

<b>THEME: ENOUGH MONEY TO LIVE ON</b>				
<b>Theme lead: Scottish Borders Council</b>		<b>Group members: CPP Partners, DWP &amp; CAB</b>		
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Progress/current position</b>	<b>RAG</b>
Communities are supported with advice and financial assistance in relation to income maximisation, debt, food, warmth and fuel throughout autumn/winter	Short life multi-agency Partnership Group (including Community Planning Partners) continues to meet to address the current cost of living crisis and provide support and assistance across the Borders to those in need throughout autumn/winter 2022.	Autumn/Winter 2022	<p>SBC is working with partners to prepare bids for the Scottish Government's Child Poverty Practice Accelerator Fund and Cash First Fund.</p> <p>The Cost of Living Fund was allocated £1.2M to support local organisations to provide advice and financial assistance to local communities. Evaluation of how the fund has been spent and how people benefitted is now underway. Further information is appended below.</p> <p>All families eligible and registered for Free School Meals, are entitled to £2.50 per child per day to help with meals. The multi-agency food conversation group continues to meet to share good practice.</p>	
The Borders is a more equitable and fair place to work	CPP to work collaboratively to identify barriers and work towards developing a plan to remove them in order to support parents into employment i.e., childcare barrier, transport etc.		<p>Scottish Borders Local Employment Partnership (LEP) have supported individuals into paid employment through initiatives such as No One Left Behind, the Employment Support Service, the Parental Employability Service and the Job Creation Scheme.</p> <p>Skills Development Scotland have created learning opportunities that help people get into and progress in rewarding work so that they develop skills and competencies which help them to maintain employment</p> <p>Funding in place to support the delivery of summer activities and provide free access to low-income households.</p>	

	Partnership to develop plans for paying the living wage – and encouraging contractors and sub-contractors to also do so.		<p>SBC contractors are encouraged to pay the real Living Wage. Question included in tender documents which is given a weighting and scored as part of the tender evaluation.</p> <p>Partner organisations paying the Living Waage are Scottish Borders Council, Borders Community Action, SoSE, Borders Housing Association, SBHA (also in final stage of applying for Fair Work accreditation).</p>	
Build, redirect and retain wealth in the Scottish Borders local economy, and place wealth back into the hands of local people	Explore a partnership approach to Community Wealth Building - CPP partners to work collaboratively to develop community wealth building plans.		<p>SBC is currently undertaking a self-assessment of its position against the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Procurement</li> <li>• Environment, sustainability &amp; assets</li> <li>• Service design &amp; delivery, and</li> <li>• Becoming and exemplar anchor institution</li> </ul> <p>This is alongside identifying CWB links with current workstreams.</p>	

## **Appendix**

# **ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY – UPDATE ON COST OF LIVING RESPONSE**

## **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 **The following information provides an update in relation to the £1.2m financial support package that was released from Council reserves to provide support to communities during 2022/23.**
- 1.2 At Council on 25 August 2022, it was agreed to approve the creation of a short term multi-agency Cost of Living Crisis Strategic Group and an Operational Officers Group in order to provide an enhanced response to the exceptional autumn and winter pressures our communities were facing.
- 1.3 These groups have reported into the Anti-Poverty Members Reference Group and the Community Planning Partnership, and have also taken into account local requirements and response across each of our five localities.
- 1.4 An update is also provided for the allocation of balances in relation to the Financial Hardship Fund.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 At the Scottish Borders Council meeting on 25 August 2022, a £1.2m underspend from 2021/22 outturn reserves was released to provide support to communities during 2022/23.
- 2.2 It was agreed to allocate £585k of the £1.2m to allow immediate dispersion of financial support as detailed in paragraph 3.1.
- 2.3 Council also agreed to delegate authority to the Director of Resilient Communities in consultation with the members of the Anti-Poverty Members Reference Group, to allocate the remaining £615k as required.
- 2.4 Council also agreed to establish a multi-agency Anti-Poverty Strategic Group and an Operational Officers Group to respond to the global cost of living crisis. The Groups consult and receive information, data and real life experiences from the Financial Hardship Officers Group, Financial Inclusion Practitioners Group, Poverty Data Group, the Food Conversations Group and any other appropriate mechanisms that are available.
- 2.5 The creation of these groups has enabled a focussed, corporate and partnership response to further support those in need, and to disperse funding in a timely, efficient and effective way, and to support the delivery of actions within the Anti-Poverty Strategy Action Plan and the Child Poverty Action Plan.
- 2.6 A communications plan was also created to provide a comprehensive campaign that provided general information, and a support directory for both Challenge Poverty Week in October 2022 and the Council's website:

[Financial support and advice](#) | [Cost of Living Crisis support](#) | [Scottish Borders Council \(scotborders.gov.uk\)](#)

- 2.7 The longer term ongoing issue of poverty across the Scottish Borders continues to be addressed by the Scottish Borders Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan, with progress being reported to the Anti-Poverty Members Reference Group, and supported by both the Cost of Living Strategic Group and Cost of Living Operational Group.
- 2.8 In June 2022, the Community Planning Strategic Board approved four themes for the 2022/23 CPP Work Plan (interim Community Plan):
1. Theme 1 – enough money to live on
  2. Theme 2 – access to work, learning and training
  3. Theme 3 – enjoying good health and wellbeing
  4. Theme 4 – a good place to grow up, live and enjoy a full life

Both the Cost of Living Support Package, and the delivery of the actions within the Ant-Poverty Action Plan make a significant contribution to the outcomes contained within each theme.

- 2.9 In addition to the £1.2m cost of living support, other financial support includes the Financial Hardship Fund. Details of this was reported to the Council's Executive Committee on 9 February 2021 and 16 November 2021. A balance of £190k was administered through the Anti-Poverty Strategic Group.

### 3 ALLOCATION OF £1.2m COST OF LIVING SUPPORT FUND

- 3.1 An immediate allocation of £585k was agreed by Council on 25 August 2022, which enabled a range of support to be put in place quickly. This included:

<b>£150k</b>	Extending existing arrangements with organisations such as CAB, Changeworks etc., to provide additional resources to assist with referrals, energy advice, money advice, signposting, and budgeting
<b>£235k</b>	Warm clothing payment of £100 to each child entitled to either Free School Meals or Clothing Grants - an initial 2,350 children benefitted
<b>£50k</b>	Top up Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) funding
<b>£100k</b>	Further top up of Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) funding
<b>£50k</b>	Additional resources to be used to support & process increased take up of benefits

- 3.2 Since August 2022, proposals for the remaining £615k have been considered and approved by the Cost of Living Strategic Board as follows:

<b>£100k</b>	Expansion of the Inclusion Fund
<b>£22k</b>	Support Warm Spaces across the Scottish Borders: <a href="#">Warm spaces</a>   <a href="#">Cost of Living Crisis support</a>   <a href="#">Scottish Borders Council (scotborders.gov.uk)</a>

<b>£15k</b>	Energy training and food support
<b>£96k</b>	Warm & Well, Youth Work Collaborative
<b>£84k</b>	Borders Housing Network, extension of Warm & Well Project, and provision of an additional resource to advise tenants
<b>£13k</b>	Live Borders, financial support to ClubSport members in relation to energy
<b>£60k</b>	Breakfast Club pilot for schools within highest SIMD areas
<b>£35k</b>	Additional funding to support increased take up of £100 Warm Clothing Grant – a further 345 children benefitted
<b>£86k</b>	Third Sector Interface & Live Borders, £50k for energy support, £36k for club membership, equipment and clothing support for sports clubs and organisations
<b>£30k</b>	Financial Inclusion Assistant role in Employability Service
<b>£7.5k</b>	Warm Spaces – Reaching You. A CAB proposal to provide outreach services.

3.3 A balance of **£66,591** is available for further allocation during 2023/24.

3.4 Evaluation of the impact of these supports is underway and references are made to these in the Anti-Poverty Progress Report which is also presented to this meeting. Specific examples include:

- a) The Warm and Well Fund was launched to support voluntary, community and charity organisations to provide warm spaces. In Berwickshire, over 200 warm space sessions were delivered between November 2022 and March 2023, with over 4,000 people attending. In Cheviot, St.Boswells Village Hall developed 'Warm-up Wednesdays'. These sessions ran for 14 weeks and supported over 200 members of the community.
- b) The Warm & Well: Youth Work Collaborative awarded grants to 25 YouthBorders member organisations to deliver additional youth work activities or enhance provision to keep young people warm and well over winter 2022. This funding was for young people and families experiencing financial hardship, poverty or deprivation and it provided a dignified approach to the impact of the increased cost of living on young people in their communities. A total of 1,488 young people directly benefitted from this funding, there were 280 additional youth work sessions, and 430 households were signposted to further advice and support. 182 care packs of food, blankets and warm or waterproof clothing were also distributed.
- c) £60k was awarded for Breakfast Clubs to 20 schools/community groups, (3 in Berwickshire, 4 in Cheviot, 9 in Eildon, 3 in Teviot & Liddesdale, and 1 in Tweeddale). Funding is being used to provide free breakfast for everyone with the aim of maximising attendance in school, providing a nutritional breakfast and working towards providing an equitable offer across the Scottish Borders. We will continue to evaluate the impact, early feedback from one school reported that lateness has decreased, the choice of breakfast is positive, children are more alert and around 25% of the school are attending.

- 3.5 In relation to the Financial Hardship Fund the following allocations have been made from the £190k balance.

Access to Food	
£76,665	Cyrenians, to provide community cook clubs in Selkirk, Walkerburn, Jedburgh and Galashiels
£20,890	Low and Slow Projects, available in Galashiels, Eyemouth, Duns, Peebles, Hawick and Newcastleton
£3,000	FareShare Membership across the Borders
£38,830	Eildon Housing, support for Borders FareShare Hub
£9,000	Eildon Housing, further support for Borders FareShare Hub

Supermarket Gift Cards	
£9,000	Violence Against Women Service (VAW)
£2,400	Early Years Team
£9,000	Further allocation to VAW
£5,500	Alcohol and Drugs Partnership

- 3.6 This leaves a balance of **£15,715** for further allocation during 2023/24.
- 3.7 Examples of how this funding has benefitted residents of the Scottish Borders include:
- a) 60 participants have taken part in the Low and Slow programme and 65 slow cookers have been distributed
  - b) The Eildon Housing Community FoodHub works in partnership to distribute donations across the Borders to address the growing need for access to food for individuals, families and their pets.
- 3.8 The Cost of Living Strategic Group and the Anti-Poverty Members Reference Group continue to look at levels of demand and options to provide further support. If the Council should consider any further financial support, a report will come forward on the implications.

#### 4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In response to the cost of living crisis, the Council released an underspend from reserves to provide £1.2m support to communities during 2022/23. A balance of £84,488 was carried forward into 2023/24. There is also an outstanding balance of £15,715 from the Financial Hardship Fund. The multi-agency Strategic Group and the Anti-Poverty Members Reference Group will continue to meet to disperse this balance appropriately. Other earmarked balances from 2022/23 will increase budgets available for 2023/24 for the Scottish Welfare Fund, Inclusion Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments. Together with Scottish Government cost of living payments and other grant offers eg. Child poverty funding, these budgets will continue to support a range of measures to provide additional resources where required to address the continuing cost of living issues.

## **5 RISK AND MITIGATIONS**

The dispersal of £1.2m has helped to mitigate hardship for Scottish Borders residents. The agreement to release these funds in August 2022 has enabled the multi-agency Strategic Group and the Anti-Poverty Members Reference Group to make a difference to those in need throughout the cost of living crisis. Agreement to carry forward balances will ensure that this response can continue, and along with national payments, will continue to help those most in need of support.