

APPENDIX B**County Council activity relating to the Fair Finance Strategy**

The Fair Finance Strategy sets out a response to the challenges of financial inclusion that is structured around work-streams and related priorities. County Council activity that is supportive of the following priorities is summarised below;

Develop a plan to help people move from unemployment to self-employment

County Council Work Clubs offer support to unemployed people who wish to start their own business – in the first quarter of 2016/17 179 people (from a total of 780 people who attended Work Clubs) were assisted into self-employment or supported with their new business idea.

Promote credit union services to employees

Work is ongoing to support the promotion of the Clockwise credit union and to increase access to credit union services across the county. Within the County Council the credit union will be promoted to employees.

Co-ordinate a campaign to improve support to private tenants

County Council officers contribute to the Housing Services Partnership (providers and commissioners supporting the delivery of housing services in Leicestershire) which has commissioned a report from SITRA (a training and consultancy service of Homeless Link – the membership charity for organisations working with homeless people) on the impact of welfare reform in the Leicestershire context and how services can most effectively support people in greatest need. The report was issued in July 2016 and makes recommendations to the Partnership relating to strategic oversight, support for customers and the supply of affordable homes.

The County Council will assist with further promotion of affordable furniture and white goods from the Re-use Network to people with financial difficulties via CAB, the Bridge etc.

Expand financial capability and digital inclusion provision

County Council Work Clubs and “Superfast Leicestershire Digital Champions” are part of a European Funding bid led by ASRA Housing. It is proposed that the Work Clubs, supported by Digital Champions and the Council’s Adult Learning Service will work with people to increase their digital skills before they are referred to other providers within the consortium for financial training.

Provide greater assistance with travel costs

County Council initiatives to provide enhanced access to work include;

- Wheels to Work – a scheme which allows young people to rent mopeds to get them to work.
- Travel to Work schemes – the County Council is working with key employers such as East Midlands Airport and Magna Park to develop public transport options, car sharing schemes and bicycle loan schemes in order that people without a car can access employment at these sites which are perceived to be difficult to access.

- Work Clubs - any unemployed person who attends a Work Club at a County Council library is able to get their bus fare reimbursed for interview attendance.

Developing community based bulk purchase projects

SHIRE Grant funding has supported the Zinthiya Trust to work with low income households in Barwell, Earl Shilton and the Wykin Estate in Hinckley with the aim of reducing household bills by a minimum of £20 week through switching energy providers and collective buying.

Help people obtain essential items at affordable prices

Since 2013 the County Council Waste & Environment Team has supported the LeicesterShire & Rutland Reuse Network (LRRN) to help increase the level of reuse taking place within the county. This support took the form of both financial and in-kind staff support to establish the network, set-up and deliver reuse trials and to secure additional funding. The reuse trials at the Recycling & Household Waste Sites have allowed the Reuse Network to gain access to additional items which can then be provided at affordable prices to those in need. Work also took place to enable the LRRN to work with a local Housing Association that allowed it to clear out void properties and capture reusable items which would otherwise have gone to landfill. These and other items can then be provided at affordable prices to new tenants.

Support integrated provision and money mentoring schemes

The County Council has contracts with the Leicestershire and Charnwood Citizens Advice Bureaux to provide funding to support debt advice work. The Bureaux have recently reported that the number of people they are supporting is steadily increasing and the amount of debt being dealt with is also increasing. It is anticipated that the introduction of Universal Credit in Leicestershire, initially to single people, will lead to an increase in financial hardship and debt.

Improving support for people in financial difficulty

Illegal money lending (loan sharking) is a criminal offence and often sees unlicensed lenders target vulnerable people. The County Council's Trading Standards Service works in partnership with the National Trading Standards Illegal Money Lending Teams which investigate and prosecute illegal money lenders.

Improving support for the most vulnerable

The County Council's Signposting and Community Support Service (SCSS) provides re-used furniture and white goods, and payments for fuel and food, to people in crisis. The SCSS also delivers preventative services focused on housing, debt and money management advice and support and is delivered in partnership with District Councils, Charity link, Citizens Advice Bureaux, The Bridge and Women's Aid. County Council funding is complemented by funds raised by Charity Link which has access to many additional funding sources. The County Council is working with partners including, Leicestershire Citizen's Advice and The Bridge to bid for Lottery funding to provide expanded, integrated and countywide financial and housing support services.

In addition to the above the County Council's Local Area Co-ordination and Supporting Leicestershire Families programmes provide integrated support for

vulnerable individuals and families and the County Council provide services as part of the Me and My Learning Project in Melton which provides a co-ordinated signposting and support service.

Mapping and analysis of deprivation data is being progressed by the County Council's Research and Insight Team to provide an improved understanding of the nature, extent and location of people in poverty. This work will inform consideration of the future focus of County Council action on poverty by the Communities Board (paragraph 10 above).

Mitigating the impact of money problems on children

The focus of the Council's work is on building the financial confidence and skills of parents through the Supporting Leicestershire Families and associated services identified above.

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