed at section 5 of the report, evaluation work will also be carried out on elements of Street Stuff programme funded by the Tackling Poverty Programme, which funds the provision of food alongside activities as well as provision across holiday periods not currently funded by Scottish Government. There is also a current consultation exercise being run by Street Stuff to inform future provision of activities.
- 7.10. It is planned that detailed report with the results of the baselining exercise, consultation and evaluation of the current provision will be developed and presented to a future meeting of the Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee, alongside the resource allocation from Scottish Government.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – There are no financial implications associated with this report.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – none
3. **Community/Council Planning** – The Fairer Renfrewshire Programme is a key driver in achieving the ‘Fair’ strategic outcome and theme within the Council Plan, and covers a number of the key actions identified in the plan. It also represents a significant partnership programme of work which supports the ‘Fair’ theme within the Community Plan, with dedicated partnership governance being established to ensure alignment between these areas of work.
4. **Legal** - none
5. **Property/Assets** - none
6. **Information Technology** - none
7. **Equality and Human Rights** – Equality and human rights are a key pillar of this plan, and it is anticipated that the programme will likely advance equality of opportunity.
8. **Health and Safety** - none
9. **Procurement** – none
10. **Risk** – none
11. **Privacy Impact** – none
12. **COSLA Policy Position** – none
13. **Climate Risk** – none

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