
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

29 November 2022

Cabinet

Title: Cost-of-Living Crisis

Purpose: To provide a 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:

1. Notes the progress the Council has made on developing support in relation to the cost-of-living crisis; and
2. 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 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 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 Wholesale gas prices have been highly volatile since early this year and there have been large moves in financial markets, including a sharp increase in government bond yields globally. Sterling has depreciated materially over the period. Over the next 12 months, firms expect wage growth to be slightly lower than over the past year at 5.5%. That implies firms do not expect the current high rates of inflation to lead to a further acceleration in wage growth over the next year. Grocery inflation now stands at 13.9%, a record high since Kantar began tracking prices in this way during the 2008 financial crash. The net result will be increasing pressure on household finances.
- 2.4 North Ayrshire currently has the second lowest employment rate in Scotland (67.8%) compared to a Scottish average of 74.4%. This most recent data release reflects the period July 2021- June 2022 and shows a 2.9% increase from the previous data release.
- 2.5 North Ayrshire has the third highest unemployment rate in Scotland at 4.1% compared to an average of 3.4% for Scotland. Again, this data is from July 2021- June 2022 and shows a 0.8% reduction on the previous release. Glasgow (4.3%) and Dundee (4.8%) are the only areas with higher unemployment rates nationally.
- 2.6 North Ayrshire's economic inactivity rate (28.7%) is the third highest in Scotland (Scottish average 22.9%). North Ayrshire is the 26th highest authority in terms of economic inactivity rates in Great Britain (out of approximately 360 local authorities).

(All sources for above data: [Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://nomisweb.co.uk/))

- 2.7 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% for East Ayrshire and 3.6% for South Ayrshire and a Scottish average of 3.2%. This dataset is for September 2022 and shows an improvement from June 2022 where the figure was 5.0%. This trend is reflected nationally.

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

- 2.8 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

- 2.9 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 will receive a cost-of-living payment of £326.
 - The Energy Price Guarantee will ensure a freeze on energy bills and typical households will pay not more than £2,500 annually until April 2023.

- All pensioner households will receive an extra £300 to help them to cover the rising cost of energy this winter.
- More than 8 million households on means tested benefits will receive 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.
- People with disabilities will receive 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 is promised for businesses over the next six months targeting the most vulnerable industries.

Scottish Government Response

- 2.10 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.
- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 Support includes the following:
- For anyone in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment, an automatic increase to £25 per week will be in place from 14 November 2022. Applications for the Scottish Child Payment will also be open to all eligible under 16s from that date, with all payments backdated to the date of application.
 - Bridging Payments which deliver immediate financial support to low-income families with school age children worth £130 in October and December 2022 have been 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.

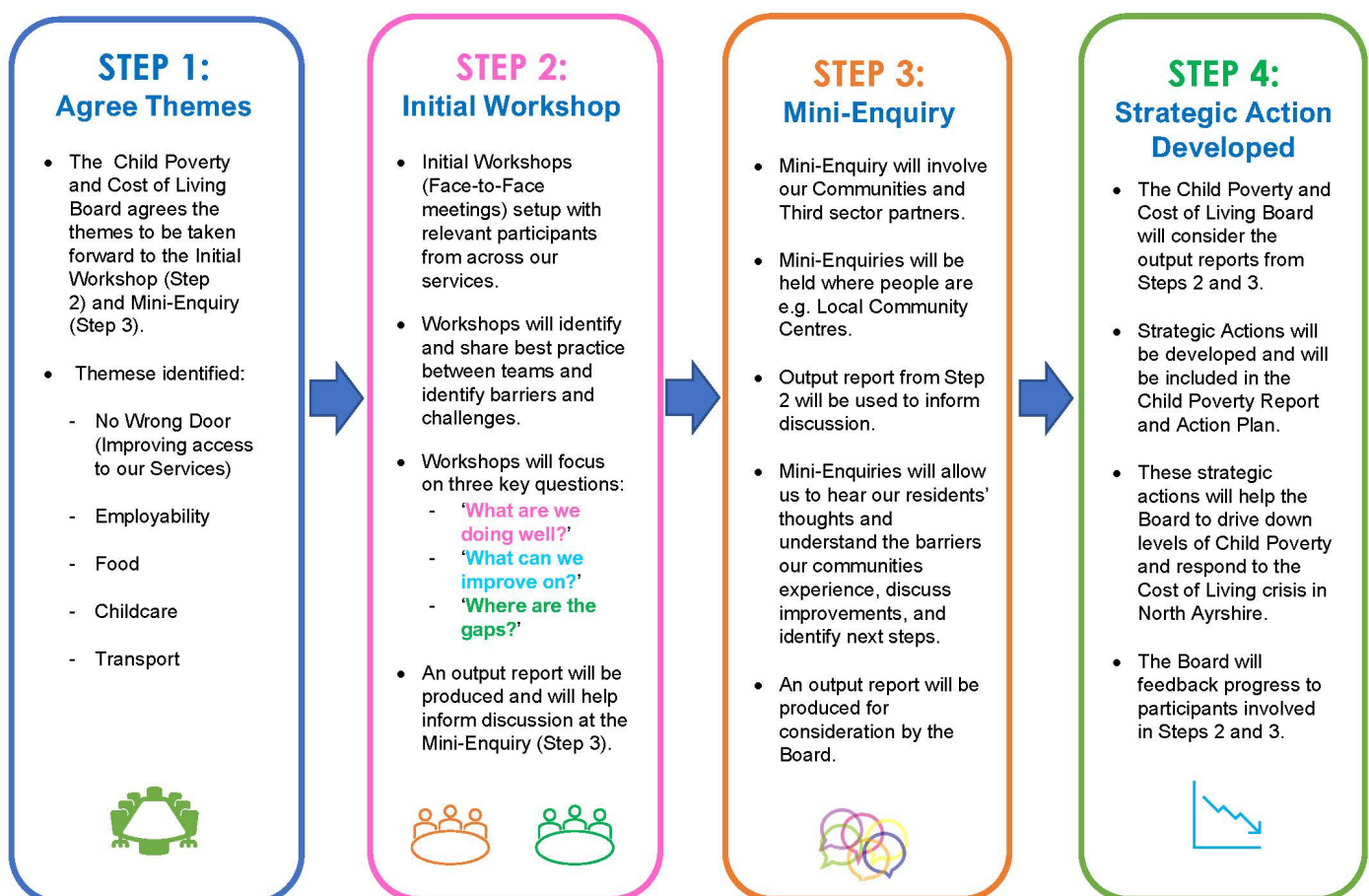
- Legislation to reduce hardships particularly for those in rented accommodation by freezing rents for six months.

North Ayrshire Response

2.13 Governance

- 2.13.1 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.
- 2.13.2 A consistent approach to identifying actions is ensured by the following approach:

Child Poverty and Cost of Living Crisis – Strategic Action Template



- 2.13.3 The outputs from this work will inform the three-year Child Poverty strategy and annual report which will be presented to Cabinet and will contribute to regular updates to Cabinet on the cost-of-living crisis and related expenditure.
- 2.13.4 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 and August 2022.
- 2.13.5 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.
- 2.13.6 Future regular reports to Cabinet will provide further updates on these funds and related activity as outlined at Appendix 1.

2.14 Cost-of-living Themes and Investments

- 2.14.1 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

- 2.14.2 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.

2.15 Cost-of-living Funding and Activities: Overview

- 2.15.1 Energy Advice and Support (*see Appendix 1, Pages 2 - 3*)

Energy Smart Scheme and Advice

Investments:

- Energy Smart Scheme including Emergency Support element - £2.176m
- Energy Advice and Support (Citrus Energy) - £0.060m

Key objectives: 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.

Scheme details: Delivery of the sustainability initiative is being implemented across three stages and incorporating:

- Energy efficiency and low carbon behaviour advice,
- Emergency support payments and
- Implementation of physical energy efficiency measures.

- 2.15.2 Food, Clothing and Essentials (*see Appendix 1, Pages 4 - 5*)

Fairer Food

Investments:

- Fair Food System - £0.150m
- Support to Fairer Food Network - £0.247m
- North Ayrshire Fairer Food Network - £0.142m
- Community Food Network - £0.500m
- Cost of the School Day (Food Element) Fund – Recurring Food element - £0.150m

Key objectives: The aim of the Fairer Food, clothing and essentials funding is to alleviate immediate crisis due to poverty and to invest in early intervention or long-term solutions which off-set future demand by providing low-cost cupboard staples to top-up shopping.

Scheme details: A network of community food larders has been established with North Ayrshire Fairer Food branding. They are supported in relation to food safety, health and safety and other regulations. The North Ayrshire Fairer Food Network of community food providers meets regularly and have been co-developing, sharing good practice and piloting bulk-buying, as well as establishing community benefit partnerships.

2.15.3 Finance and Benefits (see Appendix 1, Pages 6 - 15)

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Tenant Grant Fund

Investments: North Ayrshire Council received an allocation of £298k.

Key objectives: 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.

Scheme details: 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.

Tenant Hardship Fund

Investments: The Scottish Government provided an allocation of £867,000 to North Ayrshire through the Scottish Government Winter Support Fund – Tackling Financial Insecurities. 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.

Key objectives: To create flexibility across a number of areas to target those most in need e.g., food support, fuel, isolation, welfare fund top ups, housing, homelessness.

Scheme details: The funding assists any North Ayrshire Council tenant who is finding it difficult to manage fuel bills. Support Workers have been recruited and provide 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. The fund helps support winter warm initiatives and interventions for our most vulnerable tenant who are at the greatest risk of fuel poverty.

Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF)

Investments: Total £1,153,000 recurring funding from Scottish Government:

- £362,000 allocated to Crisis Grants
- £791,000 allocated to Community Care Grants

Key objectives: 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.

Scheme details: The SWF is delivered using a “One Team” approach - ensuring that when someone calls to apply for a Crisis Grant, a decision to award is made while the customer is on the phone and the payment can be made quickly to enable them access to much needed cash or fuel vouchers.

Council Tax Reduction scheme (CTR)

Investments: £12,880,000 recurring funding by North Ayrshire Council.

Key objectives: 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 per dwelling basis rather than individuals.

Scheme details: Automation of CTR has been introduced to ensure that any notifications received from DWP confirming eligibility or changes are automatically applied to the relevant Council Tax account.

Housing Benefit

Investments: £34,400,000 recurring funding from DWP.

Key objectives: To help people who are unemployed, on a low income or claiming benefits to pay their rent costs.

Scheme details: 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 to Universal Credit to help them pay their rent costs. This has helped people to afford to keep their tenancy and prevent them from falling into arrears with their rent.

Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)

Investments: £2,400,000 recurring funding agreed by North Ayrshire Council.

Key objectives: To help people who claim benefits towards the cost of their rent.

Scheme details: 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. This has helped people to afford to keep their tenancy and helped prevent them from falling into arrears with their rent.

Financial Inclusion

Investments: Access to finance (1st Alliance) £0.150m.

Key objectives: To support 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 afford repayments.

Scheme details: Small loans are 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.

Investments: Financial Inclusion Capacity Building: £258k.

Key objectives: The funding allocation was made to support the increasing demand for financial inclusion supports which is currently being experienced.

Scheme details: The additional funding will provide additional staffing capacity to support local people.

2.15.4 Children and Families (see Appendix 1, Pages 16 - 22)

Free School Meals

Investments:

- Scottish Government revenue funding for 2022-23 (£712k)
- Scottish Government revenue funding for 2022-23 (900k)

Key objectives: To ensure children have access to a free, healthy, and nutritious meal during the school day, and to support access to food for children throughout school holiday periods.

Scheme details: Roll out of universal free school meals 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 holiday programme ran over the Easter and summer breaks with support from community partners. Vouchers were also issued during the longer summer break. Vouchers will also be issued for the October and Christmas breaks.

Child Bridging Payment Top-Up

Investments:

- (£0.570m) June 2022
- (£1.140m) August 2022

Key objectives: The Scottish Child Payment Bridging Payments bring together the Covid hardship payments and the Family Pandemic Payment into one payment, made four times a year. These payments are available for each child who gets free school meals because of low income.

Scheme details: The scheduled summer, 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.

Cost of the School Day

Investments: Cost of the School Day Support - £0.500m (recurring).

Key objectives: 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.

Scheme details: There are three key elements:

- 1000 new digital devices each session for those in greatest need in P5 and S2.
- £100k for school uniform, winter clothing, outdoor learning, sports – participatory approach with schools.
- £150k for food in partnership with community organisations.

Children and Families Investment Fund

Investments:

- Children and Families Investment Fund - £0.075m
- Digital Access Fund - £0.255m
- Support for the North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy and Action Plan - £0.076m

Key objectives: The aim of the funding was to promote recovery and support the most vulnerable children and families.

Scheme details: The Children and Families Investment Fund links into the Cost of the School Day funding and is allocated to community support for food and clothing.

Digital access and skills are targeted by a newly recruited Digital Participation Officer. The Council also participated in Connecting Scotland programmes with SCVO which provided additional digital devices and connectivity. Its funding is not

yet fully allocated. An officer has been recruited to support the Child Poverty work and the funds will be fully utilised.

School Clothing Grants

Investments: £816,500 recurring funding agreed by North Ayrshire Council. Additional funding is provided from the Council to match demand.

Key objectives: The intended impact is that all school children have adequate school clothes and shoes.

Scheme details: 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.

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

Investments: £580,000 recurring funding agreed by North Ayrshire Council.

Key objectives: 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.

Scheme details: The funding provides 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.

2.15.5 Health and Wellbeing (*see Appendix 1, Pages 23 - 24*)

Community Mental Health and Wellbeing

Investments: Community Mental Health and Wellbeing - £0.307m.

Key Objectives: To empower local communities to deliver a wide range of events, activities and interventions that support positive mental health and wellbeing across North Ayrshire.

Scheme details: The funding was distributed via a robust application process in partnership with Arran CVS (in their role as part of the Third Sector Interface).

Investments: Community Support for Mental Health - £0.075m.

Key Objectives: To empower local communities to deliver a wide range of events, activities and interventions that support positive mental health and wellbeing across North Ayrshire.

Scheme details: The allocation was added to the existing North Ayrshire Council Participatory Budget (PB) exercise in order that projects that support mental health and wellbeing could be funded as part of the regular PB process.

2.15.6 Business Support (see Appendix 1, Pages 25 - 28)

Supporting the Resilience of Local Businesses

North Ayrshire Council provides a range of supports and interventions to assist businesses. These can be found at: [Business and community \(north-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk)

Review and Improve Support for Childminders and Out of School Clubs Providers

Investments:

- North Ayrshire COVID Economic Recovery Fund - SG Funding: £0.126m.
- North Ayrshire COVID Economic Recovery Fund - SG Funding: £0.050m.

Key objectives: The funds support the provision of wrap around childcare for families who need it. Due to COVID-19, the use of childcare has changed significantly. The funds are aimed at providing local childcare provision, to support employability and offer positive placements for vulnerable children and those in kinship care.

Scheme details: With childcare available over the summer, the fund is encouraging parents and carers with school age children to undertake a variety of short courses that upskill or lead to a route into employment. This will then build relationships with the Employability team, whilst building up confidence in the use of childcare services.

Public Transport Travel Scheme

Investments: NAC Economic Covid Recovery Funding: £20,000.

Key objectives: This fund supports low-income households, access to employment, address transport poverty and build confidence in public transport post covid. Due to the nature of the travel cards this will also benefit beneficiaries for both work and their personal life as they can also be used at evenings / weekends.

Scheme details: The scheme provides three months of free access to bus or rail travel. Beneficiaries are also supported with a free personalised travel plan to identify the best travel option for them.

2.15.7 Support for Communities (*see Appendix 1, Pages 29 - 30*)

Opening of Community Centres

Investments: Funding to accommodate activities associated with isolation / financial insecurity £0.005m.

Key objectives: To provide additional core opening hours funding to support opening of community centres to accommodate activities associated with isolation / financial insecurity.

Scheme details: 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.

Community Books

Investments: £0.022m

Key objectives: To enable the development and sharing of the Community Book initiative developed during the pandemic.

Scheme details: Funding to establish the base / platform on which the local Community Books will be hosted in future. 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.

Third Sector Support

Investments: £0.114m

Key objectives: To enable third sector partners to continue and develop “what works” programmes of activity.

Scheme details: This scheme builds on current programmes such as Out and About, working with families and key groups to improve access to food and environmental opportunities locally. This includes through the Fairer Food network and Eglinton Garden Project which develop skills to grow and cook food, as well as through family sessions and activities that 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.

2.15.8 Workforce wellbeing (see Appendix 1, Pages 31 - 32)

Workforce Wellbeing – Employee Wellbeing

Investments: LiveWell Healthy Working Lives Programme: £20k

Key objectives: 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.

Scheme details: The LiveWell Programme takes 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. It also provides advice and support to employees in relation to cost-of-living concerns.

Investments: Primary Care & Social Care Staff Wellbeing Programme: (£368,454 – over 3 years).

Key objectives: The programmes give equal priority to staff in all sectors and provide funding for physical and mental health and wellbeing interventions to manage stress and anxiety.

Scheme details: The wellbeing of the health and social care workforce remains a key priority and it is recognised that teams are fatigued because of unrelenting pressures. It is important therefore that continued wellbeing initiatives are put in place to support staff on an ongoing basis.

2.16 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 form the basis of future associated six-monthly updates to Cabinet.

3. Proposals

3.1 It is proposed that Cabinet:

1. Notes the progress the Council has made on developing support in relation to the cost-of-living crisis; and
2. 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 strongly 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 and Education)

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

Background Papers

Appendix 1

North Ayrshire Council Cabinet

Cost of Living Themes and Updates – November 2022



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	£1.726m Energy Smart Scheme was secured from funds as part of the 2022/23 Budget process. The £1.726m investment was supplemented by an additional £0.450m to support the crisis payment element of the scheme by Cabinet on 23/08/2022.
2. Intended impact	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.
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify partner for energy advice: Minute of Agreement with the Energy Agency for Home Energy Scotland to administer advice line.• Establish energy advice line: complete, active since September 2022 and being regularly promoted.• Identify criteria and delivery method for crisis payment: complete, Energy Smart Emergency Support scheme launched 31 October 2022.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Physical measures: initial phase will focus on loft and cavity wall insulation, addresses being collated using Energy Savings Trust Home Analytics Data for targeted maildrop. Supplies of LED bulbs and draught excluders will be made available at touchpoints, for example food larders. Further measures will be added to the scheme following a procurement process to identify a partner contractor.
4. What difference has the investment made?	<p>The following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will monitor the success of the programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of households in fuel poverty helped with energy efficiency advice.• Number of households in receipt of crisis support.• Number of households granted financial assistance for energy efficiency measures.• Estimated annual savings on fuel bills.• Carbon emissions saved through installing energy efficiency measures.
5. Next steps and timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continued implementation of Emergency Support element• Implement package of physical measures for delivery over heating season (loft and cavity wall insulation, LED bulbs, draught excluders) (November 2022 – March 2023).• Appoint contractor early 2023 to deliver second phase of energy efficiency measures.
6. Comments	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, direct support payments and implementation of physical energy efficiency measures.

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 is now finished with the allocation fully spent.
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	N/A
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>Fair 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. • The North Ayrshire Foodbank staffing, food supplies and resources have been supported.

	<p>North Ayrshire Fairer Food Network</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Cost of the School Day (Food element) 2021/22</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Cost of the School Day (Food element) 2022/23</p> <p>Planning with community larder network and partners are ongoing to address the particular issues created by the cost-of-living crisis.</p>
4. What difference has the investment made?	<p>14 Community Larders are operational.</p> <p>Network support group meets quarterly and members are part of a communication group for peer support.</p> <p>Weekly footfall across the Larders – 850 per week (families/members).</p> <p>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.”</p> <p>“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 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 will be taken to the NA Fairer Food Network for discussion and coproduction of a sustainable model before more funding is distributed.</p> <p>Balance of Tackling Financial Insecurity £61,499.</p> <p>Officers are working on support for community groups to assist with warm banks, food, and energy advice for winter 2022.</p>
6. Comments	<p>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.</p>



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	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.														

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. <p>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.</p>
4. What difference has the investment made?	<p>To September 2022 we have supported 140 tenants with an average age of 40 to tackle fuel poverty. 5 of these tenants had previously been known to Homeless Services. Our engagement rate YTD is 46%.</p> <p>We carry out regular visits to each of the 28 sheltered units and have engaged with 167 residents/tenants to date.</p>
5. Next steps and timescales	<p>Fuel Poverty/Sheltered Wellbeing Housing Support Workers</p> <p>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</p> <p>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. <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.</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>
6. Comments	<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 (46%). The team have also successfully engaged with tenants and helped to arrange gas safety checks, with gas restored to 92 properties. This intervention potentially avoided 158 forced entries into these properties and avoided a cost of approx. £25k 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £362,000 allocated to Crisis Grants • £791,000 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 - £128,820 Community Care Grants - £613,277 Total spend - £742,097</p>
4. What difference has the investment made?	<p>This financial year to date, the Scottish Welfare Fund has helped 1,608 people in financial crisis with a Crisis Grant. 815 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	£12,880,000 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 £12,869,533 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 16,179.
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 £19,014,471 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 7,828.
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	£2,400,000 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 £1,437,795 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.
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 September 2022, 128 individuals accessed loans through this investment, the total value of loans to date is £62,430 and the loans agreed range from £250-800.</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>Borrowers are from across North Ayrshire with the majority being from Irvine, Kilwinning or the Three Towns. Five were from Garnock Valley, 2 from the North Coast and 3 from Arran.</p> <p>47 loan requests were declined mostly due to lack of affordability or defaults on credit files.</p> <p>16 loans are currently in arrears, a total of £4,690.48, which represents 7.51% 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>£100,000 has been paid to 1st Alliance to support the delivery of the Progressive Finance Initiative.</p>
4. What difference has the investment made?	<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>

	<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. 22 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 at the end of 2021 than in the first half of 2022.</p> <p>114 borrowers are regularly saving. A total of £16,927.84 has been saved over the first 12 months, an average of £148 per saver. 11 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>
5. Next steps and timescales	<p>Progress will continue to be monitored and a meeting held with 1st Alliance in November to discuss. The final payment of £50,000 is likely to be transferred around end of 2022.</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. 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.
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>This is also to support the anticipated outcome of the current review of income maximisation and advice services when set within the context of the current cost-of-living crisis.</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. The project to review financial inclusion services has just concluded. A particular need for ongoing debt advice has been identified through the project and this will be explored.</p> <p><i>An update is provided in separate Cabinet report (29/11/22)</i></p>
4. What difference has the investment made?	N/A
5. Next steps and timescales	See 3 above. It is anticipated that the lead for financial inclusion will be appointed by the end of November and then decisions will be taken on the use of the funding.
6. Comments	N/A



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).
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 and 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	1) The holiday programme ran over the Easter and summer breaks with support from community partners. Vouchers were also issued during the summer, autumn, and winter breaks. 2) 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.
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 4,500 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 2 figures 2022/23</u> P1-P5 UFSMs - 76.5%. P6 & 7 assessed need FSM uptake - 52.6%.
5. Next steps and timescales	Vouchers will be issued for the Christmas period. Planning has been undertaken in Facilities Management (FM) to facilitate a further roll out of UFSMs when it is announced by the Scottish Government.
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 and autumn payments have been made; the winter payment is scheduled in December 2022. The expenditure is scheduled to be 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 December 2022 payment is scheduled. A recent Scottish Government announcement updated that the December (winter) Child Bridging payment to double to £260 per eligible child.
6. Concluding comments	The payments have bridged the period of the roll out of the Scottish Child Payment and the local top-up has been welcomed by families.

Cost of the School Day Support	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount.	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)
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	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 Expenditure 2021/22 –£500k 2022/23 - £500k committed
4. What difference has the investment made? (Stats and qualitative information)	2021/22 Expenditure £250k - 1,000 Chromebooks purchased. Devices are distributed annually to schools using Footwear and Clothing Grant (FCG) data. Schools issue to pupils in greatest need in P5 and S2. Providing devices enables pupils to participate in digital learning both in the classroom and at home. £100k - Using FCG data, schools provided with budget to purchase school uniform and equipment items linked to the cost of the school. This ensures clothing or equipment is not a barrier to accessing education. £61,470 - Reusable water bottles for all North Ayrshire school pupils. Water bottles reduced 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. £88,530 – funding for North Ayrshire's Community Larders. Those accessing Community Larders with school aged children were provided with supplementary food items linked to the cost of the school day.
5. Next steps and timescales	2022/23 Expenditure Informed by feedback from children and young people attending the COSD Conference in June 2022 £250k – 1000 digital devices are mid-procurement. £100k – Schools are progressing spend as allocation above. £150k – Discussions with community larder network and partners are ongoing as part of the network review.
6. Comments	The funding has been welcomed by schools as an enabler in reducing the poverty-related attainment gap.

Children and Families 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	<p>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.</p>
4. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	<p>Children and Families Investment Fund This links into the Cost of the School Day funding and is allocated to community support for food and clothing.</p> <p>Digital Access Fund Digital access and skills are targeted by a newly recruited Digital Participation Officer. The Council also participated in Connecting Scotland programmes with Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) which provided additional digital devices and connectivity. Its funding is not yet fully allocated.</p> <p>Support for the North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy and Action Plan An officer has been recruited to support this work and the funds will be fully utilised.</p>
5. What difference has the investment made?	<p>Children and Families Investment Fund This fund is supporting the Cost of the School Day initiatives.</p> <p>Digital Access Fund A Digital Participation Officer has been recruited to work in communities. Work is ongoing.</p> <p>Support for the North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy and Action Plan An officer has been recruited to support this work and the funds will be fully utilised.</p>

6. Next steps and timescales	<p>Children and Families Investment Fund Agree the full allocation via FCG data with Education in winter 2022.</p> <p>Digital Access Fund Continue to support the Digital Participation Officer and look for further opportunities.</p> <p>Support for the North Ayrshire Child Poverty Strategy and Action Plan Continue the proposed work.</p>
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 – 4,599 from 2,837 families Total spend - £607,950 2,730 Primary children – spend £327,600 1,869 Secondary children – spend £280,350
4. What difference has the investment made?	Provided financial support to 2,837 families and a total of 4,599 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 £258,690. 478 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</p> <p>Community Support for Mental Health Fund - Recovery and Renewal Investment Fund: £0.075m Date Allocated – 15/06/21</p> <p>Costs for Island Self-Isolation Fund – Tackling Financial Insecurity Fund Date Allocated 29/11/21</p>
2. Intended impact	Empowering local communities to deliver a wide range of events, activities and interventions that support positive mental health and wellbeing across North Ayrshire.
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>Community Support for Mental Health The 75k formed part of a combined Locality PB budget.</p> <p>Costs for Island Self-Isolation 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 The £307k formed part of a combined budget of £813,346k was allocated to a total of 55 groups over 61 projects.</p> <p>Community Support for Mental Health The £75k formed part of a combined budget of £813,346k was allocated to a total of 55 groups over 61 projects. The allocation was reported on the CPP website.</p> <p>Costs for Island Self-Isolation 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 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.</p> <p>Community Support for Mental Health Funding fully utilised as above, non-recurring.</p>
6. Comments	<p>Contribution to Community Mental Health and Wellbeing 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 As above.</p> <p>Costs for Island Self-Isolation 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	North Ayrshire Council provides a range of supports and interventions to assist businesses. These can be found at: Business and community (north-ayrshire.gov.uk)
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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
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2. Intended impact	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Review and improve support for childminders and OOSC providers Aimed at sustaining local childcare provision, to support employability and offer positive placements for vulnerable children and those in kinship care.</p> <p>Targeted employability opportunities for key families during Summer 2022 With childcare available in OOSC services over the summer, 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. Ten programmes will be delivered near OOSC provision or in the same building. This will build relationships between the Employability Team and participants, whilst building up confidence in the use of childcare services. It will effectively provide a wider awareness of and confidence in the support available and will help to sustain the providers by addressing the current pressure created by current low uptake.</p>
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	<p>Review and improve support for childminders and OOSC providers The post associated with the work will be advertised in January 2023 with the timescale designed to maximise intelligence from Scottish Government about their intentions for early years and wraparound care.</p> <p>Targeted employability opportunities for key families during Summer 2022 Plans are now progressing to deliver programmes with partners in Easter and Summer 2023.</p>
4. What difference has the investment made?	Future report.
5. Next steps and timescales	<p>Review and improve support for childminders and OOSC providers Recruitment in January / February 2023.</p> <p>Targeted employability opportunities for key families during Summer 2022 Planning for delivery in Easter and Summer holidays 2023.</p>
6. Concluding comments	Review and improve support for childminders and OOSC providers

	<p>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</p> <p>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 are 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 will also benefit beneficiaries for both work and their personal life as they can also be used at evenings/weekends. They can 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, CEIS and the Lennox Partnership to identify beneficiaries. When 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.</p> <p>The £20,000 fund has been fully expended and providing free travel for to 79 beneficiaries. Additional match funding secured from Smarter Choices Smarter Places (SCSP) from Paths for All to extend the scheme. A further 105 beneficiaries will receive free travel through this funding.</p>
4. What difference has the investment made?	<p>79 individuals will benefit from the £20,000 investment. This comprised of 40 Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) ZoneCards and 39 Stagecoach bus travel passes.</p> <p>105 individuals will benefit from the additional SCSP funding. This comprised of 105 Stagecoach bus travel passes.</p> <p>Qualitative information is not available at this stage. Pre and post intervention surveys are being undertaken with beneficiaries to assess the impact of the scheme.</p>
5. Next steps and timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Issue of remaining 31 travelcards to beneficiaries funded under Smarter Choices Smarter Places in week commencing 27 November 2022. – Completion of post intervention surveys with beneficiaries in March 2023.
6. Comments	The scheme will directly benefit low-income households by reducing the impact of travel costs on household budgets and helping to address transport poverty. This will improve access to employment opportunities and sustain employment. It will also build confidence in the public transport network post-pandemic and support sustainable travel for everyday journeys.

	The mode of transport is 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. Qualitative information will be available on completion of the 3 month free travel period for all beneficiaries.
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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. The Winter Warmer programme will be delivered with and by community partners.</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</p> <p>The funding is fully committed for spend via third sector partners with service level agreements.</p> <p>Community Books</p> <p>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</p> <p>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</p> <p>Longer opening hours are available in some community centres and the Winter Warmer programme of events in warm spaces.</p> <p>Community Books</p> <p>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</p> <p>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</p> <p>Funding fully allocated – non-recurring.</p> <p>Community Books</p> <p>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 place by the end of the calendar year for testing however, a temporary solution is currently operational on the CPP web site.</p> <p>Third sector support for programmes to support low-income families and individuals by building on current programmes</p> <p>Staff continue to work with partners to develop an inclusive model that fulfils the outcomes. This will be in place 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>



Employee Wellbeing

LiveWell Healthy Working Lives Programme	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount	LiveWell Healthy Working Lives Programme: £20k for 2022/ 23
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. Provision of funding from the ELT has allowed the LiveWell group to explore a wider range of activities than otherwise possible. £3,972 has been spent over Q1 and Q2 2022. Activity is reduced over the summer holiday period and increases again during Q3.
4. What difference has the investment made?	<p><i>"During my time working from home, I found it difficult being on my own most of the time and not being able to just turn around and ask a colleague a quick question and having to send emails often. Although I was a bit reserved having never participated in Tai Chi, I thoroughly enjoyed the sessions and was looking forward to the next one. I believe this helped me cope with the isolation I was experiencing."</i> – Employee and Tai Chi Class participant.</p> <p><i>"I can control my anxiety now I'm a lot calmer and loved the meditation."</i> – Employee and Meditation participant.</p> <p><i>"...Was nice to be reassured that I am not actually 'going off my head' and the symptoms such as memory, foggy moments etc. are all part of the menopause. This session has given me the confidence to speak to my doctor. Thank you!"</i> – Employee and Menopause Awareness workshop participant.</p> <p>Short evaluations are produced on activities by topic and evaluate positively, sample evaluations are highlighted below for activities during Q1 and Q2:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 x Menopause Awareness workshops rated 4.7 out of 5. • 2 x Mindfulness courses rated 4.7 out of 5. • 2 x Boulderling sessions rated 5 out of 5. • 1 x Mental Health and Return to Work session. • LiveWell Grant, (3 x LiveWell Grants were awarded for dance instructor training, a Transport Garage team building day and a Treetops Adventure team building activity). <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, Mental Health Awareness, Oral Health, Diabetes Awareness, Sexual Health Services, Digital Detox, Blood Donation and Suicide Prevention awareness.</p> <p>In light of the Cost-of-living crisis a new section has been added to the LiveWell SharePoint page called SaveWell. This includes information on: benefits and income; debt; energy saving advice; savings and affordable loans; housing support and advice; accessing affordable food, white goods, and household items; financial pressures and your mental health; and employee discounts. Since being published in September the SaveWell site has been visited 312 times (as at 7 October 2022).</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	<p>Following a recent LiveWell employee Survey, the LiveWell Programme is being further developed with opportunities up to December 2023. Activities and health promotion information will continue to be promoted and the LiveWell Grant Scheme will be re-promoted to encourage more teams across the Council to apply.</p> <p>The Council's new Energy Emergency Support Payment will also be promoted to employees.</p>
6. Comments	<p>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.</p>

Primary Care & Social Care Staff Wellbeing Programme	
1. Description of funding stream, date and amount	Scottish Government allocated a total of £108,590 to North Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership in financial year 2021/22 to support the wellbeing and mental health of the Primary Care and Social Care workforces, as well as meeting practical needs over the winter period. Additional funding of £250,000 over a two-year period (2022/23 & 2023/24) was agreed by the Integration Joint Board to continue the staff wellbeing programme. A bid was submitted to the Workforce Wellbeing Fund for Adult Social Work and Social Care and £9,864 was granted to fund Health & Wellbeing events. (£368,454 – over 3 years)
2. Intended impact	<p>This funding gives equal priority to those working in primary care and social work/social care sectors, including independent contractors, out of hours services, volunteers, carers, personal assistants, and support staff.</p> <p>Key areas have been identified as local priorities, recognising the opportunity to build on existing local approaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for teams to 'take a step back' together and participate in wellbeing opportunities • Mindfulness Interventions • Support and management of distress and anxiety; post-traumatic stress disorder; bereavement; staff affected by 'long Covid.'
3. Progress to date against milestones, including expenditure	<p><u>Physical Activity</u> Paths for All - online Workplace Walking Course This is an interactive online course which helps get colleagues moving more in and around the working day. The course provides ideas, knowledge, and skills to develop and deliver a successful workplace walking initiative.</p> <p>KA Leisure Activities On two occasions in recent months there has been an opportunity for staff to receive a free 3-month gym pass to KA Leisure facilities. 100 passes have been allocated on a first come, first served basis. This has been very popular with staff taking the opportunity of a free 3-month trial and several have gone on to continuing a gym membership at corporate discounted rates. In addition, KA Leisure have delivered online weight management sessions, as well as physical activity and yoga sessions.</p> <p><u>Mental Health</u> Mindfulness <i>Everyday Mindfulness Scotland</i> have delivered several 4-week online programmes over the last year, using a mix of presentation and mindfulness practices, focus on anxiety and stress, fight or flight and rest and digest. Over the last year, 137 staff have completed the mindfulness programme and positive feedback has been received on this method of supporting staff. Examples:</p> <p><i>'It's so difficult to get time to look after ourselves that I didn't see how I was going to fit this in, but I did and the time was in the evening when I've got other commitments, but this has made me commit to myself and it's made all the difference to my stress levels'</i></p> <p><i>'I just want to say I didn't think this on-line was going to work but it does. I was so much more able to join in when I was in my own home environment. I know its all about using the practices and so I'm determined to try and make the time'</i></p>

	<p><i>'At the start of the course, I wasn't particularly sure what I was going to learn, but it became clear as we progressed through the course. The course was very well delivered, and the explanations/teaching of the techniques and practices were excellent. I feel I have benefited greatly in myself and in my work with service users.'</i></p> <p><u>Optima Health Workshops</u></p> <p>Since the implementation of the Staff Wellbeing programme, the following suite of online workshops have been delivered by the Council's Occupational Health provider, Optima Health and were attended by 129 staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological Impact of Working from Home • Emotional Wellbeing • Sleep • Financial Wellbeing • Returning to the workplace <p>The following workshops are currently being delivered - Digital Wellbeing, Menopause and Winter Wellbeing.</p> <p>Primary Care & Social Care Grants Scheme</p> <p>The Grant Scheme has been operating since March 2022. Applications were invited from teams across North Ayrshire (including all Health & Social Care Partnership staff, GPs and Primary Care staff, Third & Independent Sector providers who are commissioned by HSCP, Personal Assistants, volunteers, and Unpaid Carers) for funding to support staff health & wellbeing activities, which would be arranged/delivered by staff for local teams.</p> <p>Applications are considered by the Primary Care & Social Care Grants Committee. And must meet one or more of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for teams to 'take a step back' together and participate in wellbeing opportunities, • Support and management of distress and anxiety; PTSD; bereavement; staff affected by 'long Covid' <p>Some examples of wellbeing applications we have received to date.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor Group Activities – including Tree Tops, Cumbrae Cycling and Wellbeing Day Retreats • Yoga Sessions • Therapy Treatment and Training including reflexology, TRE, reiki, and Indian head massage • Escape Rooms • Fitness & Wellbeing equipment including a cross trainer and exercise bike • Self-Care plans, mindfulness, and positivity cards <p>At the time of writing £176,115 has been spent on these wellbeing activities and interventions.</p>
<p>4. What difference has the investment made?</p>	<p>At the time of writing there has been a total of 207 applications since the commencement of the Scheme with 180 accepted, 8 partly funded, 5 pending awaiting more information, 3 withdrawn and 11 rejected. All of these supporting staff to take a time out with their own teams. Positive feedback has been received from all staff and teams, hence the approval from the IJB to continue the programme for a further two years, this is also in line with our strategic priority to develop and support our workforce.</p>

5. Next steps and timescales	<p>A bid was submitted to the Workforce Wellbeing Fund for Adult Social Work and Social Care in July 2022 for £9,864 and this was successful. The funding will deliver health and wellbeing events during February 2023 within KA Leisure facilities:</p> <p>The following activities will be delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menopause awareness sessions • Mindfulness exercise sessions • Weight management sessions • Mental Health Awareness Sessions • Appointments for health check ups • Appointments for Massage sessions • Appointments for manicures <p>As per the criteria for the Workforce Wellbeing Fund, the approved grant is to fund initiatives for those staff working only in the Adult Social Care/Social Work field and does not include staff working in Children's Services, NHS staff and Partnership support staff. The Partnership Senior Management Team has agreed that grant monies can be moved to expand this wellbeing work to all staff in the Partnership, reflecting our integrated approach. The Staff Wellbeing programme will continue to offer health & wellbeing opportunities through Optima Health, KA Leisure as well as further Mindfulness training. In addition, the Grant Scheme will continue to offer opportunities for teams to apply for wellbeing grants.</p>
6. Comments	<p>The wellbeing of the health and social care workforce remains a key priority and it is recognised that teams are fatigued because of unrelenting pressures. It is important therefore that continued wellbeing initiatives are put in place to support staff on an ongoing basis. An evaluation process is in place to capture the views of staff against each wellbeing activity. In addition, the Primary Care & Social Care Grant Scheme seeks feedback from staff on approved wellbeing grants relating to the application process and evaluation of the activities undertaken.</p>