

**To: Leadership Board**

**On: 1 December 2021**

---

**Report by: Chief Executive**

---

**Heading: Social Renewal Plan Update**

---

## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 An update report was provided to the Leadership Board in June 2021, highlighting a range of initial priorities which partners had identified for immediate action in light of the issues being experienced across communities. A range of funding proposals were approved at that time utilising funding to support social renewal, with £0.665m allocated specifically in relation to poverty and financial insecurity, digital exclusion and community resilience and capacity amongst other areas.
- 1.3 Officers continue to work with partners to progress all actions, with a specific focus on income, poverty and financial insecurity, given the anticipated financial challenges facing residents over Winter 2021. Recent progress is highlighted in section 4 of this report, with additional information also provided for elected members on the wider Tackling Poverty programme and its existing range of activities.

- 1.4 Since the last meeting of the Leadership Board, officers have launched a Community Food Fund, and recommendations for the allocation of funding to 3 local organisations are set out within Section 4 of the report. The paper also sets out proposals to allocate £10,000 of Tackling Poverty funding to support Renfrewshire Foodbank during Winter 2021, in recognition of the anticipated increased demand for their service over this period, and an additional £20,000 to support Youth Interventions to undertake its ongoing programme of engagement with young people over Winter 2021.
- 1.5 In recent weeks, several national funding streams have also been announced to support local community and third sector organisations to develop community resilience and capacity and to respond to increasing local need around mental health and wellbeing and social isolation. Whilst the Council is not involved directly in allocating these funds, officers are continuing to work with Engage Renfrewshire and local partners to support this process which will operate in line with Scottish Government guidance.
- 1.6 Renfrewshire has a strong reputation nationally in relation to the partnership approach to tackling digital exclusion. The pandemic has fundamentally changed the way in which people across communities have used technology, and has also widened existing inequalities around access and skills. Renfrewshire Council has participated in the Connecting Scotland programme to ensure that local people are able to gain access to devices and connectivity to support their wellbeing, and just under 2000 devices have been allocated to date.
- 1.7 Section 5 of the paper sets out how the Council will continue to develop this approach through the development of a Digital Champions network in partnership with Renfrewshire Leisure. This will be an initiative with SCVO and will build a network of volunteers and staff, and capacity across local third and community organisations, so that more local people can be supported to access and use digital technology. Linked to the Council's climate ambitions, work is also underway to develop a community digital device refurbishment initiative with local partners and businesses.
- 1.8 Within Section 6, further detail is provided on a holistic support model which is being developed by the Communities and Housing Service, to support local people who use alcohol or drugs. Through the engagement undertaken by the Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Commission, a clear finding emerged that services need to wrap support around people, and that strong relationships can support individuals to make progress with their recovery.

- 1.9 During the pandemic and through the community impact assessment undertaken in 2020, it has become increasingly clear that people living across communities continue to have very complex needs, and the holistic support model which will be piloted in early 2022 will allow partners to support recovery in a person-centred way.
- 1.10 Moving forward into early 2022, a key priority for the Council and its partners will be in relation to supporting community resilience and working with local communities to identify priorities and local action plans in response to the pandemic. This will be progressed through the 7 Local Partnerships, and work is now underway to put into place the resource required to develop this programme as well as Renfrewshire's overall approach to locality working.
- 

## **2. Recommendations**

### **2.1 It is recommended that members:**

- Note the work that has been undertaken to progress the Social Renewal Plan in Renfrewshire.
- Approve the allocation of £8940 from the Community Food Fund, to support the initiatives outlined in Section 4.
- Approve the allocation of £80,000 to Renfrewshire Leisure to co-ordinate a Digital Champions programme, with a further £20,000 allocated to support further research and evaluation in digital exclusion in partnership with SCVO and a community device refurbishment initiative. This will be drawn from the £100,000 of social renewal funding agreed by Leadership Board in June 2021 to support digital exclusion.
- Approve the allocation of £10,000 from Tackling Poverty funding to provide support to Renfrewshire Foodbank to respond to additional demand over Winter 2021 and into 2022, and £20,000 to support community youth engagement over this period by Youth Interventions.
- Approve the allocation of £200,000 to support the delivery of a holistic support service to local people impacted by drug and alcohol use, from the £2m funding previously allocated by Council to respond to the findings of Renfrewshire's Alcohol and Drugs Commission.
- Note Scottish Government funding that has been allocated directly to the third and community sector in Renfrewshire to support the COVID response and recovery and mental health and wellbeing.
- Note the additional funding which is likely to be allocated to the Council from the Scottish Government to support low income households over the Winter, and;
- Authorise the Chief Executive to develop and implement local arrangements to allocate this funding expediently, in consultation with the Council Leader, with an update to be provided to the Leadership Board in February 2022.

---

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 Following the initial completion of a local COVID community impact assessment undertaken by the Council and partners, an initial Social Renewal Plan was approved by Council in March 2021. Within the plan a number of specific priorities were identified for further action and during Summer 2021, officers worked with partners to identify actions in relation to the income, financial insecurity and poverty theme as a key focus, in recognition of the end of the furlough scheme and rising food and energy costs being experienced and which were anticipated to worsen over Winter 2021.
- 3.2 In light of the ongoing impact of the pandemic and associated restrictions in terms of wellbeing and social isolation, work has also been prioritised in terms of digital exclusion. A summary of the key activities progressed to date across these two themes are outlined within sections 4 and 5 of this report.
- 3.3 In addition to new and emerging areas of work that are being progressed with partners, officers are also continuing to progress a number of wider activities which seek to improve wellbeing and tackle inequality such as the Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Change Programme which was established in response to the findings of the Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Commission. Further work has been undertaken to develop the local response to the findings as reported to Leadership Board in September 2021, including in relation to the development of a holistic support service lead by the Communities and Housing Service, as set out in Section 6.

---

### **4. Income, Poverty and Financial Insecurity – Update**

- 4.1 In September 2021 an update on the Social Renewal Plan was provided to Leadership Board with funding allocated to support a number of projects designed to provide immediate assistance to communities and individuals who were affected by the Coronavirus pandemic. These projects had been identified through work with partners to support people and families across Renfrewshire experiencing issues in relation to low income and financial insecurity.
- 4.2 Progress to date includes:
- The launch of the Fair Work Renfrewshire service in October by Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau, which will provide employment advice to support clients to retain employment wherever possible and where this is not possible, ensure they are supported to obtain their full redundancy entitlement as well as access the correct benefits;

- The development of a benefit take up campaign developed with partners and successfully launched during November 2021, with the aim of maximising income for low income households. 60 clients of all ages were seen during the launch week, with support given around a number of benefits;
- Allocation of funding to Engage Renfrewshire to lead an affordable credit initiative focussed on preventing borrowing from high-cost lenders and ensuring everyone has options for borrowing money that help reduce the risk of falling into problem debt. An Affordable Credit Officer has been recruited and commenced work on 8 November, immediately making contact with local credit unions and community groups;
- Funding allocated to three local partner organisations to establish or develop community pantries and promote dignified access to food; and
- Development of a fuel insecurity pilot to work with low-income households struggling to meet immediate fuel costs linked to the provision of energy advice in partnership with Renfrewshire Foodbank, Linstone Housing Association and Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau.

4.3 In addition, in September 2021, members of the Leadership Board approved guidance to support the establishment of the Renfrewshire Community Food Fund. £25,000 of funding was allocated to provide small awards to organisations to develop community food offerings which move from emergency response to promote dignified, localised, access to food and community resilience.

4.4 Following approval of the guidance, the application process was launched with applications accepted between 16 September and 15 October 2021. In total 3 organisations applied for this funding:

Organisation	Funding requested	Purpose
Darkwood Crew	£4640	Darkwood Crew have applied for £4640 to help them run their weekly community meal through improving the community kitchen, hygiene training for volunteers and running three accessible cooking workshops to equip local people to make affordable, nourishing meals at home  They also will continue their surplus food run, where they collect and distribute surplus food, minimising food waste and ensuring it is relabelled and stored correctly and have applied for hall hire and fuel costs to allow them to do that.
Klas Care	£2000	Klas Care are looking to support children attending their service with a growing project, which will allow children to grow and eat healthy produce and change unhealthy eating habits.

		Working alongside local charity Eadha Enterprises and Renfrewshire Council, they are looking to develop community growing facilities, and have applied for £2,000 for plants, soil and the costs for production of a recipe book which will be distributed to 80 families to encourage healthy eating at home.
Lochwinnoch Food Group	£2300	<p>Lochwinnoch Food Committee are looking for funding to tackle food insecurity in a more sustainable way which will help build resilience locally. As part of a wider project costing £13,600 in total, they have applied for Council funding of £2,300 to purchase necessary equipment, such as a fridges and containers so they can comply fully with Food Hygiene standards and to make the portacabin they run from accessible to wheelchair users, so the whole community can benefit.</p> <p>The Committee intends that the portacabin will become a social space where the community can come together for activities and workshops which will support health and wellbeing and where they can build relationships with service users and identify other support needs.</p>

- 4.5 In line with the fund guidance, these three organisations aim to alleviate some of the pressures of food insecurity in their areas by providing ongoing and accessible support to families. The applications were assessed against the criteria contained in the Community Food Fund Guidance by a panel comprising of council officers and the Chief Executive of Engage Renfrewshire and it is recommended that all three are approved.

### **Tackling Poverty Programme update**

- 4.6 The initiatives outlined above are additional to the core Tackling Poverty Programme, which has been supported over a 5 year period through £5m allocated by the Council in March 2018. The programme continues to deliver positive outcomes and significant outcomes for local people and families – support which was been invaluable during the pandemic:
- The Healthier, Wealthier Children service provides targeted advice and support to new and expectant parents on managing changes to finances and supporting them to claim benefits they are entitled to. Between April and September 2021, the service has had 300 referrals, 95 of which were new cases. This resulted in a financial gain of £206,083 for those families.
  - As part of Challenge Poverty Week, a Renfrewshire Money and Benefits Information Session was held for colleagues and partners around how to support income maximisation for the people they work with.

The Benefits Uptake Campaign was carried out over Talk Money Week (8th – 12th November), with Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau and Advice Works coming together to offer benefit checks. A mini- Festive Campaign is planned from the end of November relating to credit options, debt and benefits and will be aimed at Council staff as well as the wider Renfrewshire population. A linked campaign will run in January focussed on reducing and managing debt.

- Energy Advice continues to be offered to people who need support to reduce their energy bills, manage fuel debt and improve the energy efficiency in their homes. Energy advisers engaged with clients through virtual visits or by email, since April 21, almost 400 clients have been supported. Due to the current changes to the energy price cap and associated issues, the advisers are now dealing with more queries regarding energy price hikes.
- Morning clubs continue in 9 schools, providing healthy breakfasts to all pupils universally within participating schools. This project relieves financial pressure on low income families, but most importantly, makes sure that children start the school day ready to learn. In total, 18,248 breakfasts have now been served since clubs resumed in May 2021.
- The programme continues to provide Street Stuff activities during the holidays and at weekends, along with the provision of free healthy food to support key activities. Since the Street Stuff Clubs recommenced in Spring 2021, a total of 5,579 attendances have been recorded with each of those young people receiving a free healthy meal. As the 'Get into Summer' Programme found the combining of older and younger age groups to be successful, this format will be continued into the upcoming programmes where possible.
- The Cost of the School Day fund continues 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. A Participatory Budgeting pilot is currently being carried out with Attainment Challenge funding.
- The programme continues to support the delivery of the Skoobmobile which introduces children to the benefit of reading and play and supports the Council's ambitions to narrow the literacy attainment gap. In addition Skoobmobile will circulate information about benefits and other support which may be available to lower income families.
- Families First are establishing their presence in local areas and referrals are received through 3 main referral routes. All schools, families can self refer and drop in style sessions will be held where people can attend to receive support. The Income Advice element of this project is now being delivered through a "Renfrewshire Schools Service" between all schools across Renfrewshire and Advice Works.

- The peer health project continues in partnership with Active Communities, working with young people in all 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. From August 2020 to June 2021, 226 peer educators worked with 3,238 pupils to support their mental health.
- 4.7 Renfrewshire Foodbank has previously received funding through the Tackling Poverty Programme. In light of the anticipated increase in demand for the Foodbank and its services during Winter 2021 and into 2022, it is proposed that funding of £10,000 is allocated from the Tackling Poverty Fund to Renfrewshire Foodbank to manage these pressures. Following recent engagement, it is further proposed that £20,000 of Tackling Poverty funding is allocated to Youth Interventions to provide interim funding undertake community and youth engagement activities over this period.
- 4.8 In terms of developments in relation to financial insecurity, Scottish Government has recently announced that an additional £25m of funding will be made available to local authorities to tackle financial insecurity for low income households this winter. Officers are awaiting further guidance and confirmation of the level of funding to be made available to Renfrewshire Council. Given the immediate requirement to distribute this funding over the Winter and to provide this support to local residents as quickly as possible, it is recommended that authority is granted to the Chief Executive to develop and implement local arrangements in consultation with the Council Leader, with a subsequent update provided to the Leadership Board in February 2022.
- 

## **5. Digital Exclusion - Update**

- 5.1 Within the community impact assessment undertaken in late 2020, the positive benefits that digital access has brought to many households across Renfrewshire were recognised strongly, however for specific groups of people there remain real barriers to access which exacerbate existing inequalities. Digital exclusion can broadly be considered in terms of connectivity, access to a device, skills and positive and accessible online experiences.
- 5.2 Key progress to date includes:
- City Fibre are investing in a 700km network providing Renfrewshire residents and businesses with access to the fastest, most reliable gigabit speed connectivity.
  - In terms of device access, Renfrewshire Council has continued to support the delivery of the Connecting Scotland Programme which was established by Scottish Government and Scottish Council for Voluntary Services (SCVO) to provide digital connectivity to people in priority categories who did not have a device. A total of 1,936 devices have now been allocated in



2020/21 to organisations across Renfrewshire to support specific target groups including people shielding/at high clinical risk, families and care experienced young people and elderly and disabled people.

- In recognition of the local commitment and partnership working, SCVO have selected Renfrewshire as one of 3 or 4 pilot 'places' to begin to understand how place-based solutions to digital inclusion could work and to develop a model of best practice for use across Scotland.
- Since the last update a new focus group has been created called 'Citizen Voice'. The group is made up of 23 members across public and the third sector representing the needs of citizens.
- Successful award for Life Changes Trust Legacy Fund of £400,000. Digital Skills for People with Care Experience 2022-2025. Consortium Bid with YMCA Scotland, YMCA Paisley, Youthlink Scotland, Barnardo's, Scottish Tech Army and Mhor Collective. This programme of work will support The Promise.

5.3 In June 2021, Leadership Board agreed to allocate £100,000 of funding to support the digital exclusion agenda, which would be drawn from funding set aside in the council's budget in March 2021 to support social renewal activities. Elected members are asked to note that subject to approval:

- £80,000 will be allocated to Renfrewshire Leisure to develop and co-ordinate a Digital Champions network in Renfrewshire in partnership with local community and third sector organisations, with a key aim of increasing participation, skills and access. The Champions network will support a digital inclusion pilot which will be undertaken in partnership with a range of local partners and SCVO. It is proposed that £10,000 is allocated to support the evaluation of this pilot which will potentially be jointly funded with SCVO and inform national practice.
- Officers are currently exploring a recycling and refurbishment option as part of the Digital Inclusion Pilot which builds in an employability and training aspect with Invest, ICT and an external partner organisation. This project will contribute to the climate agenda and will be supported through the allocation of £10,000 of funding.

---

## **6. Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Change Programme**

6.1 In September 2021, a full update was provided on the work that is being progressed by the Council and partners, to respond to the findings of the Renfrewshire Alcohol and Drugs Commission. To date £1.34m has been allocated to support a number of key projects and initiatives, drawn from the £2m of funding allocated by Council to support the local response to the Commission's recommendations.

- 6.2 This programme has continued to adapt in response to the pandemic and within the report in September 2021, it was noted that partners were considering different options to support people with complex needs, who potentially need support from different services and organisations in relation to the issues they are experiencing.
- 6.3 Renfrewshire was one of the first councils in Scotland to pilot the Housing First model, and work is underway to assess how this could be developed further, recognising that not all people who use alcohol and drugs will be engaged with a treatment service and may respond better to support from a different service or organisation.
- 6.4 Subject to procurement and recruitment timescales, it is anticipated that the pilot will commence in early 2022 in partnership with an external provider. It is proposed that funding of £200,000 is allocated to support this project which will be led by the Communities and Housing Service. This funding will be drawn from the balance of Council funding which remains to support the Alcohol and Drugs Change Programme (£0.66m).
- 

## **7 Community capacity and resilience**

- 7.1 In addition to the key areas of work outlined within this report, officers are identifying resource to develop opportunities for a locality model across Renfrewshire, informed by the initial learning from the neighbourhood hubs which were initiatives through COVID, as well as through the Developing Communities workstream which is being progressed through the Right For Renfrewshire programme.
- 7.2 Local Partnerships and the development of local action plans and priorities will be key elements of COVID recovery at a community level, and work is underway to put into place resource to support the Local Partnerships with the next phase of their development, and to co-ordinate new local networks which support closer partnership working within local areas. An update on this programme of work will be provided in early 2022.
- 

## **8. Wider developments which support the social renewal programme**

- 8.1 In addition to the initiatives outlined within this paper, local groups and organisations across the third and community sector are continuing to respond to the needs of local people impacted by the pandemic.
- 8.2 In recent weeks it has been confirmed that significant additional funding will be allocated by the Scottish Government to the Renfrewshire area, which will be coordinated by voluntary and community organisations.
- £243,000 has been allocated from the second phase of the Scottish governments Community Recovery Fund. This was a collaborative funding bid which will support 16 local organisations to deliver services

and supports which address some of the impacts of COVID, promoting wellbeing and tackling inequality across communities.

- In October Scottish Government announced that approximately £500,000 of funding will be allocated to grassroot organisations in Renfrewshire that support local people in relation to mental health and wellbeing and social isolation. The funding will be allocated to third sector organisations to support non-clinical activities, and Engage Renfrewshire will co-ordinate the local process. Applications for this fund opened in mid November and the process is being progressed in line with Scottish Government guidance in relation to the scope of applications and monitoring and evaluation requirements. Officers from the Council and the HSCP have been invited to participate in an assessment panel as part of this process with other partners.

---

## 9. Next Steps

- 9.1 Work is continuing to develop local responses to other impacts identified within the community impact assessment and the resulting Social Renewal Plan. An update on these proposals will be provided to the next meeting of the Leadership Board.

---

## Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – the pandemic has had and will continue to have a significant impact on the resources available to the Council. Given the anticipated longer term financial challenges facing the Council, the requirement for targeting of resources in priority areas will be essential.

The paper details proposals to allocate funding to support key priorities identified within the social renewal plan.

2. **HR & Organisational Development** - None
3. **Community/Council Planning** – There has been a strong partnership response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Renfrewshire with community and third sector organisations working closely together to maximise the resources available at a local level to meet the needs of local people and communities. This will be a critical focus going forward as partners work collectively to mitigate the impact on those most negatively impacted in our communities.
4. **Legal** - New legislative requirements have been put into place by the Scottish Government to support the country's response to COVID-19. There may be further changes to these requirements or further legislation as the lockdown measures ease, which the Council will require to respond to.
5. **Property/Assets** - none

6. **Information Technology** – none
7. **Equality and Human Rights** - The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health and Safety** – none
9. **Procurement** – none
10. **Risk** – none
11. **Privacy Impact** – none
12. **COSLA Policy Position** – none
13. **Climate Risk** – there are climate emergency actions in the attached action plan, aligning this Social Renewal Plan to the Council's commitment to tackling the climate emergency through a green recovery from COVID-19

---

## List of Background Papers

---

**Author:** Laura McIntyre, Head of Policy and Commissioning.