

South Ayrshire Council

**Report by Director of Strategic Change and Communities
to Cabinet
of 12 March 2024**

Subject: Financial Inclusion Projects 2024/25 and 2025/26

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to progress the financial inclusion projects that have been recommended by the Financial Inclusion Member/ Officer Working Group.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Cabinet agrees to utilise £1.055m financial inclusion funding to deliver a range of financial inclusion projects across South Ayrshire.**

3. Background

- 3.1 At its meeting on 29 August 2023, the Cabinet agreed that £1.055m of Covid 19 reserves are remitted to the Financial Inclusion Member/ Officer Working Group to support the wider agenda of sustainable financial inclusion.
- 3.2 On 23 November 2023, the Cabinet agreed that the unallocated funds (£1.055m) could be utilised to support financial inclusion activity across a range of Council Service Departments and to support key partners from the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Financial Inclusion Strategic Delivery Partnership.
- 3.3 It was also agreed that South Ayrshire Council would align the development of a new Financial Inclusion Strategy with the new Local Outcome Improvement Plan that is being developed through the CPP.
- 3.4 Following Cabinet approval on 23 November 2023, Service Leads were emailed on 13 December 2023 and asked to submit proposals for financial inclusion projects. The priorities for submissions should focus on the proposed priorities previously agreed at Cabinet:
- Breaking the cycle of debt and dependency;
 - Reducing Child Poverty across South Ayrshire;
 - A reduction in the number of people in crisis through early intervention;
and

- Preparing people for employment, training, education and volunteering opportunities and creating opportunities, that will assist our communities to thrive through economic development and local wealth building activity.

3.5 A range of projects across Council services were submitted and these proposals were reviewed by the Assistant Directors.

3.6 On Monday 12 February 2024, the Financial Inclusion Member/ Officer Working Group met and reviewed the projects and agreed the proposals should be presented at Cabinet.

4. Proposals

4.1 It is proposed that Service Leads across a range of Council services progress the proposals set out in [Appendix 1](#) that will support financial inclusion work during 2024/25 and 2025/26.

4.2 Services will report progress of these projects annually with a financial inclusion report at service and partnership performance.

5. Legal and Procurement Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

5.2 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 £1.055m is being utilised to support financial inclusion work during 2024/25 and 2025/26.

7. Human Resources Implications

7.1 Staff contracts are being extended and new posts are being created to support this work.

8. Risk

Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations

8.1.1 There are no risks associated with adopting the recommendations.

Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations

8.2.1 Financial inclusion is noted on SAC Strategic risk register. By rejecting the recommendations in this report the work to support this will not be able to be progressed.

9. Equalities

9.1 The proposals within this report have been assessed through the EQIA scoping process and there are no significant potential positive or negative equality impacts in agreeing the proposals, therefore an EQIA is not required

10. Sustainable Development Implications

- 10.1 **Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme or strategy or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy or strategy.

11. Options Appraisal

- 11.1 Proposals have been reviewed by assistant directors and the Financial Inclusion Member/ Officer Working Group.

12. Link to Council Plan

- 12.1 This report contributes to priority two Live, Work, Learn of the SAC plan 2023-2028

13. Results of Consultation

- 13.1 Projects being recommended are a result of feedback from Service Leads, partners, young people and communities. No formal consultation has taken place.
- 13.2 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Ian Davis, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Human Resources and ICT, and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

14. Next Steps for Decision Tracking Purposes

- 14.1 If the recommendations above are approved by Members, the Director of Strategic Change and Communities will ensure that all necessary steps are taken to ensure full implementation of the decision within the following timescales, with the completion status reported to the Cabinet in the 'Council and Cabinet Decision Log' at each of its meetings until such time as the decision is fully implemented:

<i>Implementation</i>	<i>Due date</i>	<i>Managed by</i>
Annual progress report presented to Service and Partnerships Performance Panel	May 2025	Service Leads/ Assistant Director - Communities

Background Papers **Report to Cabinet of 28 November 2023 – [Financial Inclusion Strategic Development](#)**

Report to Cabinet of 29 August 2023 – [Covid-19 Recovery Project and LACER Funding Review](#)

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Date: 4 March 2024

Appendix 1 Financial Inclusion Projects

Service Area	Project Details	Amount Awarded
Education	Young person's fund to allow young people to develop a proposal or initiative that will assist young people with cost of living. Proposal is following feedback from young people on cost of living	£10,000
Education / Information Advice Hub	Support resources within schools by increasing information and advice hub staffing resource to meet demands	£386,000
Information Advice Hub	Create Financial Hardship Fund (FHF) to assist families.	£40,000
Housing	Tenant Hardship Fund (THF) to prevent homelessness and support tenancy sustainment. This funding will be used to provide grant support to households in financial hardship to prevent the loss of council tenancies and potential homelessness.	£97,736
Housing	Create discretionary fund to support Care Experienced young people in temporary accommodation or private rented accommodation where their rent liability exceeds the average local authority rent.	£30,000
Revenue and Benefits	Additional funds to increase the Scottish Government core funding for payment of Crisis Grants and Community Care Grants to support customers who are on a low income or in receipt of state benefits.	£195,000
Thriving Communities	Create small grant fund to support the third sector, local groups and organisations who are supporting financial inclusion work.	£30,000
Thriving Communities	Funding to allow the continuation of discounted access to Dolphin House for young people who are in receipt of free school meals. Purchase essentials for young people visiting the centre.	£20,000
Thriving Communities	Extend Senior Communities Officers post in Glendoune until June 2025.	£73,151.50
Community Planning	Extend the Coordinators post in Wallacetown and support the ongoing developmental work in Wallacetown for a further two years.	£93,112.24
Community Planning	Provide funding to support the three food pantries in Ayr, Girvan and Maybole.	£80,000

Total **£1,055,000**

Budget £1,055,000

Difference £0