
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. Further to this, at Council on 2 March 2023 members reaffirmed their commitment to the Fairer Renfrewshire programme, and outlined a number of investments including bringing together the current Fairer Renfrewshire funding alongside the Tackling Poverty and Social Renewal reserve funds into a single resource estimated at £5million.
- 1.4. Key priorities for the Fairer Renfrewshire Programme for March 2023-June 2023 are as follows:
- Participation and Engagement
 - Developing the Local Child Poverty Action Report
 - Fairer Food Renfrewshire development
 - Winter Connections Programme Evaluation
 - Developing and delivering budget investments including holiday activities and winter school clothing grant
 - Tackling Poverty Programme Evaluation

- 1.5. This paper provides a progress update for all of the priorities listed above. As agreed at Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee, this paper will also provide a more detailed progress report on work focussed on lived experience approaches.

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. Renfrewshire Council's 2023-24 budget, agreed on 2nd March 2023, outlined a number of investments related to the Fairer Renfrewshire programme including bringing together the

current Fairer Renfrewshire funding alongside the Tackling Poverty and Social Renewal reserve funds into a single resource estimated at £5million. Initial priorities for the allocation of this funding will include:

- £0.068m over 2 years to support the recently agreed 10% increase in delivery of advice services by Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau
- £0.300m to support a £50 winter school clothing payment to each child eligible for school clothing grant
- £0.100m to provide a programme of summer activities for children and young people from low-income families, encouraging them to access a wide range of activities and healthy food
- Council also agreed to top-up funding of £0.200million to the Scottish Welfare Fund, to be drawn from Welfare Reform reserve

3.7. 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

3.8. Key priorities for the Fairer Renfrewshire Programme for March-June 2023 are as follows:

- Developing the Local Child Poverty Action Report
- Participation and Engagement
- Fairer Food Renfrewshire development
- Winter Connections Programme Evaluation
- Developing and delivering budget investments including holiday activities and winter school clothing grant
- Tackling Poverty Programme Evaluation

3.9. This paper provides a progress update for all of the priorities listed above. As agreed at Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee, this paper will also provide a more detailed progress report on work focussed on lived experience approaches.

4. Fairer Renfrewshire Programme

Advice services in Renfrewshire

- 4.1. At the Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee in February 2023, it was reported work was underway to put into place new contract arrangements with Renfrewshire Citizens Advice Bureau for the financial year 2023/24 and 24/25. These contract negotiations have now been concluded and agreed at Finance, Resources and Customer Services Board. The contract will be in place for a two-year period in the first instance.
- 4.2. 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, energy advice and a schools advice service also in development.

- 4.3. Officers have been working alongside colleagues in Children's Services to develop the Schools Advice Service, which will provide dedicated advice provision for secondary schools across Renfrewshire. Work is also underway to develop complementary advice services across early years and primary school settings alongside Advice Works, as part of the development of the 2023/24 Tackling Poverty Programme.

Financial Insecurity Winter Payment

- 4.4. The Financial Insecurity Winter Payment (FIWP) continues to be paid to those who are struggling with the cost of essentials. Late last year, this payment was widened out to referrals from the HSCP and as at 28th February 2023 there had been 4,429 awards made, and £574,350 spent.
- 4.5. It is anticipated that the current funding allocation towards the Financial Insecurity Winter Payment will allow the fund to run until the end of April 2023.
- 4.6. 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.
- 4.7. It is recognised that there is still demand for a flexible, cash-first response to financial insecurity in Renfrewshire, particularly due to the continued high cost of domestic energy. Funding has been agreed to extend this fund for 2023/24 using the Covid-19 Economic Recovery Funding, as agreed by the Economy and Regeneration board, and work is underway to assess current provision, needs and gaps to inform the approach for distributing this further funding in 2023/24.
- 4.8. 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 October, almost £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.

Developing Local Child Poverty Action Report

- 4.9. The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 places a duty on local authorities and regional health boards in Scotland to produce annual, joint Local Child Poverty Action Reports (LCPARs) describing ongoing and planned action to tackle child poverty at local level. Work is now underway to compile this year's Local Child Poverty Action Report for Renfrewshire, and this is typically presented to Leadership Board in June.
- 4.10. In order to form a better picture of Child Poverty in Renfrewshire, officers are carrying out a 'deep dive' on the data we hold as well as identifying gaps in our data. This work will be used to inform our Local Child Poverty Action Report, as well as our child poverty work more generally and we hope to gather information especially around the 6 priority groups identified by Scottish Government as being most likely to be in poverty:
- Lone parent families

- Minority Ethnic families
- Large families (3+ children)
- Families where a child or adult is disabled
- Families with a younger mother (under 25)
- Families with a child under 1 year old.

4.11. Work is ongoing with colleagues in HSCP, Public Health Scotland and other council services such as Invest in Renfrewshire and we are also working with the Improvement Service to establish where data sharing can support our knowledge.

Fair Food Renfrewshire

4.12. Further to an engagement session held in winter 2023, officers have been working closely with Nourish Scotland to plan the next stages of Fair Food Renfrewshire, using the Sustainable Food Places Toolkit.

4.13. Sustainable Food Places brings together partnerships from across the UK, and is a partnership programme led by the Soil Association, Food Matters and Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming. The toolkit that they have developed has three key themes:

- **Building a food partnership**

Put in place an appropriate and representative partnership structure to lead on development and delivery of the food strategy.

- **Developing a food strategy**

Incorporate participatory processes to facilitate the engagement and inclusion of stakeholders across the whole food system in developing a sustainable food vision and strategy.

- **Review and refresh**

Measure impact, refresh the strategy and ensure that the partnership is working effectively.

4.14. As part of the first theme, work is underway to establish a partnership steering group for this work, and to bring the wider stakeholder group together in Spring 2023 to work on the vision and shared purpose, as well as agree partnership structures and terms of reference for the steering group. It is anticipated that the newly established steering group will meet shortly after this event, and work will begin on the next theme 'Developing a food strategy.' This will support Renfrewshire Council's upcoming duties related to the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022.

5. Tackling Poverty Programme evaluation

5.1. 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.

- The evaluation of the Energy Advocates project has now been completed.

- Work is underway on the evaluation of Families First, with a particular focus on the development of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.
 - The evaluation of Street Stuff is also underway as part of the wider work to look at holiday provision in Renfrewshire more broadly, which is detailed in a separate paper at this Board.
- 5.2. A paper will be brought to Leadership Board in April 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

- 6.1. 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, now known as the Fairer Renfrewshire Lived Experience Panel.
- 6.2. As detailed at the last Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee and Leadership Board, 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 April 2023.
- 6.3. The Panel invited Cllr Jacqueline Cameron and Cllr Graeme Clark to a panel meeting in February to introduce the work of the Panel (as the Convener and Vice Convener of the Fairer Renfrewshire Sub Committee), and explore opportunities to work together moving forward.
- 6.4. Officers are now exploring options for the continuation of the panel following the completion of the test of change.

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

Author: Annabelle Armstrong-Walter, Strategic Partnerships and Inequalities Manager, Annabelle.armstrong-walter@renfrewshire.gov.uk