

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Angela Wilson, Strategic Director

Council 27 March 2019

**Subject: Response to motion to Council – November 2018:
Free Lets of Leisure Trust Premises for West Dunbartonshire
Community Food Share**

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to provide a response to the motion agreed at the West Dunbartonshire Council meeting held on Wednesday, 28th November 2018.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** Council is asked to:

- note the costs associated with the provision of space for foodbanks at section 4.1;
- note the update on Universal Credit and work of the communities team as outlined in sections 4.2 and 4.3;
- note the update on options to increase other funding opportunities detailed in section 4.4;
- note the established programmes as part of our child poverty action plan; and
- note the additional options for consideration in addressing holiday hunger detailed in section 4.5.

3. Background

- 3.1** Following a discussion in relation to a Motion by Councillor Bollan regarding Free Lets of Leisure Trust Premises for West Dunbartonshire Community FoodShare, Council agreed:

To ask WDLT to waive hall/room rental charges for any space used by West Dunbartonshire FoodShare whilst they are distributing food to families across West Dunbartonshire.

WDC will give WDCF the use of Unit 22 at the Leven Valley Enterprise Centre. The full year commercial rate to rent this unit is £16,800. WDC notes that F4T are also struggling for sufficient room for storage and asks officers to work with them to identify, and provide free of charge, suitable Council/Leisure Trust space to allow them to carry out their increased activity over the festive period.

- *WDC will fund the remaining 2018/19 financial year rental costs of Unit 22 from free reserves (By funding WDCF's main rental costs instead of asking the Leisure Trust to waive fees for use of their facilities, WDC*

will be providing better support for WDCF while ensuring that the Leisure Trust is not in detriment). Council notes that a portion of the rental costs for their current Unit 21 accommodation have already been awarded to WDCF by other funds and this should be taken into account when calculating the amount of outstanding rent to be covered.

- *WDC would like this arrangement to start as soon as practicable, and members will decide how to fund this rental cost longer term as part of considering the report called for in the next bullet, at the Council's budget meeting.*
- *Council agrees in full, the motion at 13(c) of this agenda, but adds that F4T be included alongside WDCF in the officers' report, and that the report will come to the Council's budget meeting.*

This report will also include the following:

- *Details of the per annum cost of hiring 1 FTE staff member, to be given relevant training in Universal Credit applications, that we can base in our four biggest libraries (Alexandria, Dumbarton, Dalmuir, Clydebank) one day a week to assist people with initial applications and maintenance of claims.*
- *This individual should also be able to spend up to one day a week training members of community groups who have expressed, or may express in the future, a wish to provide access to community based assistance.*
- *Consideration of increasing capacity within our Communities team given an expected increased interest in community engagement as local group seek to provide more community led help for residents.*
- *Details of any opportunities there may be for Council to increase other funds that can help those in dire need, such as the Scottish Welfare Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments.*

It will be for Council to decide at the budget meeting what measures should be put in place and how those measures will be funded.

That the report includes the potential costs of West Dunbartonshire Council providing a holiday hunger benefit payment or free school meals.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1.** As set out in the background section of this report, the motion required progress across a range of different issues. The conclusion of that work and the action required is detailed below.

West Dunbartonshire Community FoodShare (WDCF) and Food for thought (F4T)

- 4.1.1 In respect of WDCF the charges described in the motion for 2018/19 have now been waived or funded through grants approved during 2018/19. To implement this in financial year 2019/20 onward will therefore require an increase in the relevant budget to meet that recurring annual shortfall of £16,800.
- 4.1.2 WDCF currently utilise three Community Facilities managed by West Dunbartonshire Leisure Trust, The Hub in Clydebank (3 hours); Alexandria Community Centre (2 hours); and The Concord in Dumbarton (2 hours) for a total of 7 hours per week over 50 weeks of the year. Since the November Council meeting, WDCF has no longer been charged for the use of these facilities. For this current arrangement to continue throughout 2019/20, £2,100 will be required to cover the hire costs as per the Council's original decision.
- 4.1.3 In respect of F4T the issue was one of short term storage capacity for toys and gifts over the Christmas period. Officers were able to work with F4T to resolve this matter by identifying space in the Concord Centre in Dumbarton. It transpired that F4T did not need to use the facilities made available and do not require any further storage capacity on an ongoing basis. Therefore, there are no further financial implications.

4.2 Universal Credit

- 4.2.1 Recognising the potential impact of the introduction of UC Full Service in November 2018, when new claims and those with changing circumstances would be claiming via UC; Working4U (W4U) had prepared plans and processes to deal with any emerging issues in collaboration with West Dunbartonshire Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).
- 4.2.2 This included CAB providing support for those making a claim for the first time, through the use of additional 'Universal Service' funds from DWP. W4U would use existing resources to provide employability and learning support for people seeking to maintain a claim as well as providing access to welfare and debt advice support for those facing difficulties with UC system and processes.
- 4.2.3 In addition, and beyond the usual service provision, W4U supported by CAB delivered an initial programme of awareness-raising sessions within community based/third sector organisations and health and social care services. This work was also supported by DWP. Over 50 sessions have been delivered. Financial support for this activity from DWP ends on 31 March 2019.
- 4.2.4 To date the services have generally coped with the demand placed on them by new claimants and those shifting to UC due to change of circumstances. Initial support to make a claim was provided for approximately 110 people. In addition, W4U is supporting 528 UC claimants to maintain their claim by providing job search, training and employability support. This includes those

that were part of the 'Live Service', 49 of whom have registered for support since the introduction of UC Full Service 28/11/18.

- 4.2.5 While the introduction of Full Service in November 2018 did not lead to an unmanageable increase in demand for welfare and employability services, there may be future implications. The challenge going forward will emerge when the plans for migration of existing claimants on a range of different benefits to UC are implemented. Although details are yet to be provided by DWP, it is anticipated that this migration will take place in 2020. Preparation for this will centre on ensuring that those likely to be affected are aware of the process and how it will affect them.
- 4.2.6 The impact on service provision and resources as a result of migration is currently unknown and will be kept under review. It is anticipated that it will involve new complex casework and representation, and considerable further delivery of the community sessions that were delivered in anticipation of the introduction of UC Full Service. In the meantime, W4U will continue with reduced numbers of awareness sessions prior to the start of migration.
- 4.2.7 There is therefore no immediate requirement to increase W4U resources to respond to UC implementation. The Motion proposed that this individual should also be able to spend up to one day a week training members of community groups who have expressed, or may express in the future, a wish to provide access to community based assistance. The experience of officers during the introduction of UC Full Service suggested greater demand for raising awareness than community based assistance, although this may be subject to change.
- 4.2.8 Taking all these factors into account it may be more effective to keep the potential for additional resources under review and revisit closer to the date of migration in 2020. To respond to the specific query in the motion, the full annual cost of one FTE W4U officer would be £36,408.

4.3 Communities Team

- 4.3.1 Increased interest in UC within community groups is being managed through W4U. As a result there has not been an increase in demand on the Communities Team specifically as a consequence of the implementation of UC.

4.4 Opportunities to increase other Funds

- 4.4.1 The Council currently provides funding to residents who experience financial difficulties arising from changes to benefits and those suffering significant financial hardship, as follows.
- 4.4.2 **Discretionary Housing Payments** – the budget for this within 2018/19 was £1.865m and this budget has been continued into future years. The Council receives this sum in funding from Scottish Government. Currently this level of resource is meeting the level of demand, though there is potential for this to increase in future as UC full services extends to more new claimants and onto existing benefits claimants expected in 2020. The Scottish Government guarantees that reductions in benefit caused by the 'bedroom tax' are funded

and other funds are provided to assist people affected by the benefits cap and other welfare reforms. The Council is allowed to input additional funding to the amount provided by the Scottish Government, however as stated above the current level of funding is currently covering need.

4.4.3 **Social Welfare Fund** – the budget for this within 2018/19 was £0.798m and this budget has been continued into future years. The Council receives this sum in funding from Scottish Government. Currently this level of resource is meeting demand, though there is potential for this to increase in future as a result of UC, as stated in 4.4.2. The Council is allowed to provide additional funding to top-up the Scottish Welfare Fund, however as stated above the current resource is meeting the demand.

4.4.4 **HRA Hardship Fund** – Housing introduced a Hardship Fund in 2018/19 within the budget held for the Bad Debt Provision. This fund provides limited and conditional relief to tenants who have fallen into arrears and where collection would be uneconomical and/or contribute to threat of homelessness.

4.5 **Holiday Hunger** **Established Programmes**

4.5.1 Educational Services have been coordinating a joint approach to addressing holiday poverty and hunger with a range of partners such as local churches, Working 4U and third sector organisations. The coordination ensures a spread of holiday activities and food projects across all localities. This enables families to access a range of opportunities in a variety of settings to suit their needs and interests.

4.5.2 The joint services approach reflects our Child Poverty Action Plan and empowers a range of partners in eradicating ‘holiday hunger’ in their own communities. Projected costs for this model are met by third sector partners where applicable and Educational Services for sector led programmes.

4.5.3 Projected costs for 19/20 (which are already provided for within budget estimates) for Educational Services’ established programmes are:

Active Schools holiday camps at Easter and Summer holidays, includes lunch in five geographical areas of highest deprivation	£19,000
Families, Food and Futures project to continue running in three geographical areas extended to 30 days of summer holidays and open to 120 families.	£22,363
30 days of family engagement programme for our specialist settings	£22,500

The Facilities Management Service presently provides packed lunches to attendees of the Active Schools holiday camps during Easter and Summer (these are produced using the catering facilities in our current 52 week school kitchen but capacity is limited). It would be feasible to roll out this provision of packed lunches to a limited range of other projects and initiatives. Costs for

such provision would be similar to the £4.10 per meal option noted at 4.5.4.

4.5.4 **Provision of a free meal from schools**

In respect of a meal only model provided in schools, the cost of provision of a meal, including catering staff, is £4.10 per pupil.

4.5.5 Costs of pupil supervision and facilities management staff require to be added as staff do not normally work over school holiday periods.

4.5.6 Options have been developed covering two alternatives in relation to holiday period covered (week days within summer only, or all holidays) and in the number of schools used (15 primaries – to be identified as central to populations, or all 32 primary schools with all eligible pupils (currently 3,131) attending primary schools). Depending on the delivery scenario selected taking into account meal costs, FM costs and supervisory costs the options are summarised as follows:

30 days of summer holiday meals for 3,131 pupils at 15 schools	
Meal costs	£385,113
Supervision and Facilities Assistant costs	£155,913
Total	£541,026
30 days of summer holiday meals for 3,131 pupils at 32 (all) primary schools	
Meal costs	£385,113
Supervision and Facilities Assistant costs	£213,772
Total	£598,886
60 days of total holiday cover for 3,131 pupils at 15 schools	
Meal costs only	£770,226
Supervision and Facilities Assistant costs	£317,182
Total	£1,087,408
60 days of total holiday cover for 3,131 pupils at 32 schools	
Meal costs only	£770,226
Supervision and Facilities Assistant costs	£402,868
Total	£1,173,094

4.5.7 Consideration should also be given to:

- The potential contractual changes required for FM Catering staff and Facilities Assistants whose term-time contracts may need to be altered as well as a potential requirement to engage additional seasonal staff given that a number of term time staff may not wish to change to 52 week contracts;
- The practicalities of opening, closing and staffing schools for catering purposes during the traditional holiday periods. This will undoubtedly incur on costs as presently no cover is provided when staff take their annual leave during holiday periods; and
- Travel costs for families dependent on location used.

4.5.8 As can be seen from the above, the option of providing onsite catering would be complex, would not be straightforward to implement and incurs significant additional overheads and operational costs.

4.5.9 Holiday Hunger Benefit Payment

An alternative would be to provide direct financial assistance to those families entitled to free school meals. The payment to families would be £4.10 as indicated at 4.5.4 and the total cost based on 3,131 meals for 30 day is £385,113. This would be undertaken via BACS Transfer (or by exception cheque) with negligible transaction costs.

5. Options Appraisal

5.1 If funding for the use of WDLT and Council premises is not provided to WDCF then they will have to meet these costs from their current fundraising efforts. These costs were being met by WDCF prior to the motion to Council in November which waived these.

5.2 The partnership working in place to deal with the rollout of UC does not require any specific additional intervention at this time. Therefore there are two options in this respect – provide an extra resource or not. Officers advise that this is not currently required and will remain a consideration for future. It would therefore be recommended that the additional resource is not added to the budget.

5.3 In relation to DHP, SWF and HRA options, Council has the ability to increase levels of funding for DHP and SWF. However, as indicated above, current funding levels are sufficient for current need, therefore, it is recommended that such increases are not implemented at present and are subject to ongoing monitoring by officers as over the next two years as UC rolls out to affect more of the population.

5.4 In addition to the established programmes set out at 4.5.3, further options which could be considered in dealing with holiday hunger are set out in section 4.5.6 and 4.5.9. In all of these scenarios it is not clear nor is it possible to predict the actual take up or impact of different forms of service. These options relate to weekdays only on the basis that this is the meal provision during term time. Options for covering weekends are possible but would have significantly higher costs than indicated in this report.

6. People Implications

6.1 There are no people implications in respect of the provision of assistance to foodbanks or in the continuation of the current approach to managing the impact of Universal Credit. Both of these can be managed within existing staffing resources.

6.2 There may be additional staffing required as illustrated at 4.5.6. This would depend upon the format of the scheme chosen. The operation of holiday hunger benefit payment can be managed from within existing resources.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 7.1 The direct costs of the various interventions are detailed above. The full costs would vary depending on the details of the option selected.

8. Risk Analysis

- 8.1 In the respect of financial assistance to foodbanks, this does not of itself secure their operational future which also depends on continuing donations and the commitment of volunteers. The provision of funding specifically to one or other charitable organisation using public premises potentially creates the precedent that other similar organisations might expect similar support.
- 8.2 With regard to UC the Council is mitigating current risks through the provision of comprehensive W4U services, providing funding for advice partners and delivering an extensive number of information and awareness sessions to the community. The impact of UC and other welfare changes on residents is being kept under review on an ongoing basis.
- 8.3 In terms of holiday hunger there can be no guarantee that the assistance provided by the Council will be taken up, which brings both a risk that the desired outcome will not be realised and the risk of reputational damage to the Council. There is also the possibility that those accessing support provided could find themselves stigmatised. There can also be no guarantee that direct financial assistance will be used for the purpose intended.

9. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 9.1 An initial screening confirms there is no adverse impact.

10. Environmental Sustainability

- 10.1 There are no environmental implications with this report.

11. Consultation

- 11.1 Engagement is ongoing across the community, with appropriate partners and internally with relevant services.

12. Strategic Assessment

- 12.1 The actions described above support the Councils Strategic objective of efficient and effective public services that improve the lives of residents.

21 March 2019

Person(s) to Contact: Peter Barry, Strategic Lead
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Laura Mason, Strategic Lead
Stephen West, Strategic Lead

Background papers: Motion to Council 28 November 2018