

Report on	Strategic Development Update
Date of Meeting	16 th June 2022
Reporting Officer	Claire Linney, Assistant Director of Development
Contact Officer	Martina Totten

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Background
1.1	Members will recall that at the May meeting of the Development Committee Officers were asked to link in with colleagues at Derry & Strabane District Council and seek further information in respect a 'Cost of Living' grant which was recently highlighted in the media. Furthermore the committee resolved that a paper be presented to the Committee, outlining possibilities for a cost of living grant for the Mid Ulster District.
1.2	Members will also be aware that the Council recently facilitated the development of a Mid Ulster Anti-Poverty Plan, along with partners from across the Community Planning partnership Structure, to consider actions / lobbying to alleviate the impact of poverty on our residents, working with partners through 3 themes, Economic Growth, Education & Skills and Health & Wellbeing.
2.0	Main Report
2.1	<p><u>Support to alleviate cost of living pressures</u></p> <p>The ongoing cost of living increases continue to place pressures on families and residents across the region, including within our own district. These additional pressures are pushing more people into poverty and negatively impacting upon people and their quality of life.</p> <p>Council Officers have engaged with Derry and Strabane District Council on their proposed approach to deal with the cost of living increase, and we have been advised that whilst a notice was brought forward and agreed by the Council, this was to explore how the Council could potential provide additional support, within its vires.</p> <p>At this stage Officers are not aware of any agreed scheme within Derry & Strabane, however we will continue to keep a watching brief on this.</p> <p>On review of the initial proposal by Derry and Strabane, Members are advised that Mid Ulster already have in place a robust network of 11 strategic foodbank / SVP partners operating across 5 geographical location, namely;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clogher Valley • Dungannon

- Coalisland
- Cookstown
- Magherafelt
- Maghera

This network has and continues to work with the Council, supported via funding available from the Department for Communities (DFC), to provide support across all areas of the district for individuals / families to access support, were they have been negatively impacted by COVID and /or cost of living increase.

The current services offered via the network include support with provision of food (or food vouchers), fuel costs, support to purchase white goods and other necessary household requirements.

During 2021/22 our strategic partners provided support to **6300** individuals / families and are continuing to work with the Council to highlight ongoing pressures / new pressures, which supports us to build an evidence base to lobby for additional funding and other measures to support alleviation of poverty.

The network has been funded via additional money secured via DFC and we have been advised by the department that this funding is very likely to be available for ongoing support during the 2022/23 financial year (at the same level as in 21/22), with Officers expecting to receive a letter of variance within the coming weeks.

Officers are also aware of the recent announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to provide financial support to household, during the autumn, to support with increasing fuel costs, however we appreciate that consideration is ongoing in terms of how this will be delivered within Northern Ireland.

To provide a more holistic approach, through working with our foodbank partners and other support agencies, the Council has developed an Emergency Support Chart, **(Appendix 1)** which is continually circulated to a wide range of groups and networks.

It is proposed that moving forward the Council will continue to partner with DfC regarding additional funding to help alleviate emergent poverty issues and continue to deliver this through our established strategic network.

In addition Officers will continue to lobby government regarding intervention on some of the key issues impacting poverty in Mid Ulster District, as part of the Mid Ulster Anti-Poverty Network and Anti-Poverty plan.

2.2

Mid Ulster Anti-Poverty Plan

Members are advised that ongoing engagement has taken place with all Community Planning Partners through the thematic workshops, which has identified a number of key actions. Council Service leads, in addition to other key partners, have identified actions under a Council Action Plan. An update on this plan was brought to a recent Development Committee and officers are currently developing a Members workshop to discuss the plan and the proposed actions and to ensure it remains flexible withint he changing environment.

3.0	Other Considerations
3.1	<p><u>Financial & Human Resources Implications</u> Costs associated with the extension of the funding support for the Strategic Foodbank Network is due from the DFC.</p> <p><u>Professional Support</u> None</p>
3.2	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u> None known</p>
3.3	<p><u>Risk Management Implications</u> None</p>
4.0	Recommendation(s)
4.1	Members are recommended to;
4.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Note the update in respect of officer engagement with Derry and Strabane District Council regarding their current consideration to provide support around pressures associated with cost of living increases; (ii) Agree that the Council continues to provide ongoing support with the cost of living challenges through our already established strategic network; (iii) Agree that any funding allocation from the Department, aimed to provide additional support, continues to be channeled through strategic network partners; (iv) Note the progress associated with the delivery of the Mid Ulster Anti-Poverty Plan and agree that this plan be used to continue to lobby government for additional support to help alleviate ongoing cost of living / poverty pressures.
5.0	Documents Attached & References
5.1	Appendix 1 Emergency Support Chart