

To: Economy and Regeneration Policy Board

On: 28 May 2024

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Scottish Government Employability Grant Award 2024-25

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report updates Board on the most recent funding allocation from the Scottish Government for employability support in Renfrewshire for the 2024-25 period.
 - 1.2 A grant award to local authorities is provided under the banner of No-One Left Behind (NOLB) to support an all-age employability service and to tackle child poverty.
 - 1.3 Renfrewshire Council is accountable for the resources which are directed and managed through the Renfrewshire Local Employability Partnership.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Board members are asked to:
 - (i) Note the acceptance of Scottish Government grant by the Director of Finance awarded for the 2024-25 period of £0.546M under the banner of No-One Left Behind.
 - (ii) Note that a further funding allocation for the balance of funds and a separate award through the General Revenue Grant is anticipated in the next 2 months. This will be reported to a future board.
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3. Background

- 3.1 Employability plays an essential role in delivering both Scottish and local government's aims of tackling poverty, promoting inclusion and social justice and creating a fair and prosperous Scotland. It is a key component of the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET), contributing to delivering the vision for a strong economy where good, secure and well-paid jobs and growing businesses have driven a significant reduction in poverty and, in particular, child poverty.
- 3.2 Collectively, Scottish and local government aim to build an employability system that tackles inequalities in Scotland's labour market by creating a more responsive, joined up and aligned employability system that meets the needs of employers and local labour market and helps people of all ages achieve their potential.
- 3.3 Many individuals face significant challenges and barriers to obtaining and sustaining work: This includes disabled people, those with long-term health conditions, lone parents, homeless people and those from minority ethnic groups. Barriers are also likely to exist and needing to be overcome for young care leavers, 'new Scots' / refugees and those in the justice system, meaning there is still a strong demand for employability support.
- 3.4 No One Left Behind promotes a strengthened partnership approach where Scottish and local government are working together with public, private and third sector organisations to identify local needs and deliver a mixed economy of provision.
- 3.5 Local authorities act as lead accountable bodies for funding, with funding being used by Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs) to design and deliver services that meet the needs of people and labour markets in their area.

4. Employability Award 2024-25

- 4.1 Scottish Government announced budgets earlier this year and indicated a figure of around £90M for employability support of which £75.196M would come to Councils and Local Employability Partnerships.
- 4.2 Indicative allocations were provided to Councils in March 2024 and the expected allocation for Renfrewshire was £2.262M for employability delivery from 1st April 2024 to end March 2025. Grant award letters were expected at the end of March to allow delivery to commence 1st April.
- 4.3 Unfortunately Grant Award Letters were not forthcoming and it was clear that there was going to be a delay. The issue was raised at both Cosla Community Wellbeing Board and with Council Leaders and ongoing discussions with Scottish Government have been taking place.
- 4.4 Scottish Government have now confirmed that they remain committed to working with COSLA to deliver on the joint No One Left Behind ambitions.

Discussions are continuing to finalise allocations, with funding being released as decisions are taken to ensure activities in agreed areas can proceed as soon as possible.

- 4.5 To enable progress and support continuity of service, Scottish Government have decided to release funding equivalent to the first quarter of the financial year allocation for No One Left Behind.
- 4.6 A Grant Award letter for £0.546M was received by the Council on May 2nd 2024 and this initial award will be accepted by the Director of Finance. As part of the offer of grant an Annual Investment Plan will be developed for Employability for the year ahead to be submitted to Scottish Government. This will be reported to a future board.
- 4.7 Although the Council does not have formal confirmation of the full financial award under No-One Left Behind the service is continuing as normal for now. All commissioning for the year has taken place and partners are already delivering services. The Invest in Renfrewshire budget was established to cope with retrospective payments and funding delays and so the team are able to continue as planned for the time being.
- 4.8 Any future funding cut in the grant award would be unfortunate however as funding is never fully guaranteed there are mitigations in the plan for the year to downsize certain elements and this will be reported through the Investment Plan to be reported to the next board if it is required.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 In summary, the first quarter grant award will be accepted by the Director of Finance with the remainder to follow in the next few months. It is hoped that the full indicative allocation will be forthcoming and a further report to Board will outline this alongside the Employability Investment Plan for the year ahead.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – No immediate implications for Renfrewshire. The grant award is for the current quarter spend, any further implications relating to delays or cuts will be outlined in a future board report.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – Not applicable.
3. **Community/Council Planning** – the funding award comes through Renfrewshire Council for decision by the Renfrewshire Local Employability Partnership, a group reporting to the CPP. All partners on the LEP have been kept up to date on funding delays and are happy with the plans in place.
4. **Legal** – Not applicable.
5. **Property/Assets** - Not applicable.

6. **Information Technology** – Not applicable.
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - Not applicable.
8. **Health & Safety**- Not applicable.
9. **Procurement** – Not applicable.
10. **Risk**- no risks at present. Funding delays are already mitigated against using the Invest in Renfrewshire budget and any funding reduction in future will be subject to a separate report to board.
11. **Privacy Impact**- Not applicable.
12. **Cosla Policy Position**- Cosla are involved in ongoing discussions with Scottish Government over the grant award.

For more information contact:

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