

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Council
DATE	13 May 2015
DIRECTOR	Pete Leonard
TITLE OF REPORT	Street Begging Update
REPORT NUMBER:	CHI/15/169
CHECKLIST COMPLETED:	YES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Council of the letter to Mr Michael Matheson, Cabinet Secretary for Justice, The Scottish Government confirming the request for financial support for an assertive outreach worker to tackle the issue of street begging and further assist with the comprehensive street begging strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is recommended to:

Note the content of the letter sent to the Scottish Government and approaches being taken by the Council and its partners to address street begging.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications to Aberdeen City Council. We are seeking financial support from the Scottish Government.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Should funding be secured for additional outreach work then management and employment arrangements will need to be decided in consultation with the Scottish Government and street-begging partnership.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

In considering the Scottish Government reply not to confirm Aberdeen City Council (Prohibition of Begging in Designated Area) 2014 byelaw, council resolved to; Instruct officers to develop alternative sustainable solutions to the use of the proposed byelaw working in partnership with Police Scotland and other appropriate stakeholders; and to instruct the Chief Executive to write to the appropriate Scottish

Minister seeking financial and non-financial support to develop suitable solutions to tackle street begging.

Aberdeen street begging forum meet to develop strategies to address issues relating to street begging with the principal aim to help those in need secure a more sustainable future. The partnership forum includes; the Council (housing, homelessness, community safety and social work), Police Scotland, UK Border Agency, Aberdeen Alcohol and Drugs Partnership, Big Issue, Bethany Christian Trust and Aberdeen Cyrenians.

The forum has delivered a wide range of interventions to reduce street-begging ranging from delivery of support through to enforcement. The forum initiated the 'alternative giving scheme' - Begging Box initiative aimed to encourage donators to give directly to recognised charities through the begging boxes supporting the principal; 'Give a hand up not a hand out'.

The strategy includes producing the 'Everyday Street Support' information booklet giving beggars daily information on health and social support services; where to find support, clothing and food on any given day of the week. These booklets are distributed to street beggars by city wardens, the police, street pastors and voluntary sector groups.

Partners are committed to continue the high profile response to street beggars; The UK Border Agency is receptive to undertake further patrols to address begging by non-UK nationals. Police Scotland have increased the focus on street begging and have been taking a more pro-active approach to dealing with incidents of street begging encountered on patrols and in response to complaints received.

In reviewing the street begging strategy the partnership recognise the requirement to increase the assertive outreach work to help assess the on-going needs of street beggars, provide relevant support and facilitate engagement with relevant services. You will be aware that some, but not all, have complex needs, chaotic lifestyles and are challenging to engage. We believe the introduction of an assertive outreach worker would be a positive step forward to help assess these needs, engage with services and further gain information to inform future strategies.

We are requesting that the Scottish Government provides funding for the recruitment of an outreach worker to support street-beggars in Aberdeen. Funding requirements for a five year period is £129,000. Through the outreach worker we would aim to achieve improved social, health and housing outcomes for beggars.

6. IMPACT

Reducing levels of street-begging is likely to enhance the city centre's reputation as a place to visits, shop and socialise. Addressing the social, health and housing needs of street-beggars supports various objectives within the single outcome agreement and five year business plan.

Concerns exists in the city about street-begging activity in terms of fear and alarm caused; impact in business and city image; and also, concern for the well-being of

the beggars. The street-begging forum delivers an extensive strategy in line with Scottish Government recommendations however the issue does persist. Additional intervention is required to further reduce and eliminate street-begging.

The Equalities and Human Rights Impact does not identify any negative consequences for equality groups. The new proposal to deliver additional assertive outreach work should bring positive outcomes for any street-beggars with social, health and housing needs. Disability groups would experience positive impacts through reduced trip hazards arising from street-beggars. All protected characteristics could potentially benefit from reduced alarm and distress caused by aggressive street-begging.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Street-begging has a negative impact on the city's reputation. Failing to satisfactorily address the matter may create risk to the vibrancy of the city centre.

Best practice interventions are essential to manage risk of harm to street-beggars in terms of protecting them from harm and meeting their housing, health and social needs.

This report is likely to be of interest to media.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Addendum – update to report CG/14/080 – Street Begging – Council meeting 25 June 2014

Street-begging report and minute of Housing and Environment committee meeting 14 May 2013

Proposed Street-begging Byelaw report and minute of Council meeting 20 May 2009.

Street-begging report and minute of Council meeting

Update Street-begging report and minute of Council meeting 31 October 2013.

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

Emily Queen Safer Aberdeen Manager	
---------------------------------------	--

Telephone: 01224 219452 Email: EQueen@aberdeencity.gov.uk	
--	--