

## **Item: 5**

### **Special General Meeting of the Council: 16 April 2020.**

#### **Food Fund Allocation.**

#### **Report by Chief Executive.**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

To consider a proposal to distribute some of the Food Fund allocated to the Council to alleviate food insecurities arising on islands where travel restrictions have been imposed as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

### **2. Recommendations**

The Council is invited to note:

#### **2.1.**

That the Council will receive an allocation of £99,000 from the Government's £30 million Food Fund allocation to support families whose children are eligible for free school meals and individuals and households who are vulnerable for other reasons.

#### **2.2.**

That the affordability of food in the Isles has been raised as an issue with Elected Members and Council Officers.

#### **2.3.**

That feedback from island communities is that a satisfactory supply of food to the Isles' shops is currently being maintained.

#### **2.4.**

That Government advice is to stay at home, do not travel unless for food, health and essential work.

#### **2.5.**

That travel to the Orkney Mainland by Isles' residents for food shopping is being discouraged as non-essential travel.

#### **2.6.**

That there are approximately 2,900 residents on the islands who are travel restricted as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

## **2.7.**

That the Council is lobbying Government through COSLA for additional funding to alleviate food insecurity in the Isles.

**It is recommended:**

## **2.8.**

That the Council allocates £5 per head per week for travel restricted Isles' residents for an initial period of four weeks from 20 April 2020, to be met from the £99,000 allocation it will receive from the Government Food Fund.

## **2.9.**

That the Community Councils be engaged to determine the allocations per household on the Isles and the consequent distribution of aggregate payments by the Council to the Isles' shops.

# **3. Travel Restrictions**

## **3.1.**

In line with UK/Scottish Government and Transport Scotland guidance, the Council has asked Orkney Ferries Limited to ensure that only "key workers" are allowed access to travel on ferries. As a result and given the existence of general grocery shops on the Isles, Isles' residents have been denied travel on the ferry to go to a larger supermarket for their groceries.

## **3.2.**

This approach not only protects Orkney Ferries' staff to ensure that the ferry service can continue to operate and deliver freight and essential supplies but also the Isles' residents as well. Once on Orkney mainland, Isles' residents using the ferry may also travel on the available public transport which additionally could broaden the risk of transfer/infection between Mainland and the Isles.

## **3.3.**

Representations have been received from Isles' residents who still wish to exercise their right to travel to a supermarket and have access to cheaper groceries and special offers provided by the larger merchants.

## **3.4.**

Anecdotal evidence is that some items in the Isles' shops are priced higher than those in the supermarkets making the trip to a supermarket financially beneficial. Many of the Isles' residents who are concerned about the affordability of the higher prices / lack of special offers are low earners / unemployed.

### **3.5.**

Further work will take place with the Community Councils to establish more information about the allegations in respect of pricing in the Isles' shops. In addition, historically the Isles' shops have not supplied 100% of the Isles' residents' groceries for many years and may not have capacity to provide 100%. The Isles' shop supply chains need to be carefully monitored to ensure they can sustain appropriate stock levels.

### **3.6.**

There have been various suggestions of a solution to this problem including allowing infrequent trips by Isles' residents on the ferry for food shopping; providing financial support; access to Foodbank vouchers or a co-ordinated shopping effort by the Community Council to limit individual trips.

## **4. Intelligence gathered to date**

### **4.1.**

Feedback from a number of Isles based Council staff has been positive with regards to the Isles' shops in terms of stock levels, home deliveries, COVID19 procedures and prices (with only one saying that meat tended to be noticeably more expensive and none reporting price hikes). Only one Isles' shop initially appeared to be having difficulty with procedures but this is now resolved.

### **4.2.**

Orkney Ferries' feedback reported not many objections to travel being restricted overall but some residents were shopping whilst in town on other essential business. However, there have been some objections due to personal shopping preferences.

### **4.3.**

Community Councils reported high satisfaction with the Isles' shops and the efforts made to deliver to residents. Graemsay, Hoy and Walls Community Council has however made representation through the Link Officer who asked if there was the option for folk to be allowed on the ferry, perhaps once a week, to do a shop in town if they wish. Affordability issues as the situation continues for many weeks was also raised by other Community Councils.

### **4.4.**

Voluntary Action Orkney has made representation through Orkney Health and Care in respect of some residents who have made contact concerned at the cost of shopping on Hoy. The impact for one family is reported to be an additional £97 per week.

### **4.5.**

Community Associations have reported that the shops are doing well, with one mention of shop prices concern.

## 4.6.

NHS Orkney has provided feedback that indicates travel for medical reasons will be reduced to critical reasons only.

## 5. Options

### 5.1.

#### 5.1.1. Allow limited travel on Orkney Ferries for grocery shopping

The Government has told people they can continue to shop for essentials – they have not stopped people travelling to supermarkets and they have not specified ‘only use corner shops’ or islands shops. Public transport is still in place on the Mainland for those who want to shop using the bus. Access to the larger supermarkets provides shoppers the opportunity to purchase goods which can be cheaper or on special offer than those available in Isles’ shops. It is therefore understood why Isles’ residents expect to have the same opportunities and access as mainland residents, particularly those who are financially disadvantaged.

- Advantages:
  - This would allow Isles’ residents to exercise their choice, within the Governments’ guidance, to shop infrequently for essential supplies, at a shop of their choosing in the same manner as any resident on mainland Orkney can.
  - This could alleviate affordability issues with Isles’ residents not able to access cheaper goods in large supermarkets.
  - Isles’ shops would not be under pressure to scale up to 100% of residents’ grocery needs. This would avoid pressure on the supply chain from the mainland.
- Disadvantages
  - This could expose the ferry crew to increased COVID 19 risk. This could put the ferry service at risk and in turn due to the high level of fragility of crewing, could have a critical impact and increase the risk of cessation of transportation of essential freight and supplies.
  - This could expose the Isles’ residents to more COVID 19 risk. Increased number of ill people will put pressure on the NHS and will further increase risk of infection to all. Living on an island means it takes longer for a critically ill patient to access hospital treatment.
  - Policing of the limited travel would be challenging for Orkney Ferries’ staff.
  - Loss of trade for fragile island businesses.

## **5.2. Option 2**

### **5.2.1. Making it easier/more affordable for some to use the Isles' shops**

A high degree of satisfaction is reported with the Isles' shops and the mechanisms they have put in place to take orders and undertake deliveries. The two main issues being reported are those of affordability if the situation is ongoing for a long period and that of limited choice. This option is to make food shopping more affordable to address the hardship.

- Advantages:
  - This would limit exposure of the ferry crew to more COVID 19 risk, aligning with the need to protect the NHS and save lives.
  - It would limit the exposure of the Isles' residents to more COVID 19 risk, aligning with the need to protect the NHS and save lives.
  - Additional trade is good for the viability of Isles'/community shops.
- Disadvantages:
  - Appropriate mechanism needs to be designed / identified and publicised.
  - Not all residents may qualify and some therefore remain financially disadvantaged.
  - Limits choice for Isles' residents compared to mainland residents.
  - Unknown if Isles shops' supply chain can sustain provision of 100% of food supplies to all residents.

## **5.3.**

A risk assessment has been carried out for these two options and is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. The risk assessment demonstrates that the option of least risk is to create a scheme to address the affordability of food for Isles' residents.

## **6. Financial Scheme**

### **6.1.**

Having arrived at the conclusion that the preferred option is to limit the exposure of the Isles' residents and ferry crews to more COVID 19 risk, aligning with the need to protect the NHS and save lives and therefore making it easier/more affordable to use the Isles' shops is the optimum solution, there are several options to achieve this:

- Develop a payment / voucher scheme which gives a weekly or monthly sum of money for food shopping at an Isles' shop.
- Develop and promote the Crisis Grant scheme to ensure the Isles' residents are aware that it can be used in connection with affordability of food purchases.
- Include an option in the Community Resilience Fund for Community Councils or other constituted bodies to develop a food voucher scheme such as that which has been developed on Sanday by the Development Trust.

## **6.2.**

A universal payment voucher scheme administered through the Community Councils is proposed, whereby a sum per head is allocated per week to be paid to the local shops who would then credit that household with the allocated sum against their weekly shopping bill.

## **6.3.**

With an allocated sum of £5 per head per week, a family of four would have a £20 credit available per week and £80 for the proposed four-week initial duration of the scheme.

## **6.4.**

There are approximately 2,900 residents living on the Isles where travel restrictions apply. An allocated sum of £5 per head per week would suggest that the cost of this scheme for a four-week period would be £58,000.

## **6.5.**

The Council has suggested through COSLA that the Scottish Government distribute additional funding from the £10 million retained by the Scottish Government to island communities to alleviate food insecurity issues. This proposal has been made for funding to be distributed in the manner outlined in this section of the report.

## **7. Equalities Impact**

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

## **8. Links to Council Plan**

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan strategic priority of Caring Communities.

## **9. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan**

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priority of a Vibrant Economy.

## **10. Financial Implications**

### **10.1.**

On 18 March 2020, the Scottish Government announced a £350 million package to support communities affected by COVID-19. This included a £70 million Food Fund to put in place support for those who would otherwise be unable to access food through the usual routes.

## **10.2.**

£30 million of the Food Fund is initially being made available to local authorities for structured public sector responses working via local resilience partnerships to support households who may experience barriers in accessing food. This first instalment of Food Fund monies is to provide additional resources to ensure local authorities can support families whose children are eligible for free school meals and individuals and households who are vulnerable for other reasons.

## **10.3.**

The £30 million of the Food Fund has been allocated on a series of previously used distribution metrics including a 5% rurality factor. The Head of Finance has made representation to COSLA that there can be a far greater difference than 5% in the price of goods in islands shops compared to national supermarkets.

## **10.4.**

The Council's allocation from the £30 million Food Fund will be £99,000 to be paid as a redetermination in March 2021. The timing of General Resource Grant payments has however been amended and brought forward to reflect redeterminations being announced that the Government want to be utilised during the pandemic.

## **10.5.**

The proposed distribution of money set out in section 6 of this report would cost £58,000, leaving £41,000 of the funding allocation for free school meals provision. There are already arrangements in place to provide £3 per day to pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

# **11. Legal Aspects**

## **11.1.**

Section 95 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, obliges the Council to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs.

## **11.2.**

The Council must make arrangements which secure best value. An authority securing best value will be able to show that it is making effective and efficient use of its financial resources.

## **11.3.**

In terms of Section 20 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, the Council has the power to do anything which it considers is likely to promote or improve the well-being of its area and persons within it, or either of these. This includes a power to give financial assistance.

## **12. Contact Officers**

John Mundell, Interim Chief Executive, extension 2101, Email  
[john.mundell@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:john.mundell@orkney.gov.uk)

Karen Greaves, Head of Executive Support, extension 2202, Email  
[karen.greaves@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:karen.greaves@orkney.gov.uk)

Gareth Waterson, Head of Finance, extension 2103, Email  
[gareth.waterson@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:gareth.waterson@orkney.gov.uk)

## **13. Appendices**

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment.

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment.



ORKNEY ISLANDS COUNCIL  
HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT

**Service:** Chief Executive on behalf of Incident Management Team

**Description of work activity or area of the workplace assessed:** Food Shopping Options for Isles Residents

**Persons at risk from the hazards identified:** Isles Residents / Ferry Operatives

**Risk assessed by:** Karen Greaves

**Date risk assessed:** 08/04/20

Option	Hazards	Risk Evaluation (severity x likelihood)			Further Action Required
		Severity	Likelihood	Rating	
Travel to Kirkwall Supermarkets	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Could expose the ferry crew to more COVID risk. This could jeopardise the ferry service for the isle and reduce the ability to deliver essential supplies.</li> <li>2. Could expose public transport operators to more COVID risk.</li> <li>3. Could expose the isles residents to more COVID risk. Increased number of ill people will put pressure on NHS and will further increase risk of infection to all. More time required for a critically ill patient to access hospital treatment.</li> <li>4. Could find the policing of the limited travel challenging for OF staff.</li> </ol>	5	4	20	Hand sanitisers used by staff and passengers would reduce the risk of infection.

Option	Hazards	Risk Evaluation (severity x likelihood)			Further Action Required
		Severity	Likelihood	Rating	
Shop at local isles shop	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Isles shop prices could be considered less affordable for those on low income. This creates Hardship.</li> <li>2. Isles shops do not provide the choice of goods that residents prefer.</li> <li>3. Isles shops food supplies may not cope with 100% of isles residents' grocery needs.</li> </ol>	2	4	8	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1a. Crisis grants / Welfare funds may help.</li> <li>1b. Consider the development of a scheme to specifically address the affordability of food.</li> <li>2. Isles shop food supply chain being monitored nationally</li> </ol>

<b>Likelihood/Severity Definitions:</b>	
<b>Likelihood</b>	
Rare (1) Unlikely (2) Possible (3)	Will only happen in exceptional circumstances (5-10 years) Not expected to happen but definite potential exists (2-5 years) May occur occasionally. Has happened before on occasion. Reasonable chance of occurring (annual)
Likely (4) Almost Certain (5)	Strong possibility this could occur (quarterly) Expected to occur frequently (daily/weekly/monthly)
<b>Severity</b>	
Negligible (1) Minor (2) Moderate (3) Major (4)	Adverse event leading to very minor injury not requiring first aid Minor injury or illness, first aid treatment required Significant injury requiring medical treatment and/or counselling. RIDDOR reportable
Extreme (5)	Major injuries/long term incapacity or disability (loss of limb) requiring medical treatment and/or counselling Incident leading to death or permanent incapacity

<b>Likelihood/Severity</b>	Negligible (1)	Minor (2)	Moderate (3)	Major (4)	Extreme (5)
Almost Certain (5)	5	10	15	20	25
Likely (4)	4	8	12	16	20
Possible (3)	3	6	9	12	15
Unlikely (2)	2	4	6	8	10
Rare (1)	1	2	3	4	5

Low = 1-5		No action required
Medium = 6 - 12		Remedial action required as soon as is reasonably practicable. The higher the risk rating, the greater the priority for action
High = 13 - 25		Work must cease until the necessary action is taken



## Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to improve the work of Orkney Islands Council by making sure it promotes equality and does not discriminate. This assessment records the likely impact of any changes to a function, policy or plan by anticipating the consequences, and making sure that any negative impacts are eliminated or minimised and positive impacts are maximised.

<b>1. Identification of Function, Policy or Plan</b>	
Name of function / policy / plan to be assessed.	Food Fund Allocation
Service / service area responsible.	Chief Executive's Service
Name of person carrying out the assessment and contact details.	Karen Greaves <a href="mailto:Karen.greaves@orkney.gov.uk">Karen.greaves@orkney.gov.uk</a>
Date of assessment.	09 April 2020
Is the function / policy / plan new or existing? (Please indicate also if the service is to be deleted, reduced or changed significantly).	New.

<b>2. Initial Screening</b>	
What are the intended outcomes of the function / policy / plan?	To address affordability of food for isles residents whilst travel restrictions are in place due to the Coronavirus pandemic.
Is the function / policy / plan strategically important?	Yes – important to ensure sustainability for isles residents
State who is, or may be affected by this function / policy / plan, and how.	All isles residents who have to purchase their food shopping from the isles shops and therefore do not have access to supermarket discounts and special offers.
How have stakeholders been involved in the development of this function / policy / plan?	Feedback on the affordability issues have been sought from Council Staff, Ferry Staff, Community Councils, Community Associations, VAO and NHS

	<p>Orkney. There has been no wider consultation on this issue but representations have been made to officers and elected members from individuals, and their representatives, who have been impacted by the inability to shop at larger supermarkets.</p>
<p>Is there any existing data and / or research relating to equalities issues in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. consultations, national surveys, performance data, complaints, service user feedback, academic / consultants' reports, benchmarking (see equalities resources on OIC information portal).</p>	<p>A 2013 report (and 2016 update) prepared for Highlands and Islands Enterprise "A minimum Income Standard for Remote Rural Scotland" sought to calculate how much it costs for people to live at a minimum acceptable standard in remote rural Scotland.</p> <p>In the 2013 report the cost of food shopping in small island shops was calculated to be around 50% higher than in a supermarket. Even in 2013 this equated to around £60/week extra for a 4-person family.</p> <p>We also have recent Scottish Index of Multiple deprivation 2020 evidence that the isles are becoming more deprived than in 2016.</p> <p>Evidence suggests that child poverty in Orkney is variable and the Isles locality has the greatest level of housing deprivation which can have a knock-on impact to accessing available income for food.</p>
<p>Is there any existing evidence relating to socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. For people living in poverty or for people of low income. See <a href="#">The Fairer Scotland Duty Interim Guidance for Public Bodies</a> for further information.</p>	<p>Almost any change to a council service has some socio-economic impact. This is because the nature of our responsibilities and the extent to which the more deprived communities and more vulnerable people in Orkney rely on our services. Poor social and economic circumstances affect people's health and quality of life. Steps such as paying the Scottish Living Wage go some way to help tackle levels of child poverty by making more money available to help families bring up their children.</p> <p>Generally, this benefits lower-paid workers and their families.</p> <p>The movement to more of our services being available through digital access and delivery continues, with the associated benefits of convenience and fast response for most people. However, evidence suggests that some members of groups such as older people, people with disabilities and people whose first language is not English, are less likely to be able to access digital services.</p> <p>This is evidenced in the Office for National Statistics 2019 publication "Exploring the UK's</p>

	<p>digital divide.”</p> <p>Evidence also suggests that socioeconomic status and household income are strong determinants of whether people have the knowledge, skills and confidence to access public services online.</p> <p>Local and isles shops can be much more expensive than the supermarkets (up to twice the cost on some of the isles).</p> <p>Availability of reliable internet connection is also an issue for many isles residents.</p> <p>Women have been identified as being disproportionately vulnerable to socio-economic impacts and elements of welfare reform are likely to have a disproportionate impact on women and lone parents.</p> <p>Reduced services for children, young people and older people can place additional burdens of care on women.</p> <p>Women are more likely than men to manage reduced family budgets, have primary caring responsibilities and act as the buffers, going without to protect their children from the worst effects of poverty and also continue to report higher levels of concern about their financial situation.</p> <p>A high percentage of women in Orkney work part time in the public, voluntary and community sectors. The continued reduction in the public and voluntary workforces impact disproportionately on this group.</p> <p>Inevitably, the overall effect of the combination of age, disability and deprivation means that changes to support services are likely to increasingly impact disproportionately on women and lone parent families. Children in out-of-work households are at greater risk of poverty although there are a significant number of children nationally who are classed as living in poverty who live in households where someone is working (in-work poverty).</p> <p>Children of lone parents, children with disabilities and those in large families are at greater risk of living in poverty. By retaining core services focused on supporting the most vulnerable children, including those with specialist needs, and families, councils can continue to address the greatest levels of disadvantage and tackle inequality.</p>
Could the function / policy	(Please provide any evidence – positive impacts /

have a differential impact on any of the following equality areas?	benefits, negative impacts and reasons).
1. Race: this includes ethnic or national groups, colour and nationality.	None
2. Sex: a man or a woman.	None. Likely differential impact as women are more likely to be impacted by socio-economic disadvantage, more likely to work part time and have primary caring roles.
3. Sexual Orientation: whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.	None
4. Gender Reassignment: the process of transitioning from one gender to another.	None
5. Pregnancy and maternity.	None
6. Age: people of different ages.	None. Likely differential impact for older people due to reduced access to income.
7. Religion or beliefs or none (atheists).	None
8. Caring responsibilities.	None
9. Care experienced.	None
10. Marriage and Civil Partnerships.	None
11. Disability: people with disabilities (whether registered or not).	(Includes physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment, mental health) None. Likely differential impact as people with a disability are more likely to experience poorer outcomes in terms of employment and income.
12. Socio-economic disadvantage.	Yes, there is a very clear connection between food cost and socio-economic disadvantage. The proposed £5/head/week will help mitigate the cost but, being a universal provision, isn't going to address inequality as such.
13. Isles-proofing.	Yes, this fund is about addressing the price differential between the mainland and isles shops. Therefore, this will have a differential impact - a positive one. There may be additional funding targeted to organisations that support people living in the isles. Local and isles shops can be much more expensive than the supermarkets (up to twice the

	cost on some of the isles for some items).
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### 3. Impact Assessment

Does the analysis above identify any differential impacts which need to be addressed?	Yes, there are still differential impacts that could be addressed, i.e. socio-economic disadvantage. Other measures are in place e.g. the free school meals funding and funding provided to local community bodies to develop targeted schemes with their local knowledge will help address the differential impacts.
How could you minimise or remove any potential negative impacts?	N/A
Do you have enough information to make a judgement? If no, what information do you require?	Yes

### 4. Conclusions and Planned Action

Is further work required?	No.
What action is to be taken?	Discussions are ongoing with COSLA to try to secure additional funding to extend the value of this scheme.
Who will undertake it?	N/A
When will it be done?	N/A
How will it be monitored? (e.g. through service plans).	N/A

Signature:



Date: 13 APRIL 2020

Name: KAREN GREAVES

(BLOCK CAPITALS).

Please sign and date this form, keep one copy and send a copy to HR and Performance. A Word version should also be emailed to HR and Performance at [hrrsupport@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:hrrsupport@orkney.gov.uk)