

Minute of Meeting Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-committee

Date	Time	Venue
Wednesday, 15 November 2023	10:00	Council Chambers (Renfrewshire), Council Headquarters, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN

Present: Councillor Jacqueline Cameron, Councillor Graeme Clark, Councillor Anne Hannigan, Councillor Alec Leishman, Councillor Marie McGurk, Councillor Iain Nicolson, Councillor Jim Paterson

Chair

In the absence of the Convener, Councillor Clark, Depute Convener, took the Chair.

In Attendance

A MacArthur, Director of Finance & Resources; L McIntyre, Head of Policy & Partnerships, A Armstrong-Walter, Strategic Partnership & Inequalities Manager, R Cooper, Economic Development Manager and D Dunn, Social Renewal Lead Officer (all Chief Executive's); and D Low, Democratic Services Manager and C MacDonald, Senior Committee Services Officer (both Finance & Resources).

Webcasting of Meeting

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Depute Convener intimated that this meeting of the Sub-committee would be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's internet site.

Declarations of Interest and Transparency Statements

There were no declarations of interest or transparency statements intimated prior to the commencement of the meeting.

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Councillor J Cameron entered the meeting prior to consideration of the following item of business and took the Chair.

1 Cost-of-living Update

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive relative to an overview of the key context and evidence around current pressures on household finances, both in terms of household income and expenditure.

The report intimated that although some household financial pressures had eased slightly, such as the fall in costs for home energy, the management of household finances remained challenging due to continued increases in prices for household goods and high interest rates. The long-term nature of the crisis meant that issues around money and debt were enduring, and indications were that more families who had been managing previously, including those who were working, may be struggling.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

2 Fairer Renfrewshire Programme

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive relative to key projects being progressed through the Fairer Renfrewshire programme, highlighting key priorities which would be the focus of future activity.

The report provided an update on ongoing projects which were set out in Section 4 including the evaluation of the Summer of Fun evaluation programme; Advice Services in Renfrewshire; Digital Inclusion; Winter Connections Programme; School Meal Debt; and the Fairer Renfrewshire Programme.

There report detailed four key emerging themes which were shared across all elements of the Fairer Renfrewshire programme, improving financial security; advancing equality of opportunity; building community capacity and resilience; and listening to lived experience.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

3 School Meal Debt

There was submitted a report by the Director fo Finance & Resources relative to school meal debt in Renfrewshire and the support provided to families that may be experiencing financial insecurity.

The report provided an initial update for members on the work that had been undertaken locally to review existing school meal debt processes and set out next steps in terms of implementing a more holistic approach to school meal debt

management in Renfrewshire. The report also advised of the write-off of historic school meal debt that had been actioned by the Director of Finance and Resources under delegated authority.

The report highlighted the publication of a report by the children's charity Aberlour, "Robbing Peter to pay Paul: Low Income and the Debt Trap" which set out a number of recommendations for the Scottish Government, COSLA and local authorities including that the Scottish Government work with COSLA and local authorities to write-off individual school meal debt to allow families a clean slate as they moved into the new school year and possible new school setting; that the Scottish Government implement its free school meal expansion as soon as possible; and that COSLA works with local authorities on a national school meal policy, which was founded on human rights and removed stigma, to ensure that children were treated with dignity in a consistent and fair way.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the update provided on the review of school meal debt processes which was currently being progressed be noted;
- (b) That it be noted that further engagement work was proposed with the Fairer Renfrewshire Lived Experience Panel to strengthen this work;
- (c) That it be noted that, under his delegated authority, the Director of Finance & Resources had written off the sum of £47,573.25 of invoiced school meal debt; and
- (d) That it be noted that a further update on the implementation of the revised school meal debt process would be submitted to this Sub-committee in early 2024.

4 Summer of Fun 2023 Evaluation

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive relative to the initial findings gathered through an evaluation of the Summer of Fun programme in Renfrewshire, a copy of which was appended to the report.

The report intimated that a comprehensive programme had been developed in partnership with services within the Council, partners, community groups and organisations, with the principles developed by the Lived Experience Panel, being core to everything that was planned and delivered. These key principles set out that there should be a range of activities for children and families – a mixture of child only, family activities, free/chargeable and across a number of different communities in Renfrewshire; that the Council would work with partners to promote the variety of activities that were available, making sure that families knew what was on and where; that the core focus of the funding would be to provide activities which supported families from the child poverty priority groups and to target gaps in provision across localities; and that any activities funded through Fairer Renfrewshire should be free at the point of access with free food or snacks available depending on the length of the activity.

The summer camps attracted 4,500 attendees of which over 45% of children who attended were from lone parent families, over 42% were from large families and over a quarter were from families where a family member had a disability; specific summer camps were available for young people with Additional Support Needs, with 190

families using this support; the Street Stuff activities for young people aged 8 – 14 attracted 1,858 attendances across seven locations in Renfrewshire; and an Adult and Family learning programme, targeted 47 families, of whom 15 were large families and 11 were ethnic minority families.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.