

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	16 September 2021
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Food Insecurity
REPORT NUMBER	CUS/21/199
DIRECTOR	Andy Macdonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Derek McGowan
REPORT AUTHOR	Neil Carnegie
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the committee of developing interventions to address food insecurity and poverty using £175,000 allocated by the Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Support the developing proposals for use of the funding and the actions to address food insecurity as detailed in this report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the Council's 2021/22 budget meeting, it was agreed to approve the allocation of £100,000 and instruct the Chief Officer - Early Intervention and Community Empowerment to work with partners and community groups towards eradicating food poverty including hard to reach groups, maximising income and investigating the establishment of further community pantries.
- 3.2 On the 3rd March 2021 Council considered a report on the Fairer Aberdeen Fund (FAF) for 2019/20, showcasing the outstanding work that had been undertaken through Participatory Budgeting to allocate £1.64m of funds to help support vulnerable groups and individuals in priority locality areas. This included the distribution of 484 tonnes of free food, equating to 1.4 million meals throughout the year, and the establishment of three community pantries in the City.
- 3.3 From within that report, Council agreed aims that "No one in Aberdeen will go without food due to poverty by 2026" (the LOIP stretch outcome) and "Increasing food resilience at individual and community level by establishing self-governing community co-operatives to offer further supportive ways of

providing food.” The Chief Officer - Early Intervention and Community Empowerment was instructed to work with the Fairer Aberdeen Board to use the £75,000 allocated within the Administration’s 2020/21 agreed budget proposals to establish a co-operative. This therefore provided a total fund of £175,000 available for helping to eradicate food poverty, maximise income and establish further food pantries and co-operatives.

- 3.4 Income maximisation activity is already extensive across the City, with the Council’s own Financial Inclusion Team helping to achieve over £4.4m in unclaimed benefit payments, and partnership approaches with Community Food Initiatives North East (CFINE) through the FAF established. On that basis, it was decided that the £175,000 funding would be best used to focus on tackling food insecurity, on the understanding that this too would help maximise income in a different way. The focus of this additional £175,000 funding from the Council is therefore on sustainable solutions and supporting people out of poverty delivering additional pantries with access to wider support services such as financial advice services.
- 3.5 Prior to the pandemic Aberdeen had experienced increasing use of food banks by people experiencing poverty, with an extensive network of these operating in the city. The City Voice survey asked respondees for their experience of food insecurity in the previous 12 months. This reported that a small proportion of the group had experienced food insecurity with approximately 5% stating that they had been worried that they hadn’t had enough food and 6% had experienced being hungry but did not eat.
- 3.6 Through the pandemic voluntary organisations have provided exceptional support for people affected by food poverty. These endeavours have been supported by a tremendous volunteering effort and donations from individuals and the business community. The Council has assisted through its Crisis Support arrangements and distribution of vouchers for people entitled to free school meals. The Council has also provided extensive financial support throughout the response to the pandemic to tackle food insecurity and poverty, including through the Lord Provost’s Charitable Trust.
- 3.7 As part of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan refresh earlier this year, a new Anti-Poverty Outcome Improvement Group was established to oversee delivery of the new stretch outcome ‘No one will suffer due to poverty by 2026’. This group comprises representatives from a range of public sector and voluntary organisations, including Aberdeen Cyrenians, Community Food Initiative North East (CFINE), NHS Grampian and Social Security Scotland.

Projects being taken forward include those with the following aims:

- Increase the number of people using community pantries by 20% by 2023.
- Increase the uptake of unclaimed benefits across Aberdeen City by 2023.
- Increase support for those who have been most disadvantaged through the pandemic by 2023 - Women and people in the Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities.

- 3.8 A key objective of the work being taken forward is to provide dignity for those who are suffering food insecurity. While food banks provide vital support to those suffering financial hardship, they do not represent a sustainable means of accessing food. Food pantries and co-operative models ensure sustainability by providing member led, local access to quality, affordable and nutritious produce.
- 3.9 The Council and CFINE have worked in partnership to pioneer Food Pantries within the city, which offer affordable and nutritional food for co-operative members. These are membership schemes whereby for a small fee members can access nutritious discounted food.

There are currently four fixed Food Pantries operating in the City:

- a. Woodside Community Food Pantry has 82 members and 6 volunteers
 - b. 3 pantries, with distinct target beneficiaries, operate from the CFINE base, with 387 members and 16 volunteers:
 - c.
 - General Pantry with membership drawn from range of referral sources within CFINE and in communities.
 - Best Start and Smile Pantry focusing on parents with young children.
 - CFINE Volunteers (recruited largely from disadvantaged backgrounds) Pantry.
- 3.10 A mobile pantry has been launched this month, in partnership with CFINE, which benefits from a £25k award from the Council and will prioritise our most disadvantaged and vulnerable communities, including our Priority Neighbourhoods.
- 3.11 In addition, there has been an extensive network of community food outlets offering free and low-cost foods operating throughout the city. However, while the COVID crisis has substantially increased food insecurity it has impacted on the infrastructure to efficiently meet these needs, with many food outlets closed due to restrictions.
- 3.12 To further our objectives to develop the Food Pantry co-operative model and therefore increase the number of communities accessing pantries, associated increases in membership and usage, we are working with CFINE to agree investment in Development Officer capacity. The additional Development Officer capacity will:
- a. support consolidation of existing support activities and re-establishing outlets closed through the crisis.
 - b. Develop and deliver a more holistic approach more effectively connecting people in need to relevant supports including financial and benefit advice; digital and literacy; development of cooking skills; and access to volunteering and employability pipelines.
- 3.13 This development work will commence in September 2021 and continue through to 2023. Building on the community food outlet model, we aim to deliver

4 co-operative pantries over this period. £100,000 has been allocated to support this work.

- 3.14 We are also delivering actions to increase take up of free school meals in secondary schools. While good progress has been made in increasing registration for free school meals, the take up of free school meals, at 52%, remains low compared with other Scottish Local Authorities. A recognised barrier to take up is the desire of pupils to leave the building to get exercise and fresh air away from the school environment. A solution proven to be effective in other areas, such as Fife and Dundee, is an external pod serving food within the school grounds. In Dundee, for example this has helped the uptake of free school meals reach 88%. This has proven successful at Oldmachar Academy, and we are proposing to fund another pod which may be static or mobile depending on consultation.
- 3.15 The schools chosen will depend on support of the school community, with preference to secondary schools in Priority Neighbourhoods. We are therefore developing proposals to use funding for the pod and supporting related initiatives to increase uptake of free school meals. We anticipate that a pod will be introduced by the end of the 2021/22 school year, that may support not only the provision of free school meals but cost effective, nutritious food for the whole family. £75,000 has been allocated to support work to introduce a new pod to support this work.
- 3.16 Further engagement will be on-going to confirm and implement initiatives with the Fairer Aberdeen Board, Priority Neighbourhood Partnerships and school communities included.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	There is a risk that we fail to achieve maximum impact from the funding reduce food insecurity and poverty.	L	We are researching best practices solutions and working with a range of communities and stakeholders to plan and deliver interventions.
Reputational	There is a risk that we do not take account of community views on effective solutions to address food insecurity and poverty.	L	We are engaging communities and stakeholders to influence and agree interventions.

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	The proposals in this report support poverty and locality planning objectives.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the refreshed LOIP Stretch Outcome 1 – No one will suffer due to poverty by 2026.</p> <p>The investment in Food Pantry capacity will help to deliver the LOIP Improvement Project to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase the number of people using community pantries by 20% by 2023 <p>A more holistic approach effectively connecting people in need to relevant support including financial and benefit advice and access to employability pipelines will help deliver the following LOIP Improvement Projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the uptake of unclaimed benefits across Aberdeen City by 2023 • Increase support for those who have been most disadvantaged through the pandemic by 2023 • Support 50 people into sustained, good quality employment by 2023, and 100 by 2026, with a particular focus on; those from priority neighbourhoods and people over 50.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 11 - Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is five years longer by 2026.</p> <p>A more holistic approach effectively connecting people in need to relevant support including development of cooking skills and access to volunteering will help deliver the following LOIP Improvement Projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support 100 people to feel confident to promote wellbeing and good health choices by 2023 • Increase opportunities for people to increase their contribution (volunteering) to communities by 10% by 2023
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	

Regional and City Strategies	
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	Fairer Scotland Duty - The proposals within this report contribute towards the Fairer Scotland Action Plan of <i>enabling more people to have access to affordable, healthy, nutritious food, in a dignified way</i> , as Food Pantries provide affordable and nutritious food in a more sustainable and dignified way than food banks.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Full impact assessment, the interventions have the potential to impact positively for protected groups and in particular women, Black ethnic minority and poverty group who are most adversely affected by the covid crisis.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Local Outcome Improvement Plan](#), Community Planning Aberdeen

10. APPENDICES

None

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Name	Neil Carnegie
Title	Communities and Housing Area Manager
Email Address	ncarnegie@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Tel	07793 365906