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April 2015

Mr Michael Matheson
Cabinet Secretary for Justice
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Dear Mr Matheson,

I refer to your letter dated 20 June 2014 advising of Scottish Ministers decision not to confirm Aberdeen City Council (Prohibition of Begging in Designated Area) 2014 byelaw.

In not confirming the byelaw you state the specific grounds to include that Aberdeen City Council has adopted; 'a comprehensive multi-agency approach to deal with issues associated with street begging which involves a number of local partners including police Scotland.' We note that this is in line with the Scottish Government's policy to reduce street-begging.

Since receiving your decision we have undertaken further engagement with street-beggars and investigated best practice to develop our street-begging strategy.

In reviewing our street begging strategy we recognise the requirement to increase our 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 believe that additional outreach work with street-beggars would be supportive of the Scottish Government's policy in respect of street begging and therefore respectfully request that the Scottish Government considers financial support for this proposal. Funding requirements for a full-time worker over a five year period is £129,000. Through the outreach worker we would aim to achieve improved social, health and housing outcomes for beggars. We would also endeavour to develop an exemplar intervention that could be replicated in other areas.

PETE LEONARD
DIRECTOR

We look forward to your considerations to providing funding and of course we would be receptive to meeting with your officers to develop this proposal and also explore further strategies.

Yours sincerely

Angela Scott
Chief Executive
Aberdeen City Council