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| Report To: | Education & Communities Committee | Date: | 1 September 2020 |
| Report By: | Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development | Report No: | EDUCOM/46/20/LMcV |
| Contact Officer: | Louise McVey | Contact No: | 01475 712042 |
| Subject: | Anti-Poverty Initiatives: Food Insecurity, Digital Connectivity and Strengthening the Third Sector Base | | |

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide more detail of the Food Insecurity, Digital Connectivity and Community Grants proposals utilising the £1million Anti-Poverty Fund. The report also outlines the use of funding from the Scottish Government Food Fund.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 As part of the 2020/21 Budget, the Council and Integration Joint Board (IJB) allocated £1 million for Anti-Poverty initiatives. The Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 11 August 2020 approved a number of projects supported by this fund including: food insecurity, digital connectivity and strengthening the third sector base. It was agreed that a follow up report providing more details on these proposals would be presented to the Education & Communities Committee.

2.2 £150,000 for food insecurity

This will give every child in receipt of free school meals and a clothing grant an extra £40 to provide additional food over the Christmas period.

2.3 £60,000 for digital connectivity

Digital Connectivity will be provided to people who are attempting to upskill themselves but who do not have digital kits to enable them to access learning, training and employment opportunities. This support will be developed between Inverclyde Council Community Learning and Development and the third sector organisations to target people who are most likely to have difficulties because they need hardware, connectivity and improved capacity to continue with their education or training which will lead to employment opportunities.

2.4 £200,000 to strengthen the third sector community base

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic many community partner organisations received short-term funding from the Scottish Government to enable them to support vulnerable people within their community area. This included those who were marginalised or financially at risk, however, much of this funding is now ending and many local people still require support, either as a result of the pandemic or because their financial situation has worsened.

- 2.5 Support from the Scottish Government Food Fund of £1,123,000 has provided funding to enable local third sector and community organisations to tackle food insecurity during COVID-19.

To date the money has provided:

- money to support the Council to provide £25 per fortnight for free school meals until the end

of August

- additional food bags delivered to families in need (including baby bags)
- approximately 30,000 prepared meals delivered to older and vulnerable adults across Inverclyde through HSCP
- money to directly support food banks
- money to third sector organisations to provide meals to increase the reach of their services

Further use of the funding is proposed as follows:

- £30,000 to local foodbank and third sector organisations to help with food insecurity
- £42,000 to deliver food bags to families who are identified by services as being in severe poverty or at risk
- £60,000 to develop a food pantry

2.6 Conditions of the Food Fund grant have meant that the funding plans must be put in place by the end of September 2020. Due to the time constraints of Scottish Government Funding, it is proposed that the Food Pantry be appointed under a directly awarded contract as part of the emergency COVID-19 response. Inverclyde Community Development Trust have an already well progressed proposal to develop a Food Pantry and the intention would be to allocate the £60,000 to the Trust to set up a food pantry subject to appropriate outcomes and conditions being agreed.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Education and Communities Committee:

- Notes the use of the anti-poverty initiative funding;
- Agrees that recommendations for community funding awards be reported to the Education and Communities Committee;
- Agrees that a direct award of £60,000 be given to the Inverclyde Community Development Trust to develop a Food Pantry subject to officers agreeing suitable outcomes with the Trust.

Ruth Binks
Corporate Director
Education, Communities & Organisational Development

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 As part of the 2020/21 Budget the Council and Integration Joint Board (IJB) allocated £1 million for Anti-Poverty initiatives. The Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 11 August 2020, approved a number of projects supported by this fund including; food insecurity, digital connectivity and strengthening the third sector base. It was agreed at that Committee that a follow up report providing more detail on these proposals would be presented to the Education & Communities Committee.
- 4.2 Throughout the COVID-19 lockdown period the Council and partners have been delivering a wide range of supports to vulnerable individuals and families around food, direct finances, digital and humanitarian aid. It is likely that many of these supports will need to continue for many people and families in Inverclyde to mitigate the financial impact of COVID-19.

5.0 ANTI-POVERTY FUND UPDATE

- 5.1 The Policy & Resources Committee approved £1 million from the recurring revenue budget to create a resource to progress sustainable initiatives to reduce poverty and deprivation within Inverclyde. The Committee also recommended that a follow-up report providing more detail of the Food Insecurity, Digital Connectivity and Community Grants proposals will be presented to the Education & Communities Committee on 1 September.

5.2 Food Insecurity (£150,000)

When schools closed in March 2020, the Council ensured that children and young people in receipt of free school meals still received a lunch. As large orders of food supplied became problematic, the Council agreed to provide a fortnightly £25 cash payment to families for every child in receipt of free school meals and clothing grant, supplemented with a food parcel for the most vulnerable. The current scheme which benefited over 3,700 children and young people ended on 28 August 2020. Recognising the impact that food poverty can have on families, particularly at Christmas, the Policy & Resources agreed that a one off payment of £40 will be made in December 2020 to all families with a child/young person in receipt of free school meals and a clothing grant, allowing families to buy healthier food over the Christmas period. On the basis of a one off payment of £40 this would cost approximately £150,000.

5.3 Digital Connectivity (£60,000)

Community feedback has identified that Digital exclusion is a significant issue which has been highlighted by the need for on-line communications during lock-down. A short life officer working group has been formed to look at how the Council could best provide support to individuals based on both the existing plans for the expansion of provision of connectivity and support funded from the Welfare Reform budget but also from the experience of the COVID period. The short life working group recognised the need to support people with digital connectivity to increase their opportunity to participate in learning, training and employment as identified by Inverclyde Council Community Learning and Development. Specifically, the project will target people 16 years plus who have left school but need enhanced digital connectivity to engage in training and development; lone parents returning to the work place; and people who have English as a second language. The project will be supported by 2 existing CLD Digital Inclusion Workers.

5.4 Strengthen the Community/Third Sector Base (£200,000)

In addition to the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, our third sector partners worked with us to provide further services to the heart of communities in Inverclyde. These organisations have built up new relationships and recruited new volunteers and some have received financial support from short, time limited Scottish Government funding.

There are also some established community partner organisations who have an existing partnership with the Council who may be experiencing significant reductions in income level or

increased costs and now require additional support from the Anti-Poverty Initiative Funds to support Inverclyde as part of the partnership recovery plan.

This £200,000 grant fund will be made available to community and third sector organisations with an existing relationship with the Council to deliver on outcomes linked to the impact of poverty or providing assistance to the most vulnerable in Inverclyde's communities.

Organisations will be able to apply for one-off funding to a maximum of £40,000 to extend the lifetime of their project or to enable them to continue their service delivery.

This funding will be assessed by senior Council officers and recommendations will be reported to, and agreed by, the Education and Communities Committee.

5.5 The community fund will be awarded to projects where one or more of the following can be demonstrated:

- The project will help to alleviate poverty
- The project provides support to the most vulnerable in society or those in significant hardship
- The project is part of the humanitarian community recovery plan after COVID-19
- Where an organisation will struggle to deliver agreed outcomes linked to the locality plan

6.0 SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT FOOD FUND UPDATE (£1,123,000)

6.1 Support from the Scottish Government Food Fund of £1,123,000 has provided funding to enable local third sector and community organisations to ensure that there is no food insecurity during COVID-19. To date, co-ordinated by the Council, the food fund has provided:

- money to support the Council to provide £25 per fortnight for free school meals
- additional food bags delivered to families in need (including baby bags)
- approximately 30,000 prepared meals delivered to older and vulnerable adults across Inverclyde through the HSCP
- money to directly support food banks
- money to third sector organisations to provide meals to increase the reach of their services

In addition, the Scottish Government provided direct funding to Fare Share to purchase food to be distributed to local authority areas. Inverclyde Council co-ordinated and organised the distribution to 9 community organisations on a weekly basis. Since March 2020, Fare Share has provided Inverclyde with more than 12,000 tonnes of food.

6.2 Proposed spend for the remainder of the food fund is outlined as follows:

- £30,000 to local foodbank and third sector organisations to help with food insecurity
- £42,000 to deliver food bags to families who are identified by services as being in severe poverty or at risk
- £60,000 to develop a food pantry as outlined in paragraphs 6.3 and 6.4 below

6.3 There is now an opportunity to establish a local Food Pantry in Inverclyde to create locally based support in a community setting. Food Pantries avoids the issue of stigma and helps create a dignified response to food poverty. A Food Pantry is essentially a shop which is community owned and operated in order to provide access to low and no cost food. It is usually run on a co-operative and mutual aid model, so that all members of a community can access it without restriction and has an additional focus on reducing the environmental impact of food waste. All members of the community can contribute and can benefit. This removes some of the stigma that could come with people accessing free or reduced food from the Food Pantry.

6.4 Conditions of grant have meant that the funding plans must be put in place by the end of September 2020. Developing a Food Pantry in Inverclyde will require close working with our third sector organisations to establish a local unit, to work with community volunteers and to encourage local residents to access the pantry. Commissioning and the location of the Food Pantry is being explored to ensure that it is accessible for all. Due to the time constraints with

Scottish Government funding, this project will be appointed under a directly awarded contract as part of the emergency COVID-19 response. Inverclyde Community Development Trust have an already well progressed proposal to develop a Food Pantry and the intention would be to allocate the £60,000 to the Trust to set up a Food Pantry subject to specific outcomes being agreed with the Trust.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Finance

All the above proposals are contained with existing Council Budgets or Scottish Government Grant funding.

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

| Cost Centre | Budget Heading | Budget Years | Proposed Spend this Report | Virement From | Other Comments |
|----------------------------|----------------|--------------|----------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Anti-Poverty Fund Projects | Various | 2020/21 | £410,000 | | |
| Food Fund | Various | 20/21 | £1,123,000 | | |

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

| Cost Centre | Budget Heading | With Effect from | Annual Net Impact | Virement From (If Applicable) | Other Comments |
|-------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| N/A | | | | | |

7.2 Legal

None.

7.3 Human Resources

None.

7.4 Equalities

Equalities

- (a) Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

| | |
|-----|--|
| YES | |
| X | NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required |

- (b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of

outcome?

| | |
|---|--|
| | YES – A written statement showing how this report’s recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed. |
| X | NO |

(c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

| | |
|---|---|
| | YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals. |
| X | NO |

7.5 Repopulation

All these initiatives will encourage individuals and families to remain within Inverclyde and help stabilise the population.

8.0 CONSULTATIONS

8.1 None.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.