

ANGUS COUNCIL – 3 NOVEMBER 2022

LOCAL AUTHORITY COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY (LACER) FUNDING

REPORT BY IAN LORIMER, DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

ABSTRACT

This report seeks member agreement to use Scottish Government LACER funding provided to the Council to support businesses and communities recover from the pandemic.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Council:

- (i) Note the amendment to the LACER funding allocation as set out in section 4.1 of this report;
- (ii) Note the brief update on progress with previously approved projects using LACER funding set out in Appendix 1;
- (iii) Approve the proposed use of LACER funding as set out in Table 2 of this report;
- (iv) Note that the proposal in this report will leave £100,000 available to support other areas of need which may include providing additional funding to some of the existing programmes members previously agreed in Report 180/22 for use of the LACER funding

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN

2.1 This report contributes to the following strategic priorities in the Angus Council Plan: We want:

- Angus to be a go to place for business
- To maximize inclusion and reduce inequalities
- Our communities to be strong, resilient and led by citizens

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Reference is made to Report 180/22 considered by the Council at its meeting of 30 June 2022, which gave: background on the guiding principles of the LACER funding; the key themes that were identified to support both individuals, families and businesses in Angus; the range of projects being proposed; and project proposals seeking member approval.

3.2 As outlined in Report 180/22, the project proposal on free public transport required some further development to ensure it could be appropriately targeted and proposals for this theme would therefore be the subject of a separate report to committee for approval in August. The initial reporting target of August was delayed due to further time required to liaise with partners and develop the scheme proposal.

3.3 This report presents the project proposal on free public transport seeking member approval.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 Members are asked to note that Angus Council has received LACER funding of £1,667,000 as part of the grant redetermination payment for 2021/22. This is a £5,000 reduction from the £1,672,000 as previously anticipated and outlined in Report 180/22. This will see an adjustment to the amount of funding currently unallocated and agreed to be used to top up proposed projects or support new project ideas which may come forward.

4.2 Members have to date approved the amount of £1,417,000, which includes allocations of £1,400,000 for 4 project proposals, and an amended allocation of £17,000 for additional spend or new projects, as outlined in the table 1 below. Detail with regard to these projects is provided in Report 180/22 and a brief update on progress with these is provided in Appendix 1.

4.3 **TABLE 1 - APPROVED LACER PROJECTS (Report 180/22)**

Key Theme and Proposed Intervention	Allocation (£)
Town Centres - Economic Growth - Support for Local Economic Recovery	400,000
Child Poverty - One-off Support Payments and Discretionary Support Fund	350,000
Child Poverty - Welfare Rights and Social Care discretionary funds	150,000
Fuel Poverty/Cost of Living - One-off Support Payments/Vouchers	400,000
Food Poverty - Funding to Support Agencies & Capacity Building	100,000
Unallocated for additional spend or new projects (reduced from £22,000)	17,000
Total	1,417,000

4.4 A sum of £250,000 of LACER funding remains to be approved for proposed spend.

4.5 As outlined in report 180/22 a fifth project proposal, at that time requesting up to £250,000 for free public transport, has been further developed and is now ready to present to members. Officers are proposing an initial allocation for the free public transport provision of £150,000 at this time to enable actual data to be gathered on usage and costs. This would mean £100,000 still being available either to increase the free public transport project to the originally anticipated £250,000 or to support other LACER projects.

5. PROPOSALS

5.1 The proposal outlined in Table 2 below, if approved, would support our lowest-income households, particularly families, with the increasing costs of living, increasing the income people have to spend in the local economy and prioritising our town centres, encouraging collaboration and economic growth.

5.2 **TABLE 2 - PROPOSED USE OF LACER FUNDING FOR WHICH FORMAL APPROVAL IS SOUGHT**

Key Theme and Proposed Intervention	Proposed amount of allocation £
<p>Climate Change/Transport Poverty – Targeted Free Public Transport</p> <p>As part of Angus Council’s LACER funding, transport has been identified as an area in which financial assistance can have a positive impact on people. This proposal, if approved, will provide targeted groups of people in Angus with free bus travel, with the aim of supporting our lowest income households. This proposal has been prepared using data and information gathered from previous projects, internal and community planning partners, and public consultation.</p> <p>The following transport providers, who deliver all Angus bus services will support delivery of this project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stagecoach East Scotland; • Wisharts; • Moffat and Williamson; • JP Coaches; • Shorts Travel. <p>Eligibility criteria have been agreed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults from families in receipt of the School Clothing Grant; • Adults in receipt of discretionary fund payments; • Adults utilising foodbanks; • Adults in receipt of Universal Credit; • Adults returning to work after a period of unemployment; • Adults travelling to benefits appointments. 	150,000

<p>Not Eligible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone who is already in receipt of free travel through national concessionary schemes. <p>Bus passes will be allocated <u>only</u> through referrals made by the following Council staff and agreed partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental Engagement Officer (Education and Lifelong Learning) • Vibrant Communities Team • Welfare Rights • Voluntary Action Angus • Job Centre • Skills and Employability Team <p>Accessing the bus passes only through referral rather than by open application is necessary to manage the potential costs and the levels of demand which arise. An open application process may create an unmanageable level of demand and cost so this is not an open which can be pursued at this time.</p> <p>These Council staff and partners will identify people they are already working with. They will make a referral for a travel pass based on their knowledge of an individual's need, and if they meet the criteria set out in the eligibility section above.</p> <p>The passes will be printed by the Print and Design Unit, and the Transport Team will distribute passes to the three administrative partners – Communities Team, Welfare Rights Team and Voluntary Action Angus.</p> <p>Initial awards of each bus pass will be organised by either the Communities Team, Welfare Rights or Voluntary Action Angus. All renewal requests will be organised through Voluntary Action Angus, reducing administrative burden to the Council.</p> <p>The pass will be valid for a maximum of 3 months, based on the needs of the user, and will require renewal after each 3-month period if required and where the user remains eligible.</p> <p>Initially, a 3-month pilot scheme will be undertaken to allow for learning and data gathering as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of passes being issued; • Travel behaviour (how often passes are being used and on which journeys); • Costs arising compared with the £150,000 allocated to the initiative; • Feedback from partners and passholders. <p>If approved, this it is understood will be the first project of its kind in Scotland, and there are no known examples to help inform delivery. Other local authorities and national transport networks and agencies such as Transport Scotland are observing closely in anticipation of potential to replicate similar schemes across Scotland.</p> <p>Although there are challenges at present with the availability and reliability of some bus services officers consider that this initiative will make a significant contribution towards supporting people in need.</p>	
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- 5.3 The proposal in Table 2 above, if approved, would leave £100,000 of the funding available at this time. This will provide some flexibility to either:-
- a. Increase the proposed £150,000 allocation for free-public transport once data on actual usage and costs is available;

- b. To increase the allocations to other projects agreed in Report 180/22; or
- c. To support other projects and areas of need which are identified by Council staff and partners.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Angus Council's share of the LACER funding has been confirmed and received as £1,667,000. All projects and proposed interventions as set out in this report will be funded from this source so there will be no additional call on Angus Council financial resources other than officer time to administer the funding and deliver the projects.
- 6.2 All uses for the funding will be on a basis which does not add to the Council's running costs on a permanent basis.
- 6.3 A summary of the financial implications are outlined below if the Council is minded to agree the targeted free public transport proposal outlined in Section 5 above.

Angus Allocation LACER Fund	Allocated to date	Current Balance	Additional costs per this report	Current Balance minus additional costs
£1,667,000	£1,417,000	£250,000	£150,000	£100,000

- 6.4 The proposed use of funding if Council is minded to agree would commit all but £100,000 of the Angus' allocation of LACER Fund with the use of that funding being subject to a further report once more information on the impact of the existing projects is available.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached.

NOTE: Background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report is:

[Angus Council – 30 June 2022 LOCAL AUTHORITY COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY \(LACER\) FUNDING Report 180/22](#)

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Update on previously approved projects using LACER funding

INTERIM UPDATE ON PREVIOUSLY APPROVED PROJECTS USING LACER FUNDING

Project	Update
Town Centres Economic Growth - Support for Local Economic Recovery	Project will now cover all 7 Angus towns. Planning for partners and collaboration with the retail association is in progress, local business register and consultancy briefs are being prepared.
Child Poverty - One-off Support Payments and Discretionary Support Fund	Number of payments will be confirmed mid-November based on eligibility at that time. Payments will be made to eligible families in December 2022.
Child Poverty - Welfare Rights and Social Care discretionary funds	Funding has been allocated and delivery of support is underway
Fuel Poverty/Cost of Living - One-off Support Payments / Vouchers	Angus Heatwell Scheme is now live. The charity/social enterprise Scarf, in partnership with Angus Council, is supporting people to heat their homes by providing fuel vouchers to Angus residents whose household income has been adversely affected by Covid-19.
Food Poverty - Funding to Support Agencies & Capacity Building	<p>Funding has been distributed in the form of one-off grants to local charities and community organisations across Angus to support vulnerable communities affected by food poverty and connect them with the support they need</p> <p>21 applications received totalling £159,594 17 applicants were awarded full or part funding to deliver community food projects offering healthy eating / no cost initiatives.</p> <p>An extra £3,717 was allocated on top of the original £100,000 to accommodate these.</p>
<p>(Additional spend or new projects)</p> <p>Food Poverty - Cost of Living Roadshow</p>	<p>£1,000 allocated to purchase Slow Cookers for distribution at The Cost-of-Living Roadshow, held in Arbroath on 5th October 2022.</p> <p>23 support organisations attended, offering practical support for local people. Over 250 members of the public attended.</p> <p>Individuals and families who attended were referred to receive a slow cooker and will have follow up communication to ensure that they have the support and resources they need in tackling their Cost of Living issues.</p> <p>Partners have reported the positive impact of networking at the event, improved referral pathways at a local and national level. An evaluation of impact and uptake of services is being sent out and this data will be used to inform future provision.</p>



Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment Form
(To be completed with reference to Guidance Notes)

Step 1

Name of Proposal (includes e.g. budget savings, committee reports, strategies, policies, procedures, service reviews, functions):

LOCAL AUTHORITY COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY (LACER) FUNDING

Step 2

Is this only a **screening** Equality Impact Assessment ~~Yes~~/No

(A) If Yes, please choose from the following options **all** reasons why a full EIA/FSD is not required:

(i) It does not impact on people Yes/No

(ii) It is a percentage increase in fees which has no differential impact on protected characteristics Yes/No

(iii) It is for information only Yes/No

(iv) It is reflective e.g. of budget spend over a financial year Yes/No

(v) It is technical Yes/No

If you have answered yes to any of points above, please go to **Step 16**, and sign off the Assessment.

(B) If you have answered No to the above, please indicate the following:

Is this a full Equality Impact Assessment Yes/~~No~~

Is this a Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment ~~Yes~~/No

If you have answered Yes to either or both of the above, continue with Step 3.

If your proposal is a **strategy** please ensure you complete Step 13 which is the Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment.

Step 3

(i) Lead Directorate/Service:

Finance and Vibrant Communities and Sustainable Growth

(ii) Are there any **relevant** statutory requirements affecting this proposal? If so, please describe.

NONE

(iii) What is the aim of the proposal? Please give full details:

To seek member agreement on use of the funding provided to the Council under the LACER funding source where Council is able to use the funding on a discretionary basis.

(iv) Is it a new proposal? Yes/~~No~~ Please indicate OR

Is it a review of e.g. an existing budget saving, report, strategy, policy, service review, procedure or function? Yes/~~No~~ Please indicate

Step 4: Which people does your proposal involve or have consequences for?

Please indicate all which apply:

Employees	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes/ No
Job Applicants	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes/ No
Service users	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes/ No
Members of the public	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes/ No

Step 5: List the evidence/data/research that has been used in this assessment (links to data sources, information etc which you may find useful are in the Guidance). This could include:

Internal data (e.g. customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints).

Priorities in the Angus Council Plan
Public Survey of Funded Transport Users Spring and Summer 2022, see step 8 below for details
Customer Feedback

Internal consultation (e.g. with staff, trade unions and any other services affected).

Staff from a number of Council services including finance, transport, education, welfare rights, and strategic policy & planning have been consulted and involved in the preparation of the proposals in this report

External data (e.g. Census, equality reports, equality evidence finder, performance reports, research, available statistics)

Guiding principles on use of LACER funding developed by COSLA and the Scottish Government

External consultation (e.g. partner organisations, national organisations, community groups, other councils).

Consultation with Third Sector Interface for Angus Voluntary Action Angus, Job Centre, local and national transport providers, and Transport Scotland.

Other (general information as appropriate).

Step 6: Evidence Gaps.

Are there any gaps in the equality information you currently hold? Yes/~~No~~

If yes, please state what they are, and what measures you will take to obtain the evidence you need.

Step 7: Are there potential differential impacts on protected characteristic groups? Please complete for each group, including details of the potential impact on those affected. Please remember to take into account any particular impact resulting from **Covid-19**.

Please state if there is a potentially positive, negative, neutral or unknown impact for each group. Please state the reason(s) why.

Age

Positive Impact

People between the age of 23-59 who are not eligible for free travel through national concessionary schemes may be eligible to access support.

Disability

Neutral Impact

May already be in receipt of free travel through national concessionary schemes through disability entitlement.

Gender reassignment

Impact Neutral

N/A

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Impact Neutral

N/A

Pregnancy/Maternity

Impact Neutral

N/A

Race - (includes Gypsy Travellers)

Impact Positive

Supporting marginalised and at-risk groups with tackling financial insecurity

Religion or Belief

Impact Neutral

N/A

Sex

Impact Positive

Supporting marginalised and at-risk groups with tackling financial insecurity, statistically more females use public transport than males.

Sexual orientation

Impact Neutral

N/A

Step 8: Consultation with any of the groups potentially affected

If you have consulted with any group potentially affected, please give details of how this was done and what the results were.

Over the recent spring and summer school holiday periods, funded bus travel was provided for everyone in Angus, and Adults travelling with children respectively.

The funded periods allowed us to gather data and examine whether saving money, which would otherwise be spent on transport (bus travel, private car etc), allowed people and families to spend money elsewhere. The spring survey received 309 responses, with the data telling us that people used the money they saved on travel, to pay energy bills or buy food, whilst it allowed others to buy treats and engage in activities. Many people also used it to travel to work and avoided having to take their private car, saving money on petrol or diesel, as well as increasing sustainable travel. The summer survey received 680 responses and told us that free transport was the 2nd most beneficial part of the programme for children and families, behind fun activities for children and families which came first. 428 people told us that they would like to see future travel offers, 27 people did not want a future offer, and 214 people used their own transport.

If you have not consulted with any group potentially affected, how have you ensured that you can make an informed decision about mitigating action of any negative impact (Step 9)?

No negative impacts have been identified – the funding is to be targeted at people in need and we expect groups which are disproportionately affected by poverty and disadvantage and have been more impacted by the effects of the pandemic to benefit from the proposed interventions.

Step 9: What mitigating steps will be taken to remove or reduce potentially negative impacts?

We will continue to work with local transport providers (including private hire) and include them in our consultations for future transport projects, with the objective of offering a wide range of accessible services, supporting people and businesses.

Step 10: If a potentially negative impact has been identified, please state below the justification.

Not applicable

Step 11: In what way does this proposal contribute to any or all of the public sector equality duty to: eliminate unlawful discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between people of different protected characteristics?

The actions to be taken based on the recommendations in the report are considered to be likely to have a positive impact as they are intended to help people in need some of whom are likely to be within protected groups thereby advancing equality of opportunity.

Step 12: Is there any action which could be taken to advance equalities in relation to this proposal?

No

Step 13: FAIRER SCOTLAND DUTY

This step is only applicable to **strategies** which are key, high level decisions. If your proposal is **not** a strategy, please leave this Step blank, and go to Step 14.

Step 14: What arrangements will be put in place to monitor and review the Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment?

Support arrangements are subject to ongoing review as part of the Council's pandemic response and the EIA will be reviewed as necessary as part of this

Step 15: Where will this Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment be published?

As part of the committee report

Step 16: Sign off and Authorisation. Please state name, post, and date for each:

Prepared by: Victoria Gibbons 4 October 2022

Reviewed by: Doreen Philips 18 October 2022

Approved by: Ian Lorimer 19 October 2022
