

To: Leadership Board

On: 20th February 2019

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Tackling Poverty Programme

1. Summary

- 1.1 At the budget meeting on 2nd March 2018, Council agreed the allocation of £5 million over the next 5 years to support a new Tackling Poverty Programme.
- 1.2 A programme of activity has been developed which will sustain key projects which support people on low-incomes, with a focus on low-income families with children.
- 1.3 The proposed programme detailed in section 4 of the report continues key projects from within the programme throughout Year 2. However, it is recognised that there are a number of opportunities to review projects throughout the programme, to make sure delivery models are the most effective and to explore opportunities to align more closely to mainstream service provision.
- 1.4 A Local Child Poverty Action Report is currently being developed for Renfrewshire, to meet the requirements of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. The Tackling Poverty Programme investment forms a significant part of Renfrewshire's local response to tackling child poverty.

2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are asked to approve the proposed content of the Tackling Poverty Programme outlined at section 4 of the report.

3. **Background**

- 3.1 On 2 March 2018, Council agreed funding of £5 million over the next 5 years to deliver a tackling poverty programme based on the learning and evaluation of the projects carried out to date and building on the initiatives that have made the most difference in people's lives.
- 3.2 A programme of activity was developed for Year 1 which sustained key projects, supporting people on low incomes, with a focus on low-income families with children.
- 3.3 The proposed programme detailed in section 4 of the report continues key projects from within the programme throughout Year 2. However, it is recognised that there are a number of opportunities to review projects throughout the programme, to make sure delivery models are the most effective, to explore opportunities to align more closely to mainstream service provision and to respond to the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017.

4. **Progress**

- 4.1 Since the introduction of the Tackling Poverty programme, there have been a significant number of projects and developments undertaken across the Council and its partners to tackle poverty.

In addition to this, over the next 4 years the Tackling Poverty Programme will continue to provide investment to specific initiatives that support the Council's aspiration to tackle poverty.

The initiatives support three key priorities;

- Targeting support to families that need it most
- Removing barriers to participation for children and young people
- Supporting health and wellbeing for young people

- 4.2 **Targeting support to families that need it most – £0.73 million**

It is proposed that funding is allocated to support the delivery of the following initiatives:

- The three Families First locality teams funded by the Tackling Poverty Programme in Foxbar, Gallowhill and Johnstone will continue to offer early years and family support services, including targeted financial advice and parenting support over the next four years. These three localities have worked with over 880 families and generated £3.5 million of income since their introduction.
- The Healthier, Wealthier Children service will continue to provide targeted advice and support to new and expectant parents on managing changes to finances and supporting them to claim benefits they are entitled to. This service has been successful in achieving significant financial gains of over £2.7m for 1400 households during this key life event.
- Energy Advice will also continue to be offered to people who need support to reduce their energy bills, manage fuel debt and improve the energy efficiency in their homes. This project has worked with over 3,000 households to date and saving a total of over £1m on energy costs.
- Renfrewshire Foodbank will receive £30,000 over the next three years to assist with the anticipated increase in demand for support arising from the roll-out of Universal Credit in Renfrewshire, as agreed by Leadership Board in December 2018.
- Support to Renfrewshire's Citizens Advice Bureau to provide the Advice Renfrewshire phoneline will continue until March 2020, as agreed by Leadership Board in September 2018. This free, confidential and independent service will provide a wide range of money and debt advice issues to citizens.

4.3 Removing barriers to participation for children and young people- £0.34 million

It is proposed that funding is allocated to support the delivery of the following initiatives:

- Breakfast clubs will continue in 10 schools, providing a healthy breakfast to all pupils universally. Over 227,000 free healthy breakfasts have been served since the introduction of this project, relieving financial pressure on low income families, but most importantly, making sure that children start the school day ready to learn.
- The Cost of the School Day fund will continue to operate across all primary and secondary schools in Renfrewshire, directly supporting

families in a variety of ways including uniforms, food, transport, extra-curricular activities and curricular expenses.

- The programme will continue to provide Street stuff activities during the holidays and at weekends, along with the provision of free healthy meals. Over 226,000 attendances have been recorded to date.
- The Skoobmobile will continue to provide a mobile public library service directly to children and families in communities. This service aims to help improve children's life chances by encouraging a lasting interest in reading, literacy, physical activity and learning;

4.4 **Supporting health and wellbeing for young people - £0.16 million**

It is proposed that funding is allocated to support the delivery of the following initiatives:

- The peer health project will continue in partnership with Active Communities, working with young people in secondary schools across Renfrewshire to identify key health priorities in their school and developing young people to lead their own activities to improve health and wellbeing. There are now 348 peer educators that have been trained across Renfrewshire schools, who have engaged with over 5000 pupils in total on a range of health issues such as mental health, diet, alcohol and drugs.
- School counselling will also continue across secondary schools, offering 1:1 and groupwork support to young people on a range of issues such as anxiety stress, bereavement and loss, family issues and self-esteem. So far 500 young people have benefitted from this service.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – The £5 million allocated to the delivery of the Tackling Poverty Programme was agreed in the Council budget agreed on 2nd March 2018. Thereafter on 20th June 2018, Leadership Board approved the allocation of funding for Year 1 of the programme.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – Not applicable
3. **Community/Council Planning** – The programme continues to support the key priorities set out in the Council and Community Plan to tackle inequality and widen opportunity.

4. **Legal** – Not applicable
5. **Property/Assets** – Not applicable
6. **Information Technology** – Not applicable
7. **Equality & Human Rights** – The projects within the programme are likely to have a positive impact on quality and human rights, particularly considering the overrepresentation of equality groups in low income households.+
8. **Health & Safety** – Not applicable.
9. **Procurement** – The extension of some projects within the Tackling Poverty Programme may have procurement implications, where for example, contracts are coming to an end and may need to go through procurement processes again.
10. **Risk** – Not applicable
11. **Privacy Impact** - Not applicable
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – Not applicable

List of Background Papers

- (a) Not applicable

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