
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

30 May 2023

Cabinet

Title: Cost of Living Crisis

Purpose: To provide a second progress report to Cabinet in relation to the North Ayrshire Council responses to the current cost-of-living crisis and associated investments and funds.

Recommendation: It is recommended that Cabinet:

- a) Notes the progress the Council has made in developing support in relation to the cost-of-living crisis; and
- b) Agrees to accept future progress reports on the investments, funds and activity associated with the cost-of-living crisis.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 North Ayrshire Council is designing and delivering a range of investments and initiatives to mitigate the impacts of the current cost-of-living crisis for its residents.
- 1.2 Further to an initial report to Cabinet on 22nd November 2022, this report provides a comprehensive overview of the current investments, funds, and activity relevant to the cost-of-living crisis, progress to date and next steps. This report will continue to form the basis of future six-monthly reports and progress will continue to be reported to Cabinet on a regular basis.

2. Background

- 2.1 The current cost-of-living crisis has resulted in a series of challenges for residents, communities, and businesses in North Ayrshire. The ongoing impact of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and economic unpredictability, compounded by the energy crisis, increased inflation and increased interest rates has resulted in higher household prices which have created hardship and financial exclusion for citizens, including North Ayrshire residents.
- 2.2 In August 2022, Monetary Policy Report, the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee noted that the risks around its projections from both external and domestic factors were exceptionally large, given the very large increase in wholesale gas prices since May and the consequent impacts on real incomes for UK households and on Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation.

- 2.3 More recent assessments by the Office for Budget Responsibility indicate that consumer price inflation (CPI) will fall steadily throughout 2023, but with wage growth expected to stagnate or fall over the next year, many households will continue to struggle. The Bank of England thinks inflation peaked last year and expects it to keep falling in 2023 to around 4% by the end of the year.
- 2.4 North Ayrshire now has the 7th lowest employment rate, an improvement on the 2nd lowest in Scotland (73.6%) compared to a Scottish average of 74.4%.
- 2.5 The North Ayrshire rate for claimants as a proportion of the working age population (aged 16-64) is 4.6%. This compares to regional figures of 4.3% for East Ayrshire and 3.7% for South Ayrshire and a Scottish average of 3.3%. This dataset is for March 2023 and shows the rate has remained the same compared to other areas where figures have increased.

(Source: [Dataset Selection - Query - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://nomisweb.co.uk))

- 2.6 North Ayrshire's vulnerability to the current economic crisis provides the context for the updates to Cabinet in relation to current national and local interventions.

UK Government Response

- 2.7 The UK Government has committed to providing over £37 billion additional support this year:
- The Energy Bill Scheme will ensure that 29 million households across the UK will receive a £400 non repayable discount on energy bills. In addition, 1.1 million families who are in receipt of tax credits across the country received a cost-of-living payment of £326, through till March 2023. The Energy Price Guarantee is designed to ensure a freeze on energy bills and typical households will pay not more than £2,500 annually. The Energy Price Guarantee has been extended at the same level for an additional 3 months to the end of June 2023.
 - All pensioner households received an extra £300 to help them to cover the rising cost of energy this winter.
 - More than 8 million households on means tested benefits received a payment of £650 including those who receive Universal Credit, Income-based Jobseekers Allowance, Income-related Employment Support Allowance, Income Support, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit and Pension Credit. Most people on DWP benefits received the next cost of living payment between April 25, 2023 and May 17, 2023.
 - People with disabilities received an extra £150 to help with the particular extra costs they face.
 - The National Insurance contribution threshold has risen to £12,570.
 - Households who do not pay for gas or electricity from the mains will receive support.
 - Support for businesses targets the most vulnerable industries.

Scottish Government Response

- 2.8 In March 2022 and in response to the cost-of-living crisis, the Scottish Government announced additional financial support to low-income households through a cost-of-living credit of £150 on 2022/23 Council Tax bills.
- 2.9 The Scottish Government published the Programme for Government 2022 – 2023 with measures to address longer term challenges, provide urgent support and help tackle the current cost-of-living crisis.
- 2.10 Support includes the following:
- For anyone in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment, an automatic increase to £25 per week has been in place from 14 November 2022. Applications for the Scottish Child Payment are also open to all eligible under 16s from that date, with all payments backdated to the date of application.
 - Bridging Payments delivered immediate financial support to low-income families with school age children worth £130 in October and December 2022 were doubled to £260.
 - Legislation to ensure the Best Start Grant is paid automatically to eligible families in receipt of Scottish Child Payment without the need to apply.
 - Introduction of the new Winter Heating Payment allowance which guarantees a £50 annual payment to around 400,000 low-income households.
 - Doubling of the Fuel Insecurity Fund to £20 million in 2022-23, to help households at risk of self-disconnection or self-rationing their energy use.
 - Widening eligibility for the Tenant Grant Fund, to support those struggling with increasing costs.
 - Giving local authorities more flexibility to take account of energy bills in their prioritisation of households for Discretionary Housing Payments. Funding for Discretionary Housing Payments is increased by £5 million.
 - Legislation was introduced to reduce hardships particularly for those in rented accommodation by freezing rents for six months. The Scottish Government has confirmed that the measures will continue past these dates, with amendments. From 1 April 2023 until 30 September 2023, a new rent cap of 3% in most instances - or up to 6% for prescribed costs - will apply to the private rented sector. The eviction restrictions will also remain in place.
 - In December 2022, North Ayrshire received £63,000 revenue and £17,000 capital funding from the Scottish Government Island Cost Crisis Emergency Fund.

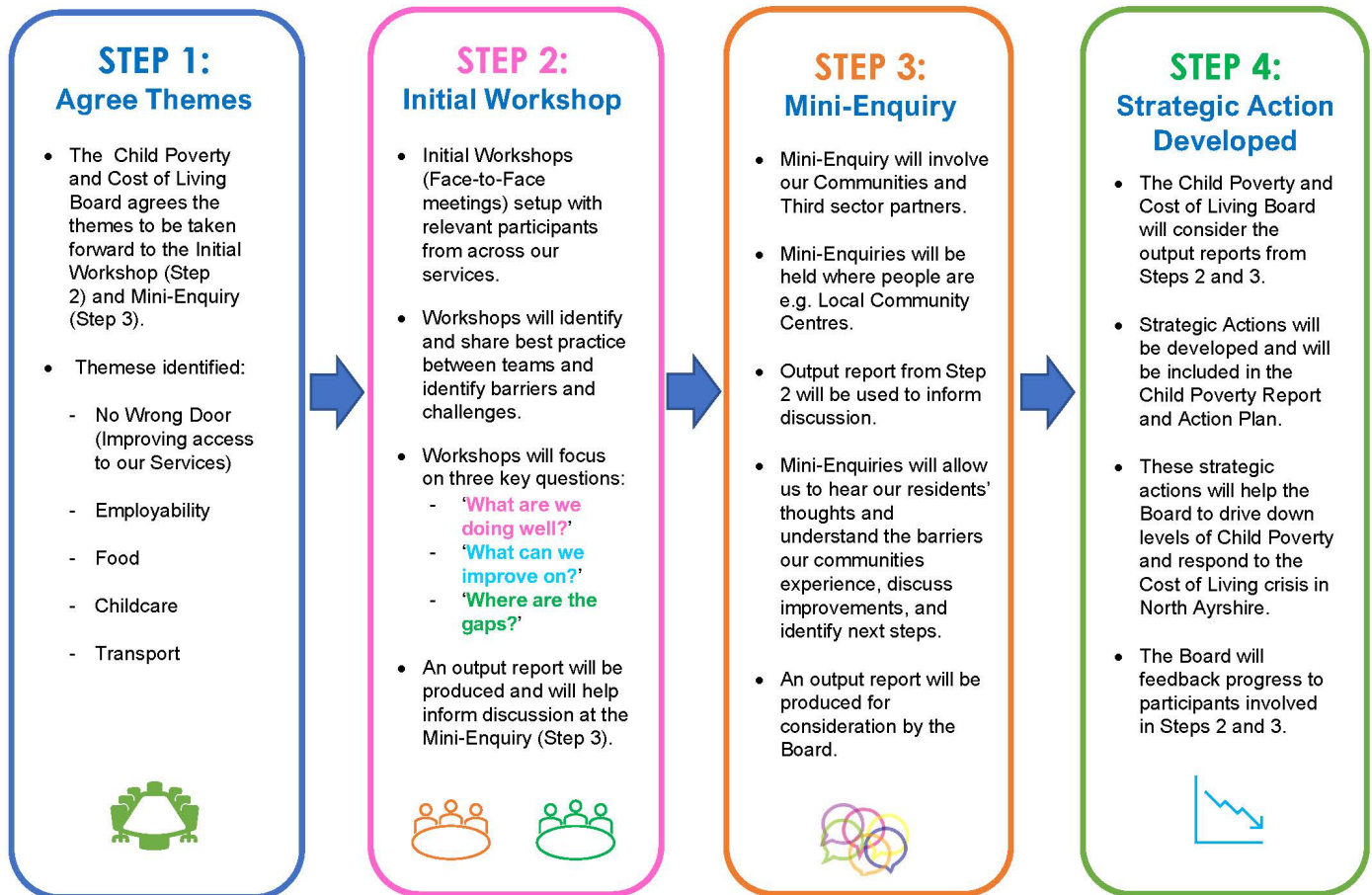
North Ayrshire Response

2.11 Governance

- 2.11.1 In June 2022 Cabinet agreed to set up a new Board to tackle child poverty. With the escalation in cost-of-living concerns this board now also oversees the Council's response to the current cost-of-living crisis. The board is chaired by the Council Leader. The strategic approach to the themes in relation to child poverty and cost-of-living are agreed by the Board and explored in conjunction with Community Planning, third sector partners and residents.

2.11.2 A consistent approach to identifying actions is ensured by the following approach

Child Poverty and Cost of Living Crisis – Strategic Action Template



2.11.3 Themes explored to date are:

- No Wrong Door
- Employability
- Food

Two place-based mini-enquiries have been concluded on Arran and Cumbrae to align with the Scottish Government Island Cost Crisis Emergency Fund.

A mini-enquiry on childcare is planned for 25th May 2023.

The outputs from this work have informed the three-year Child Poverty strategy and annual report which will be presented to Cabinet in June 2023 and will contribute to regular updates to Cabinet on the cost-of-living crisis and related expenditure.

2.11.4 The Council has made substantial investments in tackling child poverty and the cost-of-living crisis. The most recent of these have been agreed in Cabinet reports of June 2022, August 2022 and the budget of March 2023, where the Cost of the School Day fund was replaced by the Child Poverty and Cost of Living Fund. This provides £400k per annum for three years to honour existing commitments in relation to digital devices, fund developments in community transport and provide support for actions directed by the Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board.

2.11.5 This Cabinet report brings together an overview of these investments, the funds that North Ayrshire administers locally on behalf of Scottish Government or Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) which have an impact on the costs of living, progress in relation to intended impacts and timetables for future progress against the funded actions. The funds have been organised thematically and this approach reflects the support we also offer to residents through the Council's web presence at: www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/cost-of-living.

2.11.6 Future regular reports to Cabinet will provide further updates on these funds and related activity as outlined at Appendix 1.

2.12 Cost-of-living Themes and Investments

2.12.1 The themes are as follows:



Energy Advice and Support



Food, Clothing and Essentials



Finance and Benefits



Children and Families



Health and Wellbeing



Business and community including transport for work



Support for Communities



Workforce wellbeing

2.12.2 Further detailed information about the funding associated with the above themes is contained in **Appendix 1**, as well as progress in relation to expenditure, future plans and timescales.

2.13 Cost-of-living Funding and Activities: Update on current investments

The following is a summary of the significant additions and changes since the previous report. Further detail is included at Appendix 1:

- 2.13.1 **EnergySmart:** allocation at the Council budget of 1st March 2023 of underspend in excess of £1m – value TBC – at the end of financial year 2022-23.
- 2.13.2 **Early Intervention Fund – Child Poverty and Cost of Living:** one off investment over three years (replaces Cost of School Day budget): allocation at the Council budget of 1st March 2023: £1.4m.
- 2.13.3 **Financial Inclusion:** £100k additional investment (included within the £1.4m outlined at 2.13.2 above).
- 2.13.4 **Financial Inclusion:** Community Investment Fund (CIF) allocation of £45,767 to CHAP for community-based outreach advice services: approved by Cabinet on 24th January 2023.
- 2.13.5 **Community transport initiative:** £100k investment (included within the £1.4m outlined at 2.13.2 above).
- 2.13.6 **P4 – P5 Free School Meals / Holiday Meals:** Scottish Government funding: £2.272m.
- 2.13.7 **Island Cost Crisis Emergency Fund:** Scottish Government funding: £63k revenue and £17k capital.
- 2.13.8 **Parental Employment Support Fund (PESF):** Scottish Government funding: £282,132.
- 2.14 Further detailed information about the funding associated with the above themes is contained in **Appendix 1**, as well as progress in relation to expenditure, future plans and timescales. This will continue to form the basis of future associated six-monthly updates to Cabinet.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 It is proposed that Cabinet:
 - a) Notes the progress the Council has made on developing support in relation to the cost-of-living crisis; and
 - b) Agrees to accept future progress reports on the investments, funds and activity associated with the cost-of-living crisis.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

Human Resources

4.2 There are no direct HR implications as a result of this report.

Legal

4.3 There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 The purpose of the current report is to provide an overview of the measures which that Council has taken or delivers to mitigate the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis on our most vulnerable residents.

Climate Change and Carbon

4.5 This report includes information on the Energy Smart scheme which aims to reduce fuel poverty and increase affordable warmth, whilst reducing carbon emissions and providing local employment opportunities.

Key Priorities

4.6 The proposals impact on the following:

- Active and strong communities
- Children and young people experience the best start in life
- Inclusive, growing, and enterprising local economy
- People enjoy good life-long health and well-being
- Effective infrastructure and digital connectivity
- Affordable, modern, and well-designed homes that meets residents' needs
- A sustainable environment

Community Wealth Building

4.7 Community Wealth Building is an approach to developing more resilient local economies. First initiated in response to a previous economic crisis in USA, it has gained substantial global momentum as an approach to local economic development. North Ayrshire Council has led the way in Scotland with the first Community Wealth Building Council strategy and the establishment of the Ayrshire CWB Commission. CWB is based on the premise that over time the development of more resilient and sustainable local economy will require fewer reactive interventions in response to future economic, environmental or social crises. It is recognised that as part of the council's comprehensive approach to CWB, short-term measures taken to mitigate the effects of the costs of living crisis will contribute to our medium and longer-term goals of developing a more resilient economy. A recent discussion at NAC CWB Expert Panel emphasised these points and advised where possible efforts should focus

on supporting the long-term transition of our local economy, scaling up and joining up to drive the change that is needed. There are a wide range of initiatives and actions across each of the pillars which will mitigate the cost-of-living crisis including:

- Fair Work – supporting the update of the Real Living Wage and improving job security for employees.
- Procurement – development of local supply chains and strengthening the local company business base
- Plural ownership – evidence shows that cooperatives and other forms of plural ownership are more resilient through periods of economic shocks than shareholder-based businesses, in addition to contributing to addressing social and economic inequality.
- Financial Power - Work with partners including credit unions to encourage progressive finance

The forthcoming CWB legislation and the new Ayrshire regional economic strategy will further strengthen this approach.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 A wide range of partners and residents have been consulted in the development of the interventions included in the report and improvements to delivery of services has resulted. The ongoing mini enquiries, on themes such as the “No Wrong Door” approach, are contributing to interventions and service design.

Audrey Sutton
Executive Director (Communities & Education)

For further information please contact **Audrey Sutton, Executive Director (Communities & Education)**, on **(01294) 324308**.

Background Papers

Appendix 1: Cost of Living Themes & Updates (April 2023)

North Ayrshire Council Cabinet

Cost of Living Themes and Updates – April 2023



Energy Advice and Support

Food, Clothing and Essentials

Finance and Benefits

Children and Families

Health and Wellbeing

Business and Community including transport to work

Support for Communities

Employee Wellbeing



Community based energy support

1. Description of funding stream, date and amount	<p>£1.726m Energy Smart Scheme was secured from funds as part of the 2022/23 Council budget setting process. The £1.726m investment was supplemented by an additional £0.450m to support the crisis payment element of the scheme by Cabinet on 23 August 2022.</p> <p>At the Council budget of 1/3/23, a further commitment to invest any year end underspend in excess of £1m – value TBC – was agreed.</p>
2. Intended impact	<p>The key objective is to support residents of North Ayrshire through the cost-of-living crisis by reducing fuel poverty and increasing affordable warmth, whilst reducing carbon emissions and providing local employment opportunities as part of the programme.</p>
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	<p>There are three elements of the Council's Energy Smart programme, and an update on each is provided below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– The launch of a partnership with the Energy Agency to signpost households to free and impartial advice through the Home Energy Scotland helpline<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The partnership was launched on 19 September 2022 and 1,991 North Ayrshire households have received energy advice since that date to help lower their bills.– The creation of a £450,000 fund to offer one-off emergency support payments towards energy bills for low-income families<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Energy Smart Emergency Support scheme launched on 31 October 2022 to provide assistance over the 2022/23 winter period. Our communication and promotion activities undertaken included a number of press releases highlighting the initiative to local media which was carried by the five regional newspapers and local radio stations. We also carried repeated promotion on our social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn) with details on how to apply with links. The scheme featured as part of our Christmas social media campaign which signposted a number of ways in which households could get extra help in the run-up to the festive season. In addition, the following steps were taken:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Posters and awareness materials were provided to various locations including the 14 food larders, libraries, community centres, GP surgeries, churches and community shops;• Information shared with schools via head teachers;• Information shared with Council employees through message on payslips;• Display screens in libraries and offices were used to promote the scheme; and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To date, the Council has supported over 1,300 households facing pressure from rising utility bills through the Emergency Smart Emergency Support scheme. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The creation of a £1.726 million fund to carry out home improvements to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy bills The initial phase of support launched in January 2023, targeting low-income households who may be eligible for top-up loft insulation. The second phase of support is in the process of being procured and will offer a wider range of energy efficiency measures and is anticipated to launch in June 2023. In addition, we have also provided 900 LED bulbs to the 14 food larders to help reduce energy consumption in homes.
4. What difference has the investment made?	<p>The following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will monitor the success of the programme:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Number of households in fuel poverty helped with energy efficiency advice. 2) Number of households in receipt of crisis support. 3) Number of households granted financial assistance for energy efficiency measures. 4) Estimated annual savings on fuel bills. 5) Carbon emissions saved through installing energy efficiency measures.
5. Next steps and timescales	<p>Appoint a contractor to deliver multiple energy efficiency measures in homes in June 2023.</p>
6. Comments	<p>The Energy Smart model aims to support residents of North Ayrshire through the cost-of-living crisis by reducing fuel poverty and increasing affordable warmth, whilst reducing carbon emissions. Delivery of the sustainability initiative is being implemented across three stages and incorporating energy efficiency and low carbon behaviour advice, crisis support payment and implementation of physical energy efficiency measures.</p>

Citrus Energy	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount	Fuel Poverty - increase capacity in Citrus Energy Fund - Tackling Financial Insecurity: Scottish Government Funding: £0.060m Date awarded - 15/06/2021
2. Intended impact	Increased capacity in Citrus Energy allowed the organisation to deliver the additional support in the Garnock Valley and Irvine and deliver much needed energy advice to local communities.
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	The additional capacity was for a 12-month period and the allocation was fully spent. At its budget of March 2023 Council approved any balance of underspend in 2022/23 beyond £1m to be used to provide funding for further emergency support payments to citizens to help with their energy bills. This funding will be in addition to the previously secured £450,000,
4. What difference has the investment made?	Additional information and advice has been provided at a critical time for residents seeking support.
5. Next steps and timescales	As 3. above
6. Comments	This piece of work was initiated as a result of learning from the pandemic.



Food, Clothing and Essentials

Fairer Food	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount	<p>Fairer Food System Fund: Recovery and Renewal Investment Fund - £0.150m Support to Fairer Food Network Fund: Tackling Financial Insecurity SG – 2021/22 Winter - £0.247m North Ayrshire Fairer Food Network Fund: North Ayrshire COVID Economic Recovery Fund - SG Funding - £0.142m Community Food Network Fund: Original Investment Fund - £0.500m Cost of School Day Food allocation: £150,000</p>
2. Intended impact	<p>The prevention of food poverty through the provision of food with dignity. The aim is to reduce the cost of the weekly shop, not to provide a full shop, so that family budgets go further. This minimises pressure on the foodbank. Funding has been used for food vouchers during holidays and the provision of warm clothing/footwear/outdoor wear and basic household items, such as toiletries. It also includes support for self-isolation on islands, mental health, energy, and money advice.</p>
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	<p>A network of community food larders has been established with North Ayrshire Fairer Food branding. The Council provides support in food safety, health and safety and other regulations. The NA Fairer Food Network of community food providers meet regularly and have been co-developing, sharing good practice and piloting bulk-buying, as well as establishing community benefit partnerships.</p> <p>Fairer Food System Allocation fully spent. This was the initial funding allocation that started off the establishment of the network. Expenditure included shelving, tills, resources for cooking & food preparation areas, initial stock, branding, fridges, freezers, chill cabinets etc. £0.150m</p> <p>Support to Fairer Food Network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA Food Resilience (Community Hubs and NA Foodbank) Peripatetic Support Officer supports the transportation of supplies such as emergency parcels, larder top up stock, delivery, and uplifts of stocks/equipment/materials across all sites. Funding to cover additional Venue Assistants for food support at Whitlees Centre. Emergency stock supplies and equipment investment for emergency situations including BBQs for each larder site. Additional urns, crockery and twelve months Foodbank Co-ordinator and cook costs: £0.077. • Food Larder Development: Top up for winter food supplies, marketing and promotion, equipment and adaptations, training of staff – The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS), Elementary Food Hygiene, Financial Regulations: £0.143m. • Community Cafes: Costs for food, supplies to host free soup days, coffee mornings or similar targeting financially vulnerable and isolated. Investment in equipment within Community Cafes: £0.027m.

North Ayrshire Fairer Food Network

The North Ayrshire Fairer Food Network is our local alternative to foodbanks and is aimed at addressing food insecurity in a dignified way. Further development of the larders and shops will support low income residents by developing and improving the sustainability of the existing network.

New initiatives and business models include community fridges, community cafes, social enterprises based on growing produce and better links across providers. It will also focus on support for the islands communities so that approaches are developed which fit their specific needs: £0.142m.

Cost of the School Day (Food element) 2021/22

- Reusable water bottles were purchased for all North Ayrshire school pupils. Water bottles reduce the need for pupils to purchase single-use plastic liquids during the school day. Providing all pupils with a water bottle reduces stigma and promotes healthy practices. It is also more environmentally friendly.
- Those accessing Community Larders with school aged children were provided with supplementary food items linked to the cost of the school day.

Cost of the School Day (Food element) 2022/23

Planning with community larder network and partners is ongoing to address the particular issues created by the cost-of-living crisis.

Ongoing NAC support to North Ayrshire Fairer Food Network External consultants have recently completed a review of the larder models, which vary depending on the local aims of the community organisation. The NA Fairer Food Network has agreed a model with should sustain current demand for 3 years, supported by the allocation of £500,000 from Cabinet.

The payment model to distribute this funding will provide a quarterly payment for 12 quarters dependant on the larder footfall, which breaks down as follows:

Up to 24 weekly appointments, £500 per quarter.

Between 24 and 49 weekly appointments, £1,000 per quarter.

Between 50 and 99 weekly appointments, £2,000 per quarter.

Over 100 weekly appointments, £3,000 per quarter

The first quarterly payment was made in January 2023 and covered a four month period from Dec 22 – March 23 to allow for a standard reporting period. The first payments totalled: £27,994.33 and supported 14 larders across the authority. This model allows capacity to expand as the cost-of-living crisis continues and more families and households need to access the provision. We anticipate continued growth in weekly appointments over the coming months.

The second payment run will be in April 23 and will be based on the footfall from Jan – Mar 23 and will support 15 larders as Eco Savvy on Arran now has a subsidised food model running in conjunction with their Zero Waste café's on the island. This will be included in the next payment run in April.

	It was also agreed that £100k of the £500k be held in reserve to support any new larder set ups and infrastructure development.
4. What difference has the investment made?	<p>15 Community Larders are operational. Network support group meets quarterly, and members are part of a communication group for peer support. Weekly footfall across the Larders – 850 per week (families/members). Membership is far greater than the weekly footfall estimated: c2000- 3000.</p> <p>“The people coming in are from all demographics, from those working to those on benefits.” “The groups have become experts in where to buy and how to get the best value for money from supermarkets and other suppliers. However, what is being offered in the larders is being changed to meet the budgets available and rising cost of foods.”</p>
5. Next steps and timescales	<p>External consultants have recently completed a review of the larder models, which vary depending on the local aims of the community organisation. This has been taken to the NA Fairer Food Network for discussion and coproduction of a sustainable model which is now being implemented.</p> <p>Balance of Tackling Financial Insecurity £61,499. Officers continue to work on support for community groups to assist with warm banks, food, and energy advice for winter 2022-23.</p>
6. Comments	The models have to align with the aspirations of community volunteers and the available budget. There is considerable potential for the larder volunteers to offer advice and refer to other partners, such as Home Energy Scotland (7 of the 14 larders have already completed their referral training and can now signpost via Home Energy Scotland's online portal)



Finance and Benefits

Tenant Grant Fund															
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount	The Scottish Government provided an allocation of £10m to Scottish local authorities during financial year 2021/22 to provide direct financial support to tenants - via landlords in their area - for the specific purpose of paying rent arrears arising from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was aimed at highly vulnerable tenants who would become homeless or did not have alternative sources of support. Coronavirus (COVID-19) Tenant Grant Fund: North Ayrshire Council received an allocation of £298k.														
2. Intended impact	The grant is to help prevent homelessness and sustain tenancies by directly reducing, alleviating, or paying off rent arrears altogether, where a tenant is in either the social or private sector, and has faced difficulties due to Coronavirus. The grant covered arrears arising between 23 March 2020 and 9 August 2021.														
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	The full allocation of funding has been spent; it was closed to new applications on 31 March 2022. Total expenditure was £298,259.65, split across 2021/22 and 2022/23.														
4. What difference has the investment made?	<div>555 applications were received, of which 460 were awarded grant. Of the remaining 95 applications, 75 were closed, 18 were assessed as not eligible and 2 were refused by the relevant landlord.</div> <table><tr><th>Applications Approved</th><th>No of applications</th><th>Amount paid</th></tr><tr><td>Private let</td><td>29</td><td>£18,665.39</td></tr><tr><td>RSL</td><td>92</td><td>£54,978.63</td></tr><tr><td>NAC</td><td>341</td><td>£224,615.63</td></tr></table>			Applications Approved	No of applications	Amount paid	Private let	29	£18,665.39	RSL	92	£54,978.63	NAC	341	£224,615.63
Applications Approved	No of applications	Amount paid													
Private let	29	£18,665.39													
RSL	92	£54,978.63													
NAC	341	£224,615.63													
5. Next steps and timescales	N/A														
6. Comments	<div>Initial spend within the Fund was low despite a high level of applications being received. Although applications were being made these couldn't be progressed due to a number of factors, including the requirement for proofs and non-engagement from either the tenant or landlord. In January 2022 officers reviewed processes and engaged with landlords to expedite applications into decision making and awards being made. The process was very labour intensive, and staff had to make several contacts with both tenants and landlords despite best attempts to ensure the information required was fully captured within the application process.</div> <div>The fund is now closed with allocated monies being fully spent.</div>														

Housing Tenant Hardship Fund	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount	<p>The Scottish Government provided an allocation of £867,000 to North Ayrshire through the Scottish Government Winter Support Fund – Tackling Financial Insecurities. The supporting guidance detailed flexibility of use across a number of areas to target those most in need e.g., food support, fuel, isolation, welfare fund top ups, housing, homelessness.</p> <p>From this fund the Council's Housing Service was awarded £195K for help with tenancy hardship, focusing on highly vulnerable tenants affected by fuel poverty.</p>
2. Strategic intent: intended impact	<p>The funding assists any North Ayrshire Council tenant who is finding it difficult to manage fuel bills. The Support Worker provides person-centred housing related support including income maximisation, welfare benefit advice and assistance, fuel, and utilities advice, helping them to sustain their tenancy and prevent any potential homelessness issue in the future.</p> <p>The fund helps support winter warm initiatives and interventions for our most vulnerable tenant who are at the greatest risk of fuel poverty.</p>
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	<p>Funding was carried over into 2022/23 due to the timing of allocation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 temporary posts funded until April 2023, at a cost of £142K: 4 Housing Support Workers posts were created at the end of 2021/22 (2 x Fuel Poverty and 2 x Sheltered Wellbeing). The funding was carried over into 2022/23 due to the time taken to recruit into the posts. • Top up of meters to help resettlement from temporary accommodation into mainstream tenancies. We have set aside £15K and are currently setting processes up with the Scottish Welfare Fund. • Assist to top up gas meters where they require to be uncapped in order to re-start a gas supply and allow for a gas safety check to be completed. To date we have only spent £210 as we have managed to gain access to other funds via energy suppliers/agencies, but expectations is that due to funding from these sources being limited we will achieve full expenditure of £10K by 31 March 2023. • Winter warmth initiatives/interventions - officers are researching what could impact most effectively on making heating and overall energy cheaper in relation to the cost-of-living crisis. We currently anticipate expenditure of £28K by 31 March 2023.
4. What difference has the investment made?	<p>Update to 31 January 2023 we have supported 197 tenants with an average age of 39 to tackle fuel poverty. 7 of these tenants had previously been known to Homeless Services. Our engagement rate YTD is 53%.</p> <p>We continue to carry out regular visits to each of the 28 sheltered units and have engaged with 641 residents/tenants to date.</p>
5. Next steps and timescales	<p>Fuel Poverty/Sheltered Wellbeing Housing Support Workers Continue to engage with tenants/residents to tackle fuel poverty and maximise income where possible to avert crisis with energy over the winter months – by 31 March 2023.</p> <p>Winter Warmth Initiatives/Interventions Provide our most vulnerable tenants with access to a range of goods that reduce energy costs over the winter months – by 31 March 2023.</p>

	<p>Sustainability Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking in on any of the Sustainability team's projects that could support tenants. • Discussions around the new 'Energy Smart': Energy Based Community Support Model - by 31 December 2022. (completed). Promote the service when engaging with tenants – 31 March 2023. <p>Social Welfare Fund</p> <p>Ongoing discussions with Social Welfare Fund (SWF) Manager about how we can assist with payments for meters for new tenancies (NAC only, as Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) do this as part of new tenancy set up) and people struggling to meet the cost of energy prices as they start to rise – by 31 October 2022 (completed). This is being done via Housing Support staff due to complexities around how this would work in-line with the Scottish Welfare Fund and the impact this could have on staffing resources. This method of working will remain in place until 31 March 2023</p> <p>Social Media/Referrals</p> <p>Continue to engage with residents in North Ayrshire via social media and a referral process that will be managed via the Housing Support Service Co-ordinator - by 31 March 2023.</p> <p>Cost-of-living Crisis</p> <p>Working with other Council departments/agencies to address Cost-of-living crisis being faced by people at risk of homelessness and also tenants. Signposting to other agencies and collecting data on resources available within communities for support through the winter months – by 31 March 2023.</p>
<p>6. Comments</p>	<p>As funding was not made available until around February 2022, recruitment timescales meant staff were unable to take these posts up until May 2022. Within a short space of time the team have achieved great success in engaging with tenants who are in fuel poverty (53%). The team have also successfully engaged with tenants and helped to arrange gas safety checks, with gas restored to 370 properties. This intervention potentially avoided 370 forced entries into these properties and avoided a cost of approx. £59k to the Council.</p>

Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF)	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount	<p>Total £1,153,000 recurring funding from Scottish Government. Additional top up of £88,070 received Feb 23 and underspend of £157,477 carried over from last year added to the recurring funding to give a total figure of £1,398,547.00.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £272,357 allocated to Crisis Grants • £1,126,190 allocated to Community Care Grants
2. Intended impact	<p>The aim of the funding is to provide financial help by way of a Crisis Grant to those in immediate crisis or a Community Care Grant to those in need of essential household items. The funding is intended to provide a Crisis Grant of a cash award to people who are in financial crisis because of either a disaster like a fire or flood or are in an emergency situation such as having lost all their money, had their money stolen, or are in need of food. It is also used to provide energy vouchers for their home. The award is made using a text message or email to their phone with a code which can be redeemed at any Pay Point vendor ensuring they can access the cash or energy top up for their pre-payment meter quickly.</p> <p>Community Care grants aim to help people who are leaving any form of care such as hospital or prison or who have been homeless and require help to set up their own home by providing them with essential household items and furniture. It can also be used to help households facing exceptional pressure with on-off items such as a washing machine or cooker.</p>
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	<p>Crisis Grants - £232,016 Community Care Grants - £1,011,541 Total spend - £ 1,243,557</p>
4. What difference has the investment made?	<p>This financial year to date, the Scottish Welfare Fund has helped 3,237 people in financial crisis with a Crisis Grant. 1,445 people have received fuel vouchers, and 781 people have received a Community Care grant to help with essential household items and furniture.</p>
5. Next steps and timescales	<p>Continue to accept and process applications as quickly as possible throughout the year.</p>
6. Comments	<p>The SWF is delivered using a "One Team" approach ensuring that when someone calls to apply for a Crisis Grant that a decision to award is made whilst the customer is on the phone and the payment can be made quickly to enable them access to much needed cash or fuel vouchers.</p>

Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTR)	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount	£12,930,000 recurring funding by North Ayrshire Council.
2. Intended impact	To help those on lower incomes by lowering the amount of Council Tax that they are liable to pay. This is based on age, household structure and income and is charged on a per dwelling basis rather than to individuals. To fund CTR awards to all eligible households on a low income across North Ayrshire.
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	Year to date £12,962,094 has been awarded in total.
4. What difference has the investment made?	CTR has enabled Council Tax bills to be more affordable for lower income families. Current caseload is 16,328.
5. Next steps and timescales	Continue to ensure that there is high uptake of CTR and that it is awarded quickly for those eligible.
6. Concluding comments	Automation of CTR has been introduced to ensure that any notifications received from The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) confirming eligibility or changes are automatically applied to the relevant Council Tax account.

Housing Benefit (HB)	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount	£34,400,000 recurring funding from DWP.
2. Intended impact	To help people who are on unemployed, on a low income or claiming benefits towards paying their rent costs. Housing Benefit is aimed at pensioners and people of working age who are unemployed, on a low income or claiming benefits and have not yet been moved across to Universal Credit to help them towards paying their rent costs.
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	Year to date £32,297,924 has been awarded in total.
4. What difference has the investment made?	This has helped people to afford to keep their tenancy and helped prevent them from falling into arrears with their rent. Current caseload is 7,553
5. Next steps and timescales	Continue to ensure that Housing Benefit claims and changes of circumstances are processed quickly and accurately.
6. Comments	N/A

Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount	£2,498,947 recurring funding agreed by North Ayrshire Council.
2. Intended impact	The aim is to provide financial help to people claiming Housing Benefit or who receive housing cost payments through Universal Credit but their benefit is less than the full amount of their rent. DHP is used to help cover the shortfall.
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	Year to date £2,401,108 has been awarded in total.
4. What difference has the investment made?	This has helped people to afford to keep their tenancy and helped prevent them from falling into arrears with their rent. Current caseload is 4,683
5. Next steps and timescales	Continue to ensure that DHP claims are processed fairly and quickly within the budget.
6. Concluding comments	DHP requests are managed annually within the budget.

Financial Inclusion	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount	Recovery and Renewal Investment Fund Financial Inclusion: Progressive Finance Access to Finance (1 st Alliance): £0.150m
2. Intended impact	<p>North Ayrshire Council approved funding for the 1st Alliance Credit Union to deliver a progressive finance scheme, to lend to individuals, who are considered as a higher credit risk due to history, but who can however afford repayments.</p> <p>Small loans would be available to low-income residents who would not normally qualify through typical lending rules i.e., due to the higher risk factor, the credit union would not be able to lend from members' funds. The agreed period for this investment is 1st October 2021 to 1st October 2023 (or whenever the capital investment is exhausted if prior to this date) and the total grant funding will be paid in three instalments. North Ayrshire residents who borrow from 1st Alliance must save a minimum of £3/week to access a loan (this saving and borrowing model is standard for Credit Unions), therefore borrowers will at the same time become savers. In the longer term this will provide a safety net for both planned and unplanned expenses and reduce the need to borrow from other sources, including high-cost lenders, or to fall into debt, including arrears with bills. The fund is recycled as each loan is cleared off and the member moves onto a members based loan. This will therefore provide a legacy fund which will enable 1st Alliance to continue providing low-cost loans to "high risk" customers in the future.</p>
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	<p>To the end of January 2023, 165 individuals accessed loans through this investment, the total value of loans to date is £123,135 and the loans agreed range from £250-£2000 with the majority agreed at £500.</p> <p>63 loans were agreed from August to December 2021.</p> <p>36 from January to June 2022.</p> <p>29 from July to September 2022</p> <p>32 from October to December 2022</p> <p>5 in January 2023.</p> <p>Borrowers are from across North Ayrshire with the majority being from Irvine, Kilwinning or the Three Towns. Ten were from Garnock Valley, 3 from the North Coast and 3 from Arran.</p> <p>A total of 75 loan requests were declined mostly due to lack of affordability or defaults on credit files.</p> <p>19 loans are currently in arrears, a total of £5,492.87, which represents 4.5% of total loans.</p> <p>A standard assumption of 5% bad debt provision had been assumed. This higher rate of bad debt applies to all 1st Alliance loan portfolios and they believe it to be linked to a number of factors including the increase in cost-of-living.</p> <p>£150,000 has been paid to 1st Alliance to support the delivery of the Progressive Finance Initiative. The full allocation of £0.150m has now been paid to 1st Alliance Credit Union for the purposes of the Progressive Finance Initiative.</p>
4. What difference has the	<p>Borrowing through 1st Alliance costs less on interest rates than most other lenders. For example:</p> <p>1st Alliance: £400 loan = 10 per week for 11 months = £72 interest.</p> <p>Scotcash: £400 loan = £12.21 per week for 12 months= £234.78 interest & £24 fee.</p>

investment made?	<p>This investment has therefore provided access to low-cost affordable loans for residents who would otherwise either have gone to higher cost lenders or have fallen into debt due to not being able to access a loan from anywhere. 55 loans were to buy out high-cost debts which have higher interest rates.</p> <p>The other loans were for a range of purposes including purchase of household items, clothes, events, holidays and for Christmas, which accounts largely for the higher number of loans agreed</p> <p>158 borrowers are regularly saving. A total of £23,532 has been saved over the first 12 months, an average of £142 per saver, with some saving 76 borrowers have now accessed top-up loans which means that the interest rate is reduced, as they have evidenced that they are responsible borrowers.</p> <p>When setting the 23/24 Budget, Council last week approved a further £100,000 to be invested in Financial inclusion support, mainly debt advice services.</p>
5. Next steps and timescales	<p>Progress will continue to be monitored. The final payment of £50,000 has been transferred and discussions will take place to ensure this progressive finance model is embedded within the new Financial Inclusion Strategy and service for North Ayrshire</p>
6. Comments	<p>The investment is proving to be beneficial to North Ayrshire residents who may otherwise have been unable to access low-cost affordable loans, meaning that they have been able to cover additional unexpected and expected costs, purchase essential household items, and reduce higher costs loan payments. Many have improved credit ratings and/or moved on to top up loans with a lower interest rate and most have built up some savings, many of whom may not have managed to save before.</p> <p>1st Alliance is now building that 'legacy fund' which will benefit residents beyond the scope of this investment period.</p>

Financial Inclusion Capacity Building	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount	£258k for Financial Inclusion, agreed at August 2022 Cabinet. £100k agreed at Council budget on 1/3/23.
2. Intended impact	<p>The funding allocation was made to support the increasing demand for financial inclusion supports which is currently being experienced through the Money Matters and Welfare Reform Advice Teams.</p> <p>Plans to utilise available non-recurring funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioning of an independent debt advice service for North Ayrshire for 2 years to address an identified gap in debt advice provision. • Extension of the Better Off pilot as required to ensure smooth transition and continuity of service – currently agreed until end June 2023 • Development of case management system and IT infrastructure • Salary plus costs for the Senior Manager post for 24 months • Marketing materials associated with a Communications Plan <p>This will address the increasing demand for both welfare rights and debt advice across North Ayrshire.</p>
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	<p>The review of financial inclusion services across the Council has now been concluded and it has been agreed that the Money Matters Team (Health & Social Care Partnership) and Welfare Reform Advice Team (Housing) will come together under a single lead for Financial Inclusion. The new team aims to build on the work of the existing services and create additional capacity to support local citizens through reducing cross-referrals and streamlining referral pathways.</p> <p>The additional funding will provide additional staffing capacity to support local people. As the project to review financial inclusion services has just concluded, no expenditure has yet taken place, and decisions around the use of the funding will now be made in the context of the new team. A particular need for ongoing debt advice has been identified through the project and this will be explored.</p> <p>At its budget on 1/3/23 the Council allocated up to a further £0.100m to build on the previous investment of £0.258m to implement the review of financial inclusion services across the Council and to secure a level of support which is more commensurate with current need.</p> <p>A five-year Financial Inclusion Strategy for North Ayrshire has been finalised and was approved by Cabinet on 21 March 2023. The merger of the Money Matters (HSCP) and Welfare Reform and Advice (Housing) teams will start on 1 April 2023 when the Team Managers will start reporting to the new Senior Manager (Financial Inclusion)</p>
4. What difference has the	Future report.

investment made?	
5. Next steps and timescales	See 3 above.
6. Comments	N/A

Parental Employment Support Fund (PESF)

1. Description of funding stream, date and amount	<p>Parental Employment Support Fund (PESF): support for unemployed and employed parents within the key priority groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents who are <25 years of age • Parents with a child under 1 year old • Parents with 3 or more children • Parents who have a disability or disabled children • Ethnic minority parents • Single parents <p>1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023 £282,132</p>
2. Intended impact	<p>The expected outcomes and objectives for PESF are as set out below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person-centred support for parents to address barriers to work including skills development, work experience, health support, money advice, motivational support • Support for parents already in work through the provision of training and employability support to sustain employment and progress within the workplace by gaining improved employment • Maximise opportunities to reduce child poverty by enhancing income through employment
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	<p>This funding supports the continuation of We Work for Families, contracted for delivery by The Lennox Partnerships, with keyworkers delivering tailored employability support to families across North Ayrshire.</p> <p>During 2022/23 167 new parents were registered for support and 67 progressed into employment.</p> <p>Referrals are received from health visitors and funding through PESF has also supported a pilot programme with a focus parents accessing 1140 hours of childcare, the pilot has focussed on supporting parents and working with Hayocks Primary, Hayocks Early Years, Springvale Early Years and Auchenhavrie Academy - 4 new Keyworkers have been recruited for the pilot with 12 registrations completed.</p> <p>Other highlights include: Step into Business Admin Pilot – 11 Parents commenced a pre–employment programme for 5 weeks (3 days per week) at Ayrshire College, completing the PC Passport qualification before progressing to a 26 week paid work experience</p>

	<p>placement with an anchor organisation, where they will work towards achieving an SVQ level II in Business Administration by demonstrating competence in the workplace. This builds on the Skills for Life Programme delivered across various council services.</p> <p>Hillhouse / WWFF Christmas appeal - WWFF delivered gifts to 63 families/114 children at a challenging time for families struggling with the cost of living. Quotes have been provided by all in receipt and all highlight the worth of this support.</p> <p>Fuel Poverty Blanket Appeal – WWFF sourced £900 funding to purchase 150 blankets to give to children and families experiencing fuel poverty, 120 blankets were issued to Hayocks Early Years and Primary School and the additional blankets will support parents and children in the wider community.</p> <p>Public Transport Scheme – 99 parents received a travel pass to access 3 months free public transport which supported enhanced engagement with employability services as well as increased wellbeing and family leisure time.</p>
4. What difference has the investment made?	The investment has improved engagement, delivered a pilot to develop new referral pathways which will increase volumes of parents supported in the future and supported unemployed parents to progress into employment.
5. Next steps and timescales	Child poverty investment as part of Best Start Bright Futures is anticipated from the Scottish Government to support parental employment from 1 st April 2023 – 31 st March 2024, the allocation and Grant Offer Letter with the terms and conditions of this funding is expected once ministerial approval and Cosla approval can be obtained.
6. Comments	Income from employment is a key driver to take children out of poverty and there is an established model which can be scaled to deliver the impact required when funding is confirmed.



Children and Families

Free School Meals	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount.	1) Scottish Government revenue funding for 2022/23 (£712k). 2) Scottish Government revenue funding for 2022/23 (900k). 3) Scottish Government revenue funding for 2023/24 (£2.272m)
2. Intended impact	The funding supports the continued roll out of Universal Free School Meals (UFSMs). This funding is the revenue funding to cover costs for Primary 4 & Primary 5 children in the financial year 2022/23. The Scottish Government also provides funding to enable a continued provision of food-based support during the school holiday periods to those children with an assessed eligibility for free school meals.
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The holiday programme ran over the Easter & summer breaks with support from community partners. Vouchers were also issued during the summer, autumn, and winter and February breaks. Roll out of Universal Free School Meals (UFSMs) to Primary 4 & Primary 5 children is complete. We continue to monitor and encourage uptake of meals to ensure we maximise the benefits of this entitlement. The Scottish Government have provided revenue funding of £570,000 in 2023/24 to start the roll out of free school meals to all P6 and P7 pupils whose families are in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment. They also committed to continuing funding to support free holiday meals during 2023/24.
4. What difference has the investment made? (Stats and qualitative information)	Easter meals provided – 4,622 Summer meals provided – 16,213 Vouchers issued for circa 5,000 children Uptake of school meals has increased for primary 4 & primary 5 children following the UFSM provision roll out however, overall uptake for UFSMs is lower than anticipated. This is the general trend across other authorities. <u>Quarter 3 figures 2022/23</u> P1-P5 UFSMs – 80.4%. P6 & 7 assessed need FSM uptake – 57.1%.
5. Next steps and timescales	Planning has been undertaken in Facilities Management (FM) to facilitate a further roll out of UFSMs when it is announced by the Scottish Government as well as the planned expansion of eligibility for free school meals to those in receipt of the Scottish child payment. Cabinet approved future provision of free school meals on 21 st March 2023.

	Direct payments will be made for future holiday periods which are aligned to the cost of a school meal. Cash payments allow more flexibility on the use of the funding and a more dignified provision for eligible families.
6. Concluding comments	Holiday meal provision (food or vouchers) ensures continuity of food for all children assessed as eligible for FSMs. This supports access to food and removes a financial burden from families. The expansion of UFSMs continues to support all families in this difficult economic climate. Many families who are not eligible for assessed-need FSM, are also struggling with the cost-of-living increases therefore free provision of a hot meal will ease the financial burden of having to pay or provide an alternative lunch option.

Child Bridging Payment	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount.	The scheduled summer Child Bridging Payment of £130 was increased to £230 (additional £100 payment by North Ayrshire Council) and eligibility for the £100 payment was extended to low-income families of children of pre-school age. (Funding source: North Ayrshire COVID Economic Recovery Fund SG Funding): £0.570m June 2022. The scheduled autumn and winter Child Bridging Payment of £130 was increased to £230 (additional £100 payment) and eligibility for the £100 payment was extended to low-income families of children of pre-school age. Funding source: The Council's uncommitted Investment funds and earmarked funds following approval from the 2022/23 Budget process: £1.140m August 2022.
2. Intended impact	The Scottish Government provides Child Bridging Payment funding to local authorities for each child in receipt of Free School Meals on the basis of low income. These payments are provided for all eligible children and young people of school age. The payments total £520 per annum and they are currently paid in spring, summer, autumn, and winter at £130 for each eligible child. The funding from Scottish Government has been increased to £260. The funding was increased to help address the current cost-of-living pressures and to also recognise the needs of families of children at pre-school age. It is estimated that the £100 payments directly to families benefit around 5,700 children (over 3,300 families) with payments made from late June 2022.
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	Summer, autumn and winter payments have been made. The expenditure was completed in December 2022.
4. What difference has the investment made?	Feedback indicates that the timing and value of the payments has made a real difference to families, especially as school holidays and colder weather impact on household bills.

5. Next steps and timescales	The recent increase in the Scottish Child Payment has been implemented and therefore the purpose of the bridging payment has ended.
6. Concluding comments	The payments have bridged the period of the roll out of the Scottish Child Payment and the local additional top-up was welcomed by families.

Cost of the School Day and Early Intervention Fund – Child Poverty and Cost of Living

1. Description of funding stream, date and amount.	<p>Cost of the School Day Fund – Council budget 04/03/2021 and Cost of the School Day Cabinet Report 23/03/2021 Date allocated - 2021/22 budget Amount - £0.500m pa (recurring)</p> <p>At the Council budget of 1/3/23, this fund was replaced by the Early Intervention Fund – Child Poverty and Cost of Living – one off investment over 3 years. The allocation of this fund will take into account existing commitments and will be directed by the Child Poverty and Cost of Living Board) and will be the subject of future reports.</p>
2. Intended impact	The aim of the Cost of the School Day (COSD) is to drive forward a whole systems approach to reducing the cost of the school day in order to deliver a fairer and more equal North Ayrshire. It delivers the NA Children's Services Plan 2020-23 vision which is "for all our children and young people to have the best start in life and for North Ayrshire to be the best place in Scotland to grow up".
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	<p>There are three key elements: 1000 new digital devices each session for those in greatest need £100k for school uniform, winter clothing, outdoor learning, sports – participatory approach with schools £150k for food in partnership with community organisations.</p> <p>Expenditure 2021/22 –£500k 2022/23 - £500k committed.</p>
4. What difference has the investment made? (Stats and qualitative information)	Cost of the school day funding has provided schools with enhanced flexibility to meet the needs of learners and their families throughout the ongoing cost of living crisis. Schools have utilised this funding in a variety of ways, which have been designed to meet needs within their local context. While it is challenging to quantify the difference made, qualitative evidence is gathered at school level. Loudon-Montgomery Primary School, as a school located in one of North Ayrshire's areas of highest deprivation, provides a good example of the difference this funding has made. The school has used this funding to put in place a breakfast club and morning snack; opportunities for families to access free school uniform; and participate in home learning through provision of IT devices and other learning materials that promote family learning. Another key use of this funding has been enabling all pupils to participate in school trips and other extra-curricular activities. Loudoun-Montgomery's Head Teacher believes: "our child centred focus on reducing the cost of the school day enhances our ability to broaden our learners' experiences, deliver a wider curriculum and extend learning beyond the

	school day. Our focus on ensuring that pupils look and feel their best and the provision of a healthy breakfast, snack and lunch all play a significant part in setting up our children to embrace the learning ahead of them each day.”
5. Next steps and timescales	Due to a small amount of carried forward cost of the school day funding from 2021-22, as well as additional community funding made available this year, head teachers have been allocated £198k in the 2022-23 school year. Plans are progressing at school level to spend this funding in the remainder of the school year in areas where this can make the biggest difference to support learners and their families. This includes bulk purchasing of school uniforms.
6. Comments	The funding has been welcomed by schools as an enabler in reducing the poverty-related attainment gap.

Investment Fund	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount.	<p>Children and Families Investment Fund Fund: Recovery and Renewal Investment Fund - £0.075m</p> <p>Digital Access Fund Fund - Recovery and Renewal Investment Fund - £0.255m</p> <p>Support for the North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy and Action Plan Fund: North Ayrshire COVID Economic Recovery Fund - SG Funding - £0.076m Date Allocated – 15/06/21</p>
2. Background: rationale for the funding allocation	<p>A Cabinet Report on 15/6/21 set out the rationale, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise the health and wellbeing of our residents by protecting the most vulnerable in our society against the immediate threat of coronavirus and the consequences of changes to the way we live. • Work with our communities in the renewal of services to ensure they meet their needs and priorities. • Build community capacity and resilience. • Ensure our children and young people get the best start in life by creating opportunities for education and employment, including through Community Wealth Building and Renewal. Prioritise and help tackle poverty, including child poverty.
3. Intended impact	The aim of the funding was to promote recovery and support the most vulnerable children and families. Funding also supported the further reduction in the Cost of the School Day, to contribute towards Scottish Government’s aim of eradicating digital exclusion by improving digital access and skills, and the ongoing work to reduce Child Poverty and mitigate against its impact.
4. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	<p>Digital Participation Officer in post</p> <p>Review of access to wifi and IT resources in community venues complete (18 centres plus 15 libraries) and action plan to developed – currently implementing the actions</p> <p>Wifi access map created – available on NAC library app and NAC web page.</p> <p>Supporting the development of Digital Volunteers and Volunteering opportunities.</p> <p>Established North Ayrshire Digital Access Forum with agreed Terms of Reference in place.</p> <p>Events and sessions delivered across North Ayrshire with specific focus in school communities. Strong partnerships are being developed with Family Learning Teams and school staff.</p>

	<p>Supporting Ukrainian Hub with essential access to IT resources.</p> <p>In partnership with the Digital Officer in TACT, created short films to assist in promoting the support available online and tutorials on how to access help and complete forms etc.</p> <p>Digital Participation Officer sits on the Digital Strategy and Accessing our Council Workstreams</p>
5. What difference has the investment made?	<p>Available community-based resources are known and gaps identified.</p> <p>Positive feedback from participants attending sessions.</p> <p>Action plan being implemented: future report.</p>
6. Next steps and timescales	<p>The following current actions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and potentially widen the Forum membership. • Link with Education on supply of the digital devices and deliver support to assist with the use of the resources. • Work with feedback from Chit Chats to deliver bespoke help based on community feedback. • Integrate with Community Learning and Development Strategic Plan and support where relevant. • Support community associations with IT / internet related safeguarding.
7. Comments	<p>Future reporting will include impact data as the work progresses.</p>

School Clothing Grants	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount	£816,500 recurring funding agreed by NAC. Additional funding is provided from the council to match demand.
2. Intended impact	The aim of the funding is to provide financial help with children's school clothing and shoes. An annual payment of £120 is given to primary school children and £150 to secondary school children before the start of the new school year then to new applicants throughout the year. The intended impact is that all school children have adequate school clothes and shoes.
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	Total children – 6,499 from 4,045 families Total spend - £861,090 3,792 Primary children – spend £455,040 2,707 Secondary children – spend £406,050
4. What difference has the investment made?	Provided financial support to 4,045 families and a total of 6,499 children to enable them to afford school clothes and shoes.
5. Next steps and timescales	Continue to accept and process applications as quickly as possible throughout the year.
6. Comments	A promotional campaign takes place each year at the start of school summer holiday period to confirm that applications are open. Text messages and emails are sent out to previous recipients with a link to the online application form and encouraging people to apply. This is also promoted via the Council's Twitter and Facebook pages.

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount.	£580,000 recurring funding agreed by North Ayrshire Council.
2. Intended impact	To provide financial support to young people from low-income families to allow them to be able to afford to stay in post-16 education either in school or college who might otherwise have left education. The aim of the funding is to provide financial support of £30 a week (paid fortnightly in arrears) to 16 to 19 year-olds in education who come from low income families subject to attendance and agreement of a learning plan.
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	Total expenditure this financial year to date is £482,460. 667 young people have received at least one payment for this school year.
4. What difference has the investment made?	As payments are made directly into the young person's bank account, this ensures that they can access the funds easily and use them for whatever they need to help them maintain attendance in school.
5. Next steps and timescales	Continue to accept and process applications as quickly as possible throughout the year.
6. Concluding comments	A promotional campaign takes place each year after the start of the school year in August to confirm that applications are open and encourage uptake. This is also promoted via the Council's Twitter and Facebook pages.



Contribution to Mental Health and Wellbeing	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount.	<p>Contribution to Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund - Tackling Financial Insecurity Winter Funding 2021/22: £0.307m Date Allocated - 29/11/21 Fund – Children and Young People’s Community MHWB Supports and Services Framework Grant Funding (CYP CMHWP) 2021 - 2022 £370,000, 2022-23 £360,000 (total funding allocations) a portion of which contributes to this theme.</p> <p>Community Support for Mental Health Fund - Recovery and Renewal Investment Fund: £0.075m Date Allocated – 15/06/21 Fund – Children and Young People’s Community MHWB Supports and Services Framework Grant Funding (CYP CMHWP) 2021 - 2022 £370,000, 2022-23 £360,000 (total funding allocations) a portion of which contributes to this theme.</p> <p>Costs for Island Self-Isolation Fund – Tackling Financial Insecurity Fund Date Allocated 29/11/21</p>
2. Intended impact	<p>Empowering local communities to deliver a wide range of events, activities and interventions that support positive mental health and wellbeing across North Ayrshire.</p> <p>Enabling children, young people and families to access MHWB support at the time of need, within their local communities and to contribute to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing and address emotional distress. The support should be provided by an appropriately trained workforce.</p>
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	<p>Contribution to Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Scottish Government gave Arran Community & Voluntary Service (CVS) responsibility for the distribution of the National Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund.(CVS) developed a robust application and assessment process involving staff from across the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) and individuals with lived experience. The fund was heavily oversubscribed and the £307k was allocated in partnership with Arran CVS to allow more applications to be funded.</p> <p>In financial year 2021-22 the CYP CMHWP contributed an additional £55,000 to the adult CMHWP Fund detailed above to deliver projects which targeted support for children, young people and families. In financial year 2022-23 a further £30,000 was allocated. Of note the employment of a Welfare Rights Officer (£40,000) to work across the 9 secondary schools engaging in outreach support has resulted in around £350,000 additional income in families’ pockets. The impact of reducing financial insecurity on mental health and wellbeing is well documented.</p> <p>Community Support for Mental Health</p>

	<p>As above.</p> <p>Costs for Island Self-Isolation</p> <p>During lockdown periods, protocols were developed for dealing with visitors to the island who tested positive whilst on Arran and were in need of assistance to self-isolate or travel home.</p>
4. What difference has the investment made?	<p>Contribution to Community Mental Health and Wellbeing</p> <p>The £307k formed part of a combined budget of £813,346k was allocated to a total of 55 groups over 61 projects. The investment from CYP CMHWP has allowed 4740 children and young people and 742 family members to access early intervention programmes in their community for positive mental health and wellbeing or emotional distress.</p> <p>Community Support for Mental Health</p> <p>The £75k formed part of a combined budget of £813,346k was allocated to a total of 55 groups over 61 projects.</p> <p>Costs for Island Self-Isolation</p> <p>The availability of the fund allowed a robust and practical protocol to be in place if needed.</p>
5. Next steps and timescales	<p>Contribution to Community Mental Health and Wellbeing</p> <p>As we approach the one-year milestone since allocations were made Arran CVS are carrying out the evaluations of the projects. The next round of the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund has just launched and again CPP partners are involved in the process to maximise impact and share local knowledge and experience. Evaluations of the impact of the CYP CMHWP funding are ongoing- with the Scottish Government receiving 6 monthly reports on impact.</p> <p>Community Support for Mental Health</p> <p>Funding fully utilised as above, non-recurring.</p> <p>CYP CMHWP receives annual funding. The steering group have, following positive evaluations, agreed to continue to fund a number of projects across the authority for financial year 2023-24.</p>
6. Comments	<p>Contribution to Community Mental Health and Wellbeing</p> <p>Using the established process made the spend quick and effective with money getting to the local groups quickly and via a single application process. It allowed the available money to be combined for maximum impact.</p> <p>Community Support for Mental Health</p> <p>As above.</p> <p>Further planning for the CYP CMHWP Grant funding for next financial year is underway and an analysis of both referral reasons and onward referrals will allow us to target funding, however we are also keen to continue to deliver messages around positive mental wellbeing and how to keep well. It is pleasing to note onward referrals to CAMHS remain low and we hope this indicates the positive impact the CYP CMHWP supports, and services provide. We are however aware that locally CAMHS referrals are in fact increasing and are hoping to work with CAMHS colleagues to identify themes and localities and help us develop and target interventions.</p> <p>Costs for Island Self-Isolation</p> <p>The fund allowed North Ayrshire Council to proactively contribute to the CPP approach to situation and emergent protocols.</p>



Business and community including transport to work

Supporting the Resilience of Local Businesses	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount	Although not specifically allocated as part of cost-of-living, funds associated with supporting business have been redirected to focus on sustainability, capacity building and resilience. Key funding that has been redirected: European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) £300k.
2. Intended impact	Agreement with Scottish Government to waive restrictions on European Regional Development Fund from Growth. This initially was in response to pandemic however given cost-of-living crisis flexibility remains to support resilience of business base. Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) form the cornerstone of NA economy and given make up recruit locally. Support to keep business sustainable and competitive allows for continued employment and helps alleviate potential increases in redundancy/poverty. It is also noted that cost-of-living has significantly increased cost impacts for most businesses including utilities, supply chains etc.
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	Since start of year over 500 businesses have been supported and a further 140 new businesses have received support to start up.
4. What difference has the investment made?	927 jobs have been safeguarded and a further 39 new jobs have been filled with support from Business Development (BD). Building capacity and sustainability has focused on new ways of working, cost control, implementation of digital technologies. Outputs: 135 businesses have been supported to reduce carbon impact. 140 businesses have been supported to enhance digital capability. 116 instances of specialist consultancy provided to business. Helped secure over £600,000 from external providers for businesses.
5. Next steps and timescales	Continue with support for business. ERDF funding will continue to March 23.
6. Comments	N/A

Review and Improve Support for Childminders and Out of School Clubs (OOSC) Providers	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount	Review and improve support for childminders and OOSC providers Fund - North Ayrshire COVID Economic Recovery Fund - SG Funding: £0.126m. Targeted employability opportunities for key families during Summer 2022 Fund - North Ayrshire COVID Economic Recovery Fund - SG Funding: £0.050m. Date awarded – June 2022
2. Intended impact	Review and improve support for childminders and OOSC providers By the end of this parliament Scottish Government has committed to ensure provision of wrap around childcare for families who need it. Use of childcare has changed significantly because of COVID-19. OOSC providers face a particularly unstable business environment. Reduced use of OOSC services during lockdown and changed working patterns provide an opportunity to assess future demand and support the sector to ensure the local availability of services in line with Scottish Government's expectations. The specific needs of the vulnerable children, kinship care and our island communities will also be considered a part of this work. Targeted employability opportunities for key families during Summer 2022 Parents and carers with school age children will be encouraged to undertake a variety of short courses that upskill or lead to a route into employment. Build relationships between the Employability Team and participants, whilst building up confidence in the use of childcare services.
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	Review and improve support for childminders and OOSC providers Initial discussions have been had with relevant officers and a draft Terms of Reference developed for a short life working group to feed into and guide this work Previous work relating to childminding on Arran has been requested via Scottish Childminding Association The role profile for the post is with Job Evaluation Targeted employability opportunities for key families during Summer 2022 This work still progressing with a group of 10 parents in the Auchenhavie Cluster. A strong partnership is in place between Employability, Information and Culture, Ayrshire College and the local childcare providers.
4. What difference has the investment made?	Review and improve support for childminders and OOSC providers Too early to assess Targeted employability opportunities for key families during Summer 2022 Ongoing – full assessment / evaluation will be carried out with participants and partners at the end of the course
5. Next steps and timescales	Review and improve support for childminders and OOSC providers Appoint officer into post. Targeted employability opportunities for key families during Summer 2022 Finish delivery as planned. Carry out full assessment / evaluation with participants and partners.

6. Concluding comments	<p>Review and improve support for childminders and OOSC providers The fluctuating childcare services across North Ayrshire will benefit from the additional support and the local families will have access to quality services.</p> <p>Targeted employability opportunities for key families during Summer 2022 Partners are keen to support this style of delivery.</p>
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Public Transport Travel Scheme	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount	Public Transport Travel Scheme NAC Economic Covid Recovery Funding Approved by Cabinet 7 June 2022 and subsequent Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 20 June 2022: £20,000
2. Intended impact	The scheme contributes to the principles of the Recovery Fund and Child Poverty Action Plan. This scheme provides support low-income households and individuals returning to work with free access to public transport for a fixed three-month period.
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	<p>The scheme provides three months of free access to bus or rail travel. Beneficiaries were also supported with a free personalised travel plan to identify the best travel option for them. This supports low-income households, access to employment, address transport poverty and build confidence in public transport post COVID-19. Due to the nature of the travel cards this also benefitted beneficiaries for both work and their personal life as they could be used at evenings/weekends. They could also be used alongside other concessionary travel schemes including the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young Person's Free Bus Travel Scheme which allows children and young people under 22 free bus travel; • Kids for a Quid rail scheme allows children to travel for £1 alongside an adult traveller, for up to four children; and • Concessionary travel scheme for disabled people and those over 60 years of age. <p>The Active Travel and Transport Team worked with the Council's Employability team and the Community Enterprise in Scotland (CEIS) to identify beneficiaries. CEIS is a social enterprise agency who deliver a range of services including employability, employer engagement, recruitment, and retention services. This includes workforce development services, community engagement and capacity building, skills and training services and community regeneration services.</p> <p>Once beneficiaries were identified, the team prepared a personalised travel plan for each individual to work out the best public transport ticket solution for them. Thereafter the individual was provided with the most appropriate ticket for the three- month period. Pre and post intervention surveys were undertaken with beneficiaries.</p> <p>As part of the £1.400m investment to support the work of the Child Poverty and Cost-of-Living Board, it is proposed that £0.100m of this fund is earmarked for a community transport pilot. The funds will be used to scope and develop a community transport service with a view to introducing a proof-of-concept pilot during the year.</p>
4. What difference has the investment made?	79 individuals will benefit from the £20,000 investment. This was comprised of 40 Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) ZoneCards and 39 Stagecoach bus travel passes. 105 individuals will benefit from the additional SCSP funding. This was comprised of 105 Stagecoach bus travel passes. Pre and post intervention surveys were undertaken with beneficiaries to assess the impact of the scheme. The information obtained from these is currently being analysed.
5. Next steps and timescales	Identification of opportunities to replicate the scheme in 2023/24 are currently being investigated.

6. Comments	<p>The scheme directly benefitted low-income households by reducing the impact of travel costs on household budgets and helping to address transport poverty. This improved access to employment opportunities and sustain employment. It also build confidence in the public transport network post-pandemic and support sustainable travel for everyday journeys.</p> <p>The mode of transport was tailored to individual beneficiaries' needs and both bus and rail travel solutions will be facilitated across North Ayrshire. Free travel and transport advice is available to all North Ayrshire residents under the Travel Smart and Trinity Active Travel Hub activities. This includes personalised travel plans.</p>
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Community Transport Initiative	
7. Description of funding stream, date and amount	<p>Community transport initiative</p> <p>At the Council budget of 1/3/23, the Early Intervention Fund – Child Poverty and Cost of Living, a one off investment of £1.4m over 3 years, included provision of £100k for a exploration of a community transport initiative.</p>
8. Intended impact	The initiative aims to explore the use of Council vehicles to support the needs of communities where access to transport at certain times of day is a barrier to accessing services and opportunities.
9. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	A report will be brought to Cabinet to explore options
10. What difference has the investment made?	Future report
11. Next steps and timescales	Future report
12. Comments	



Support for Communities

Support for communities	
1) Description of funding stream, date and amount.	<p>Additional core hours to support opening of Community centres to accommodate activities associated with isolation and financial insecurity Fund: Tackling Financial Insecurities Funding 2021/22: £0.005m. Date allocated- 29/11/21</p> <p>Community Books Fund: Tackling Financial Insecurity Funding 2021/22: £0.022m. Date allocated - 29/11/21</p> <p>Third sector support for programmes to support low-income families and individuals by building on current programmes Fund: North Ayrshire COVID Economic Recovery Fund – Scottish Government: £0.114m. Date allocated – 7/6/22</p>
2) Intended impact	<p>Additional core hours to support opening of Community centres to accommodate activities associated with isolation/financial insecurity This funding allows local community centres to be open longer in order to accommodate/offer a wider range of activities aimed at alleviating the effects of social isolation and delivering activities to contribute to positive mental health.</p> <p>Community Books Funding to establish the base/platform on which the local Community Books will be hosted. This resource will allow staff and community leaders access to a wide range of information relating to resources available in the local area. This will in turn assist with enquiries from citizens seeking help and advice.</p> <p>Third sector support for programmes to support low-income families and individuals by building on current programmes</p>

	<p>Work with the third sector support for programmes to support low-income families and individuals by building on current programmes such as Out and About, working with families and key groups to improve access to food and environmental opportunities locally, including through the Fairer Food network and Eglinton Garden Project, to develop skills to grow and cook food and, through family sessions and activities, build ongoing individual and community capacity. These sessions will encourage people to engage with the local environment to support mental health and wellbeing and to develop parenting skills, family bonding, relationships, volunteering, and employability in a supportive environment.</p>
3) Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	<p>Additional core hours to support opening of Community centres to accommodate activities associated with isolation/financial insecurity The funding is fully committed for spend via third sector partners with service level agreements.</p> <p>Community Books Work continues to find the most effective solution however a temporary fix is in place on the CPP web site.</p> <p>Third sector support for programmes to support low-income families and individuals by building on current programmes There will be a 'test and learn' trial in one locality over a year, which will establish impact and provide data and evidence for future service design and external funding bids. The initiative will link to the Love Local voucher scheme which will support local businesses. A pilot is planned for Ardrossan with the aspiration to widen to the Three Towns in 2023.</p>
4) What difference has the investment made?	<p>Additional core hours to support opening of Community centres to accommodate activities associated with isolation/financial insecurity Longer opening hours are available in some community centres.</p> <p>Community Books 6 community books and 6 thematic Cost-of-living Crisis community books are live on the Community Planning Partnership webpages - http://northayrshire.community/communitysupport/</p> <p>Third sector support for programmes to support low-income families and individuals by building on current programmes A pilot is being designed.</p>
5) Next steps and timescales	<p>Additional core hours to support opening of Community centres to accommodate activities associated with isolation/financial insecurity Funding fully allocated – non-recurring.</p> <p>Community Books Staff continue to work with partners and providers to select the most appropriate platform to host the resource. The aim is to have it in a pilot form by the end of the calendar year for testing however, a temporary fix is in place on the CPP web site.</p> <p>Third sector support for programmes to support low-income families and individuals by building on current programmes Staff continue to work with partners to develop an inclusive model that fulfils the outcomes. This will be set for delivery across Three Towns from Easter 2023 for 12 months with focussed pieces of work during school holidays.</p>
6) Comments	<p>Support is also provided for communities through the Fairer Food network and community grants, including Community Investment Fund (CIF).</p>

Islands emergency

1) Description of funding stream, date and amount.	<p>Whilst island communities can access a wide range of existing funding from the Scottish Government, the Island Cost Crisis Emergency Fund represents an additional £1.4 million investment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">£1.1 million resource£300k capital <p>This fund is being directly allocated to Local Authorities, through a 100% population formula as approved by the COSLA Settlement Distribution Group and COSLA Leaders. Allocations for are as North Ayrshire Council follows:</p> <table><tr><th>Local Authority</th><th>Resource (£000)</th><th>Capital (£000)</th></tr><tr><td>North Ayrshire Council</td><td>63</td><td>17</td></tr></table>	Local Authority	Resource (£000)	Capital (£000)	North Ayrshire Council	63	17
Local Authority	Resource (£000)	Capital (£000)					
North Ayrshire Council	63	17					
2) Intended impact	<p>This has been developed to specifically recognise and tackle the challenges faced by island communities.</p> <p>Local Authorities responsible for islands should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Use this funding to target island areas only;Use the funding to target immediate need and help those who are struggling due to the cost crisis; andUse the funding for existing schemes and/or other new support where they feel the need is greatest.						
3) Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	<p>There are already arrangements in place for energy efficiency, energy crisis support and welfare rights advice for residents and it is proposed to use existing mechanisms to provide targeted support for islands communities. Schools have quickly identified potential areas of spend which will mitigate cost of living challenges which particularly affect island communities. Mini-enquiries on child poverty and the cost of living have recently been held on Arran and Cumbrae and key themes and potential mitigations have been identified. It is proposed that local third and voluntary sector organisations will be funded to address locally identified challenges. Therefore, the following arrangements are proposed:</p> <table><tr><th>Purpose</th><th>Funding allocation</th></tr><tr><td>EnergySmart (existing service which supports energy efficiency measures in homes and crisis grants). In addition, £5,000 will also be contributed from Covid Recovery funding for this service.</td><td>£10,000</td></tr><tr><td>Money Matters (existing service which supports Welfare Rights assistance/representation to North Ayrshire residents to ensure they receive their legal</td><td>£10,000</td></tr></table>	Purpose	Funding allocation	EnergySmart (existing service which supports energy efficiency measures in homes and crisis grants). In addition, £5,000 will also be contributed from Covid Recovery funding for this service.	£10,000	Money Matters (existing service which supports Welfare Rights assistance/representation to North Ayrshire residents to ensure they receive their legal	£10,000
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	<p>entitlement to state benefits). In addition, £5,000 will also be contributed from Covid Recovery funding for this service.</p> <p>Schools (Arran High, Arran primary schools, Largs Academy and Cumbrae Primary School). Proposed purposes include: £15,000 (total)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remote, online after school study support for islands pupils who are unable to attend in person due to costs and availability of transport; • The introduction of laundry and other family support initiatives in schools; and • The introduction of visiting specialists to broaden the experience of children due the unavailability or unaffordability of transport for visits to mainland facilities and experiences. <p>Third and voluntary sector groups on Arran and Cumbrae £28,000</p> <p>Two mini-enquiries have been held on Arran and Cumbrae to identify key island challenges in relation to the cost of living crisis. Key themes have been identified, with potential mitigations which can be delivered locally, over and above the proposed support (above) for energy and welfare rights advice. Connected Communities will contribute £2,000 to the fund to provide a total allocation of £30,000 across the two islands.</p>
4) What difference has the investment made?	Future report
5) Next steps and timescales	Work with Arran CVS and Locality partnership chairs to allocate funding to voluntary and community groups to support local communities.
6) Comments	



Employee Wellbeing

LiveWell Healthy Working Lives Programme

1. Description of funding stream, date and amount	LiveWell Healthy Working Lives Programme: £20k for 2022/23/24 (non-recurring funding)
2. Intended impact	£20k of funding supports employee health and wellbeing through a programme of activities/events including a small grant fund. The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) allocates the funding which emphasises the importance of employee health and wellbeing within the workplace. The LiveWell Programme aims to breakdown some of the barriers that employees face when trying to improve their health and wellbeing. The LiveWell Programme aims to increase awareness of support and information, while wellbeing related activities are made more accessible through reducing or negating the costs associated with participation. This in turn improves employee morale, wellbeing, engagement, and performance.
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	The LiveWell Programme has always taken an organic approach, with a framework of planned activities scheduled alongside ad hoc opportunities. This enables LiveWell to adapt quickly to new suggestions and ideas. The Programme also provides small grants to teams for health and wellbeing activities via our LiveWell Grant Scheme. In 2022/23, £811 have been issued to various teams to carry out wellbeing activities of their choice. Provision of funding from the ELT has allowed the LiveWell group to explore a wider range of activities than otherwise possible. During Quarter 3, £3,865 was spent on Wellbeing activities, with a total of £7,236 since the start of the financial year.
4. What difference has the investment made?	Information gathered from evaluations highlights the positive difference that the wellbeing activities are having, participant comments include - "it was great to find strategies to unwind and switch off. Additional links to follow up on session were really helpful and I will continue to use these". (Everyday Mindfulness Course) "It has been a skill that has changed my life. I am so appreciative of the opportunity to attend. Thank You". (Trauma Release Exercise programme). "More information on the different types of HRT available and what they target. I had no idea there were different types to tackle different hormones. Having the opportunity to discuss my own situation and worries was invaluable". (Menopause Awareness session). "I feel more confident in my new skill, I really enjoyed being out on the water and enjoyed meeting new people and having fun. The exercise, the good company and being out in nature helped me destress a bit too". (Stand Up Paddleboard session)

	<p>Short evaluations are produced on activities by topic and evaluate positively, sample evaluations are highlighted below for activities delivered in Q3 (participant ratings out of 5 in brackets) -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menopause Awareness Workshop (5 out of 5) • Everyday Mindfulness Scotland course (4.8 out of 5) • Trauma Release Exercise (TRE) course (5 out of 5) • 2 x Stand-Up Paddleboarding sessions (5 out of 5) • NHS Oral Health Team visit to Council facilities. (no ratings available but 120 employees engaged with the service). • Bereavement Awareness Session (4.7 out of 5) <p>The activities listed are those paid for from the ELT budget; other activities are also promoted that do not have a direct cost. In addition to activities a wide range of health promotion topics are promoted via the LiveWell SharePoint page, News in Brief and LiveWell Facebook page. These have included – Breast Cancer Awareness (66 views*), World Mental Health Day (51 views), Menopause Awareness (95 views), Mouth Cancer Action Month (63 views), World Cup Survival Guide, including information on sensible alcohol consumption (123 views).</p> <p>*views on the LiveWell Sharepoint page.</p> <p>The Energy Savings Advice page of the SaveWell site was updated with additional information provided by the Energy and Sustainability Team within the Council.</p> <p>In addition to the LiveWell Programme of activities, the following support is being provided to employees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living Wage implemented from date of announcement rather than official implementation date. • Promotion of tax relief opportunities such as income tax marriage allowance, aligned to issue of P60 issue. Laundry allowance and professional membership fees. • Promotion of government childcare support scheme. • Pay advances for those transitioning into employment with us. • Promotion of credit unions particularly Scotwest Credit Union and all their promotions through webinars. • Employee discounts including supermarkets.
5. Next steps and timescales	A calendar of wellbeing themes was created to highlight activities to the end of December 2023. Activities being planned in for Quarter 3 include – Mental Health Awareness session, Building Personal Resilience session, Everyday Mindfulness Scotland course, Sleep Awareness, Unconscious Bias session, Menopause Awareness session; TRE (Trauma release) course, cooking videos.
6. Comments	A range of wellbeing activities will continue to be planned and promoted throughout 2023/24, these will be free at point of access for Council employees (or heavily subsidised). The qualitative comments provided in the evaluation of activities highlight both the

	appreciation of and the benefits obtained from participating in wellbeing activities. Many employees would not access activities if they were not promoted through the workplace.
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