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| Report To: | Policy and Resources Committee | Date: | 25 May 2021 |
| Report By: | Corporate Director, Education, Communities Organisational Development | Report No: | PR/09/21/RB |
| Contact Officer: | Ruth Binks | Contact No: | 712761 |
| Subject: | Proposals for Anti-Poverty Interventions 2021-2023 | | |

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Policy and Resources Committee with a series of proposals on the deployment of funds allocated to anti-poverty in Inverclyde, including governance and interventions.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 In the 2020 Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) report a number of data zones within Inverclyde are highlighted as amongst the worst in Scotland, with Greenock Town Centre rated number one in Scotland.
- 2.2 Prior to the SIMD 2020 being published, the Council and its Alliance Partners had already identified three of Inverclyde's six localities (Port Glasgow, Greenock East and Central, Greenock South and South West) as having the greatest level of inequalities, poverty and deprivation in Inverclyde.
- 2.3 The Council, along with the Integration Joint Board, have allocated £1million for specific action to address these inequalities and this papers sets out a range of potential targeted interventions to address these inequalities, along with proposals on governance to support the management of the intervention.
- 2.4 Committee allocated extra funding for Scottish Welfare Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments in 2017. In recent years this funding has not been required. It is proposed to vire the unallocated £80,000 from the Welfare Reforms Budget to the Anti-Poverty Budget thus increasing the annual sum available to £1.08million.
- 2.5 As part of the recovery from Covid-19 pandemic, Inverclyde Council conducted a series of community listening events across the six localities and a survey monkey questionnaire during February/March 2021. This was established to engage the community on activities and interventions that will impact on inequalities, poverty and deprivation in Inverclyde and this helped generate the proposals contained in Section 5 of the report.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that;
- The Policy and Resources Committee approve the proposals set out in Section 5 and approve the virement of £80,000 from the Welfare Reforms budget to the Anti -Poverty budget.
 - The Policy and Resources Committee note that officers will continue to develop proposals to utilise the remaining funds for Members to consider in the context of the Covid Recovery Plans

- c) The Policy & Resources Committee note that regular updates on the progress of projects and the impact of the investment will be presented to Committee.
- d) The Policy and Resources Committee note that longer term proposals for the use of the recurring budget in light of any changes to Scottish Government Policy/Funding will be reported as part of the 2022/23 Budget.

Ruth Binks
Corporate Director
Education, Communities & Organisational Development

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Scottish Government published the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) report on 28 January 2020. The SIMD is a Scottish Government tool for identifying places in Scotland suffering from deprivation. It uses data relating to multiple aspects of life (income, employment, health, education, access, crime and housing) in order to gain the fullest possible picture of deprivation across Scotland.
- 4.2 Inverclyde is the area with the largest local share of deprived areas, with 45% of data zones among the 20% most deprived in Scotland. Greenock Central is ranked as the most deprived data zone in Scotland.
- 4.3 Prior to Covid -19 pandemic the Council, along with the Integration Joint Board, allocated £1million for specific action to address inequalities and deprivation with a focus on initiatives to address unemployment and employability, support for people experiencing difficulties with alcohol and drugs, mental health or people who are experiencing food insecurities.
- 4.4 The issues faced by the affected by the targeted client group are often complex and multi-generational – so in order to address this a holistic approach across the three Directorates of the Council was adopted via the formation of a senior officer Anti-Poverty Group.
- 4.5 The Anti-Poverty Steering Group provides strategic leadership, monitoring and guidance on the multifaceted challenges associated with this local priority. The Anti-Poverty Steering Group comprises of the two Corporate Directors and the two Interim Service Directors, Head of OD, Policy & Communications with Secretariat provided by the Education and Communities Service.
- 4.6 In March 2021, Inverclyde Council completed a series of Community Listening Events and Community Survey Monkey across the 6 Localities, to discuss with key stakeholders what needs to change to offer better support and to meet the needs of people living in Inverclyde and specifically within the most deprived communities. Key themes include;
 - Employment, life skills and apprenticeships for young people and people who are most marginalised from the job market, offer intensive on going and follow up support. Quality employment opportunities for those who have lost their jobs or been furloughed. Ensuring co-ordination and communication so that people who need support for benefits or employment know where to access it and that the services are sharing information for the benefit of the individual.
 - Mental Health and Isolation was discussed at every community listening event and more support is required at grass root level for people to build their resilience and skills. The stakeholders agreed that having safe community spaces would offer local services that were easily accessed and relevant to the community.
 - Food and Utility Insecurity are a concern of many of the stakeholders who participated, food insecurity was affecting those living in poverty prior to Covid 19 pandemic and this has been exacerbated during the lock down period, especially for those who are not entitled to the additional benefits but have experienced a reduction in their income.
 - Asset Based Community Support – People within the smaller localities have worked together to develop services and volunteering opportunities to meet the short term needs of the community with kindness and compassion. These immediate needs include food, clothing, utilities and digital access, which are accumulating and adding to family stress and mental health. Collaborative service support for those who are on the poverty margin but do not qualify for the benefits available was highlighted across many of the localities.

5.0 PROPOSALS AND GOVERNANCE

- 5.1 It is proposed that the implementation, management and monitoring of the day to day interventions of the Anti-Poverty initiatives will be the responsibility of a 0.6 dedicated team leader. Two year budget - Costs for backfilling the redirected hours- £72,000.

- 5.2 Delivery, governance and monitoring of the interventions will be the responsibility of the Implementation Group, consisting of Service Manager – Regeneration, Service Manager - Business Support Engagement, Financial Inclusion and Workforce, Finance Manager – Education and Exchequer, Service Manager Policy, Performance and Partnership and Service Manager Strategy and Support Services, This group will be Chaired by Head of Culture, Communities & Educational Resources.

The Anti-Poverty Steering Group will lead the strategic overview including reporting on anti-poverty initiatives to Inverclyde Council Policy and Resources Committee. The Anti-Poverty Steering Group will be Chaired by Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development. An organigram of this proposed structure is attached as appendix 1 of this report.

The Anti-Poverty team leader post will be responsible for the collation of project updates, but not responsible for the delivery of each individual project. The project lead will help those involved with the projects to monitor delivery and evaluation of the projects as well as anticipated medium term outcomes. Updates will be reported to the Policy and Resources Committee on a regular basis. It should be noted that longer term outcomes and longitudinal impact on poverty will be harder to measure for many of the projects.

INTERVENTIONS PROPOSED

5.3 Employment - £1,037,000

It is proposed to implement two local Employment pilots to offer support to a cohort of 20-30 year old males who are unemployed with alcohol or drugs dependencies, often with mental health issues. Males tend to make up at least 70% of the alcohol and drug service population and these clients do not engage effectively with the Council or other support services due to their chaotic lifestyle which often includes crime. It is proposed to provide a pipeline of three dedicated Grade 6 outreach support posts for 24 months to these individuals; to engage with them, gain their trust, provide intensive activities through a diversionary approach with a view to making them job ready after one year and provide them with one years' worth of paid employment in year 2, with appropriate ongoing support. An initial pilot will target Greenock Town Centre clients with a second pilot following in Port Glasgow Town Centre, each pilot will support 15 clients. In the SIMD 2020 figures Inverclyde's most deprived data zone, which is located in Greenock town centre, has an income deprivation rate of 48% and an employment deprivation rate of 44%. Further analysis of our most deprived town centres datazones has identified a cohort of 20-30 year old males with complex barriers to employment, often mental health and addictions, and involved in crime. There are major challenges to be overcome in relation to reducing poverty and deprivation, increasing employment opportunities, improving health and reducing health inequalities. To be successful in tackling this issue it will need to be delivered through stronger, more targeted collaborative working which we consider these pilots capable of achieving as well as the added benefit in year two of paid employment being reinvested in the community.

5.4 School Linked Social Workers £202,000

Based on the findings of the CELSUS work around early intervention and child neglect and the links to poverty it is proposed to allocate two full time social workers to the most deprived school cluster areas in Inverclyde. The service will be piloted for an initial two year period and the social workers can be redeployed at the end of this period if the pilot stops.

5.5 Business Start Up - £167,000

Employ a dedicated business development officer for a two year period to provide business start-up and business development support in the most deprived data zones. (SIMD 2020). This funding will be allocated between employment costs £92,000 salary / support development costs £75,000.

5.6 **Food Insecurity - £124,000 for two years**

The first Inverclyde Zero Waste Food Pantry opened in early December 2020 and the membership has steadily increased to more than 400 members at the end of March 2021. The table below provides an update of the location members of the pantry

| Postcode | Members |
|-----------------|----------------|
| PA14 | 37 |
| PA15 | 98 |
| PA16 | 244 |
| PA18 | 3 |
| PA19 | 20 |

Providing a total of £60,000 towards the running costs of the Pantry for the next 2 years which will offer the Inverclyde Community Development Trust with medium-term financial security for the existing pantry whilst it bids for other funding sources to help support and expand the Pantry longer term.

Inverclyde Council has two annual memberships to Glasgow FareShare to supply food to key stakeholder organisations and to the Inverclyde Zero Waste Food Pantry who distribute to their local service users. The cost of the two Fare Share membership will be £64,000 for two years.

5.7 **Fuel Insecurity - £200,000**

Combining the anti-poverty fund with hardship funding will enhance local partnerships with the third and community sector organisations such as IHeat to provide service support for households who are financially insecure. IHeat already support older people over 75 years to ensure that they do not have debts because of utility bills. IHeat currently offer advice, information and funding of £75 for utilities. During Covid -19 pandemic lock down this was increased to £150 of grants because older people were shielding or self-isolating and therefore would be likely to use more gas and electricity. This will be scaled to include people over 70 years with an annual cost of £80,000 per annum.

5.8 In addition, Inverclyde households will receive support through the Wise Group Energy Crisis Fund (IHeat) to ensure that their energy supply is sustained whilst working with the household to equip them with the tools, skills and knowledge to manage their energy usage in future.

- Households with prepaid meters: will receive a £49 top up grant funding provided up to three occasions for households who have prepaid metering that is in or in danger of self-disconnection.
- Households who pay by quarterly credit or monthly budget will receive a one-off charitable grant of £50 that will be allocated to the Customers energy billing account.
- Households with a prepaid meters will be given the opportunity to discuss the option of changing to a lower tariff that meets the needs of the household. This option will be in discussion and at the discretion of the energy provider depending on any outstanding debts. It is likely that the utility company will carry out a credit check prior to agreeing to change the meter however, IHEAT energy advocacy will support the customer to ensure the best utility deal is offered.

5.9 **Financial Fitness - £60,000**

Inverclyde Council provide Financial Fitness with £30,000 of grants per year to offer support in benefits advice and financial management, this provides people across the community with a choice of services for them to seek support and assistance regarding their finances. This cost was previously met from the Welfare Reform Budget.

5.10 **Starter Packs - £74,000**

Starter Packs is a small community organisation who provides those on the lowest income with a range of household products to assist with their first tenancy. Starter Packs also receives £14,000 towards rent for a two year period. This cost was previously met from the Welfare Reform Budget.

5.11 **Early Intervention Support and Mentoring for Families - £104,000**

To provide mentoring and coaching support for families living on low income, and who have challenges with mental health and anxiety. This proposal will provide £52,000 of funding per year to employ staff for a 24 month period to establish and develop a local referral service support for families requiring early intervention support. The funding will equate to supporting approximately 25 to 30 families in Inverclyde in the first 12 months of the initiative.

5.12 **Tail o'the Bank Credit Union - £8,000**

To support Tail o'the Bank with funding for non-domestic rates relief for the period 2021/23.

5.13 **Other Anti-Poverty Initiatives**

These proposals are not the only initiatives or services that will work towards mitigating poverty and deprivation in Inverclyde. Policies and plans such as Attainment Challenge, the Child Poverty Action Report, Inverclyde Outcome Improvement Plan and the Recovery Plans all take cognisance of poverty, deprivation and inequalities as a priority. Many services that the Council provides have either a direct or indirect impact on trying to alleviate families and residents from the impact of poverty including:

- Employability Schemes
- Scottish Welfare Fund/Discretionary Housing Payments
- Attainment Fund
- Early implementation of universal provision of P4 School Meals
- More generous qualifying criteria for FSM and Clothing Grants
- More generous free School Transport eligibility for FSM recipients
- Free internet access in many Council Facilities
- Heating support/grants for the over 75s

Therefore it can be seen that prior to the events of COVID-19, Inverclyde Council already had a strong record for enhancing national initiatives or being early adopters of interventions to alleviate poverty. Enhanced support continued during the pandemic. Direct examples of this include:

- The Council gave £100 Council Tax credit to around 3700 households in 2021/22 (Cost £370k)
- The Council gave an extra £5/fortnight to qualifying pupils during the lockdown/home working period
- 620 more children qualified for the £100 Christmas and Easter payments to FSM recipients

5.14 The proposed initiatives in this report take into account the recovery period post Covid-19. Beyond the initial 2 years of this plan, consideration needs to be given to ensure that Inverclyde Council support takes into account the national context and any future Scottish Government initiatives that are put in place. The longer term sustainability of any interventions needs to be taken into account. In future years, the Council may wish to consider continuing to opt to enhance any national policies; for instance continuing with the more generous threshold for free school meals, or to increase the amount of any grant payments made. If this is the case, then consideration will need to be given as to how this will be funded.

5.15 **Summary of Finance**

| Proposal | Two year budget |
|---|-----------------|
| Dedicated team leader (0.6FTE) | £72,000 |
| Local Employment pilots | £1,037,000 |
| Dedicated business development officer | £167,000 |
| School linked Social Workers | £202,000 |
| Food Insecurity Year 2 Pantry and Fare Share Membership | £124,000 |
| Fuel Insecurity | £200,000 |
| Financial Fitness | £60,000 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Starter Pack | £74,000 |
| Early Intervention Support and Mentoring for Families | £104,000 |
| Credit Union | £8,000 |
| Total Allocated | £2,048,000 |
| Contingency | £112,000 |
| Total funding | £2,160,000 |

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Finance

Committee allocated extra funding for Scottish Welfare Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments in 2017. In recent years this funding has not been required. It is proposed to vire the unallocated £80,000 from the Welfare Reforms Budget to the Anti-Poverty Budget thus increasing the annual sum available to £1.08million.

In addition there remains almost £800,000 in the Anti -Poverty Earmarked Reserve. Officers will develop further proposals for Members to consider later in 2021.

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

| Cost Centre | Budget Heading | Budget Years | Proposed Spend this Report | Virement From | Other Comments |
|-------------------|----------------|--------------|----------------------------|---------------|--|
| Anti-Poverty Fund | Various | 2021/23 | £2048k | | £112k remains unallocated over 2021/23 |

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

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

6.2 Legal

There are no legal implications other than those highlighted in the report.

6.3 Human Resources

Any HR implications are highlighted in the report.

6.4 Equalities

Equalities

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

| | |
|---|--|
| X | YES |
| | 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?

| | |
|---|--|
| X | YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed. |
| | 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 |

6.5 **Repopulation**

Tackling the deep seated inequalities in Inverclyde will have a positive impact of the area's population.

7.0 CONSULTATIONS

7.1 The MBWG support the proposals in this report.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 None

Inverclyde Anti-Poverty Governance Structure

