

FLEXIBLE FOOD AND FUEL FUND AND CONNECTED FOR GOOD

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Flexible Food and Fuel Fund (FFFF) has provided targeted financial assistance and welfare rights support to households experiencing food and fuel insecurity across Argyll and Bute since January 2021. The Fund has supported thousands of households and has consistently achieved high engagement with advice services, resulting in significant income maximisation and improved financial stability for low-income households.
- 1.2 This report provides an updated position on FFFF and the proposed Connected for Good redesign, in light of significant changes to the external funding landscape. UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) revenue funding will end in March 2026, with no replacement allocation for Argyll and Bute from successor UK Government funds for at least the next three financial years. Discussions with the Big Lottery Fund (BLF) have been positive, with confirmation that Connected for Good aligns strongly with fund priorities; however, BLF funding would be focused on enhancement and expansion activity rather than existing contracted commitments.
- 1.3 The report sets out the current funding context, summarises evidence of impact, and presents options for the Policy and Resources committee to consider. In particular, it outlines a shared investment approach which would combine a reduced Council-funded baseline, time-limited use of earmarked reserves, and a core Council contribution to match BLF funding, providing stability while longer-term funding solutions are pursued.
- 1.4 Failure to sustain preventative provision would have disproportionate impacts on low-income households, including families with children, disabled people and those living in rural and island communities, with increased pressure on statutory services.
- 1.5 Members are asked to consider these options in the context of both financial constraint and the Council's statutory and equality duties to support households experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 In February 2025, the Policy and Resources Committee agreed to the use of earmarked reserves to support the Flexible Food and Fuel Fund (FFFF), delivered under contract by third sector partners Bute Advice Centre and ALLenergy, during 2025/26. This decision recognised both the effectiveness of the service and the need to identify longer-term funding solutions. The current contract is due to end on 31 March 2026.
- 2.2 As part of that decision, Members also supported the inclusion of Argyll and Bute Citizens Advice Bureau (ABCAB) in the wider poverty mitigation approach. ABCAB has since been involved in the development and redesign of Connected for Good, alongside existing delivery partners.
- 2.3 Since that decision, the funding environment has changed materially. UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) revenue funding will conclude in March 2026, with no replacement allocation for Argyll and Bute. At the same time, discussions with the Big Lottery Fund have clarified both opportunities and constraints around external funding for Connected for Good, the proposed redesign building on the success of FFFF and other poverty mitigation activity.
- 2.4 Senior officers have therefore requested that Members are provided with an updated position and a set of options to inform decisions on the future level and model of Council support.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Policy and Resources committee is asked to:
- Note the updated funding position for the Flexible Food and Fuel Fund and Connected for Good, including the loss of UKSPF funding from 2026/27.
 - Recommend to Council that they approve Option 2 and provision is made for the annual cost of £104,000 at the budget meeting on 25 February 2026.
 - Agree the time-limited use of existing Scottish Welfare Fund earmarked reserves to support the preventative elements of the Flexible Food and Fuel Fund and Connected for Good, recognising the complementary role these services play in protecting statutory crisis provision.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to:

- Set out the current position of the Flexible Food and Fuel Fund and Connected for Good;
- Explain the changed funding context;
- Present evidence of impact; and
- Provide options for Members to consider regarding future Council support.

4.2 Background – Flexible Food and Fuel Fund

The Flexible Food and Fuel Fund was established in response to rising food and fuel insecurity and has since become a key element of the Council's poverty prevention approach. The Fund combines:

- Direct financial assistance to households experiencing crisis; and
- A structured referral pathway into welfare rights, income maximisation, debt advice and fuel poverty support delivered by third sector partners.

The model has achieved consistently high engagement rates, with over 95% of households engaging with advice services following receipt of initial support. This preventative approach complements the statutory Scottish Welfare Fund by reducing repeat crisis presentations and supporting households to stabilise their income.

4.3 Connected for Good and Service Redesign

Connected for Good builds on the success of the Flexible Food and Fuel Fund as a cornerstone of a broader, more coordinated poverty mitigation approach. While FFFF provides a proven entry point through crisis support and advice-led intervention, Connected for Good brings together a wider set of preventative and early intervention activity under a single, joined-up model.

Key objectives include:

- Expanding face-to-face outreach and advice provision across all areas of Argyll and Bute;
- Improving integration between Council referral pathways and third sector delivery;
- Strengthening coordination, learning and funding sustainability; and
- Supporting earlier identification of vulnerability to reduce crisis escalation.

In addition to the Flexible Food and Fuel Fund, Connected for Good incorporates a number of complementary, low-cost, high-impact interventions designed to support children, families and vulnerable adults.

These include the continuation and development of pre-loved school clothing and cost-of-the-school-day interventions, at an estimated cost of approximately £20,000 per

annum. This activity supports school attendance and attainment by addressing practical barriers faced by low-income families, including access to recycled school clothing, period products for young women, and items such as wellington boots and waterproofs to enable participation in outdoor learning. These interventions have been shown to deliver disproportionate benefits relative to their cost and align closely with child poverty and attainment priorities.

Connected for Good also strengthens collaboration around Council Tax and debt-related interventions, with a focus on earlier engagement, safeguarding and trauma-informed practice. Closer working between Council services and advice providers enables vulnerable individuals to be identified earlier in the collection process, reducing exposure to enforcement action, protecting mental health, and supporting sustainable repayment or relief solutions where appropriate.

Finally, the redesigned model places greater emphasis on data-informed targeting and analysis, allowing the Council and partners to identify emerging risks, geographic concentrations of need, and households experiencing multiple pressures. This supports a more proactive and targeted approach to outreach and referral, ensuring that limited resources are directed where they will have the greatest preventative impact.

A Connected for Good coordinator role, funded for one year through Fairer Futures “adopt and adapt” funding, will support delivery during the transition period and enable partners to work in a more coordinated and integrated way.

4.4 Funding Context

Scottish Welfare Fund

The Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) is a statutory scheme supporting households experiencing financial crisis. The Council’s SWF budget is funded through a combination of Scottish Government General Revenue Grant and Council funding, reflecting the fact that Scottish Government programme funding alone has not historically been sufficient to meet local demand.

In recent years, expenditure under the scheme has exceeded Scottish Government programme funding by varying amounts, typically in the range of £90k–£130k per annum, although demand and spend can fluctuate significantly year to year. To ensure the continued operation of the statutory scheme and manage this volatility, the Council previously agreed additional budget provision to supplement Scottish Government funding where required.

In both 2024/25 and 2025/26, the Scottish Government provided additional one-off funding nationally to support local authorities experiencing SWF overspends. In Argyll and Bute, this additional funding was not required due to the level of budget provision already in place, resulting in an overall underspend. These underspends have been earmarked by the Council for future use and currently total approximately £400k.

The existence of these earmarked reserves provides limited, time-bound flexibility to consider how preventative activity aligned to the objectives of the Scottish Welfare

Fund may be supported alongside statutory provision, without reducing the Council's ability to meet its statutory duties.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

UKSPF revenue funding will end in March 2026, with no allocation for Argyll and Bute from successor UK Government funds for at least the next three financial years.

Big Lottery Fund (BLF)

BLF has confirmed strong interest in supporting Connected for Good, with funding focused on enhancement and expansion rather than existing contracted commitments. BLF funding may be weighted towards the early years of delivery if required, subject to a clear sustainability strategy and Council match funding.

Appendix 1 shows the financial position and investment to date made by the Council in respect of FFFF.

4.5 Impact and Evidence

Since January 2021, the Flexible Food and Fuel Fund (FFFF) has supported approximately 4,140 households across Argyll and Bute and has delivered cumulative client income gains in excess of £6 million through welfare rights, income maximisation and fuel poverty interventions. Outcomes have been particularly strong for families with children, single-adult households and disabled people, reflecting both high levels of need and the effectiveness of advice-led support.

Levels of engagement and client income gain have been highest in areas where face-to-face provision is available, notably Bute and Cowal. These areas also contain some of the most deprived SIMD datazones in Argyll and Bute, indicating that higher engagement reflects underlying deprivation as well as service accessibility. This evidence reinforces the case for expanding outreach into other areas with known deprivation pressures but more limited access to advice services.

The Flexible Food and Fuel Fund operates alongside the statutory Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF), with the two schemes performing complementary roles. While the SWF provides crisis assistance at points of acute need, FFFF supports earlier intervention and stabilisation through advice, income maximisation and debt support. Evidence from partner monitoring indicates that access to preventative support through FFFF reduces repeat crisis presentations and helps to protect statutory provision.

Direct grant awards under FFFF are modest when set against the wider financial impact achieved through advice-led support. Monitoring data shows an average client income gain of over £1,500 per household per annum, compared to significantly lower levels of one-off grant assistance. This supports the case for maintaining smaller grants to incentivise engagement, while directing a greater proportion of available funding towards advice capacity that delivers sustained financial benefit.

Although approximately 4,140 households have been supported since January 2021, fewer than half received a direct Council-funded grant. The majority were supported through advice, income maximisation, fuel poverty and debt interventions delivered by third sector partners without a grant payment. As a result, Council grant monitoring data understates the full scale of reach and impact, which is more accurately reflected in partner monitoring reports showing sustained demand and ongoing client income gains.

The Council's use of earmarked reserves reflects a continuity of purpose from earlier Covid-related cost-of-living funding through to more recent Scottish Government support to manage Scottish Welfare Fund overspends. While these funding streams are distinct, both are intended to respond to sustained household hardship and protect statutory crisis provision, reinforcing the strategic link between preventative support such as FFFF and the effective operation of the Scottish Welfare Fund.

Further detail on reach, demand and trends over time is provided in Appendices 2 and 3.

A summary of client income gain by benefit type, illustrating the predominance of recurring benefit entitlement secured through advice-led support, is provided in Appendix 4.

Analysis of caseload distribution by area, highlighting concentrations of demand and implications for wider outreach, is provided in Appendix 5.

The effectiveness of the Flexible Food and Fuel Fund has also been recognised externally. The model has received two national awards and has been referenced as an example of good practice in national reporting on poverty and human rights in Scotland.

This external recognition provides additional assurance that the approach adopted in Argyll and Bute aligns with emerging best practice and delivers meaningful outcomes for households experiencing financial hardship.

4.6 Options

The following options are presented to illustrate the range of potential approaches available to the Council, including associated costs, risks and implications.

The financial implications of each option, including indicative annual costs, funding sources and use of earmarked reserves, are summarised in Appendix 6.

Option 1 – Maintain Current Model (High Support / High Cost)

- Council continues to fund the full £168k per annum core contract and current levels of household grants of £135k per annum.
- Council provides match funding to BLF for Connected for Good expansion of circa £85k per annum.

- Provides maximum continuity in the short term but requires the highest level of ongoing Council investment and continued reliance on reserves, with limited long-term sustainability.

Revenue budget implication: Requires approximately £288k per annum of ongoing Council revenue funding, in addition to continued reliance on short-term earmarked reserves. This level of recurring commitment is not affordable within the current financial framework.

Option 2 – Shared Investment and Stabilisation (Preferred / Mid-Range)

Option 2 proposes a shared investment approach that stabilises delivery, protects advice capacity and enables expansion through external funding, while avoiding any reduction to the approved Scottish Welfare Fund cost pressure.

Under this option:

- The Council funds a reduced Flexible Food and Fuel Fund baseline, including:
 - Approximately 50% of historic core contract costs; and
 - Revised flat-rate household grants of £100, maintaining engagement while releasing funding to protect advice capacity.
- Approximately £100k per annum of existing Scottish Welfare Fund / Flexible Food and Fuel Fund earmarked reserves would be used, on a time-limited basis over four years, to support this reduced baseline of preventative activity.
- The Council establishes a new, explicit, time-limited poverty mitigation budget of approximately £104k per annum for four years, to act as match funding for external investment through the Connected for Good programme. This commitment will be built in as a cost pressure for the budget outlook for the 2026/2027 year onwards.
- The Big Lottery Fund provides approximately £300k over four years (front-loaded if necessary), funding expanded outreach, face-to-face provision and additional advice capacity.
- £20k per annum (£10k Council / £10k Big Lottery Fund) is allocated to small-scale, high-impact school-based interventions to reduce the cost of the school day.

This approach:

- Maintains full protection for the statutory Scottish Welfare Fund by retaining the approved cost pressure in full;
- Uses earmarked reserves strategically and time-limited to support prevention;
- Leverages external funding on a pound-for-pound basis; and
- Provides stability over a four-year period, creating time to secure additional funders and develop longer-term sustainability options.

Transition costs associated with moving from the existing Flexible Food and Fuel Fund contract to the Connected for Good delivery model would be met from earmarked reserves and would be explicitly time-limited. These costs do not alter the relative affordability of Option 2 and would not create any ongoing financial commitment beyond the Connected for Good delivery period.

Revenue budget implication: Requires a new, explicit Council revenue commitment of £104k per annum for four years which will be built in as a cost pressure for the budget outlook for 2026/2027 onwards. A further element of the option would be supported through time-limited use of existing earmarked reserves, rather than ongoing revenue funding.

Option 3 – No Further Council Support / Managed Reduction

- FFFF contract ends in March 2026.
- No Council match funding for BLF.
- Reduced or ceased provision, with increased pressure on statutory services, schools and health and social care partners.
- Highest equality, reputational and service risk.

This option carries significant equality and Fairer Scotland Duty risks due to the withdrawal of targeted preventative support.

Revenue budget implication: No ongoing Council revenue commitment.

4.7 Transition Arrangements

Subject to the timing of any Big Lottery Fund award, there may be a short transition period between the end of existing Flexible Food and Fuel Fund contractual arrangements and the commencement of Connected for Good funding. Officers propose managing this through a clearly defined, time-limited transition arrangement to maintain continuity of support and avoid sudden disruption to households and delivery partners.

Any such transition support would be non-contractual, limited in duration, and funded from existing earmarked reserves. The indicative cost is estimated to be in the range of £42,000 to £84,000, depending on the duration required. This does not represent an ongoing commitment and would not alter the affordability of the preferred option.

4.8 Connected for Good Coordination and System Capacity

As noted in section 4.3, a time-limited Connected for Good coordinator role has been approved. This section sets out the strategic importance of the role in supporting service redesign, managing transition risk and strengthening long-term sustainability.

Option 2 assumes continuation of the Connected for Good coordination role to support transition, funding sustainability and system integration

The coordinator will support partnership working across poverty mitigation activity, oversee service redesign and transition, manage referral flow in line with funded capacity, and lead on the development of longer-term funding and sustainability plans.

The role also enables Argyll and Bute to engage more effectively with national learning networks, including work on remote and rural poverty, and to maximise the legacy of Taking Action on Rural Poverty (TARP) activity delivered with the Poverty

Alliance. Learning from this work will inform future funding bids, policy development and advocacy.

Officers will continue to track client income gains on an annual basis as a key indicator of demand and impact, recognising that sustained or increasing client gain reflects ongoing need for income maximisation support, even where direct grant funding is constrained.

In addition to established measures such as client income gain, officers intend to work with the Improvement Service to develop a broader framework for assessing the wider social impact of Connected for Good. This will include consideration of outcomes such as reduced crisis demand, improved financial resilience, engagement with services, and preventative impact across communities.

Similar approaches are being adopted by other local authorities and partnerships across Scotland, and this work will support continuous improvement, accountability and future funding bids, without creating additional financial commitments.

Without dedicated coordination capacity, there is a risk that delivery partners and the Council remain in a cycle of short-term funding and reactive decision-making, limiting the ability to demonstrate impact and secure longer-term sustainability.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The Flexible Food and Fuel Fund has delivered demonstrable benefits to households across Argyll and Bute and remains a key component of the Council's poverty prevention approach. However, the loss of UKSPF funding and constraints on external funding require Members to consider how this work can be sustained in a realistic and responsible way.

This report sets out clear options to inform Member consideration and enable timely decision-making.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy - The Flexible Food and Fuel Fund and Connected for Good align with the Council's commitment to preventing poverty, reducing inequality and supporting vulnerable households. The proposals support delivery of the Council's policy objectives relating to financial inclusion, early intervention and prevention, and partnership working with the third sector.
- 6.2 Financial: The financial implications of each option are set out in Section 4.6. Option 2 is designed to be affordable within existing approved financial frameworks through the time-limited use of earmarked reserves, reconfiguration of approved cost pressures, and match funding to external investment. Detailed financial arrangements would be confirmed following Member direction and the outcome of external funding discussions.
- 6.3 Legal: The Scottish Welfare Fund is a statutory scheme and will continue to be delivered in line with legislative requirements. The Flexible Food and Fuel Fund and Connected for Good are discretionary schemes. Any transition

arrangements or revised delivery models would be implemented in accordance with procurement, contract and grant-funding requirements, and would not constitute an extension of existing contractual commitments.

- 6.4 HR: There are no direct staffing implications for Council employees arising from the options presented. Any changes to delivery arrangements for third sector partners would be managed by those organisations in line with their own employment responsibilities, with appropriate notice and engagement.
- 6.5 Customer Service: The Flexible Food and Fuel Fund has demonstrated high levels of engagement and positive customer experience by combining crisis support with access to advice services. Option 2 seeks to maintain continuity of support while improving access to face-to-face outreach across the Council area, enhancing the overall customer journey.
- 6.6 Risk: Failure to identify sustainable funding would increase pressure on statutory services, including the Scottish Welfare Fund, housing services, schools and health and social care partners. Option 2 mitigates these risks by stabilising preventative provision, leveraging external funding and reducing reliance on short-term arrangements.
- 6.7 Climate Change: There are no direct negative climate change implications arising from the proposals. Advice and support delivered through Connected for Good, including fuel poverty and energy efficiency advice, contributes indirectly to reduced energy consumption and supports wider climate and sustainability objectives.
- 6.8 Fairer Scotland Duty: The proposals directly support the Fairer Scotland Duty by seeking to reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage. Any reduction or withdrawal of preventative support would disproportionately impact low-income households. Option 2 supports compliance with the Duty by maintaining targeted support for those most affected by poverty.
- 6.9 Equalities: The Flexible Food and Fuel Fund primarily supports households experiencing financial hardship, including families with children, disabled people and single-adult households. The equality impacts of the options have been considered, and Option 2 provides the most balanced approach to maintaining support while managing financial risk.
- 6.10 Consumer Duty: The proposals support fair access to support and advice, helping households make informed decisions and avoid escalation of financial difficulty. The integration of advice services promotes good outcomes for consumers in vulnerable circumstances.
- 6.11 Island Communities: Households in island and remote rural communities face higher living costs and reduced access to services. Connected for Good aims to improve access to outreach and advice across all areas of Argyll and Bute, including island communities, helping to address geographic inequalities.
- 6.12 Children's Rights and Wellbeing: The Flexible Food and Fuel Fund has supported a significant number of families with children and contributes to improved household stability and wellbeing. The proposals align with the

principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child by supporting children's right to an adequate standard of living and access to essential support.

Executive Director Kirsty Flanagan

Executive Director with responsibility for Finance

Policy Lead Councillor Moreland

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For further information contact: Fergus Walker, Revenues and Benefits Manager
Fergus.Walker@argyll-bute.gov.uk Tel: 01586 555237

APPENDIX 1 - FINANCIAL POSITION AND INVESTMENT TO DATE

FFFF Year/Spend and Fund	Actual Spend (£)			Funded by (£)			Cumulative Client Gain per £1 of Council Investment
	Direct Payments To Families	Contract Costs Partners	Total	UKSPF	Council	Total	
2021/22	130,050	168,000	298,050	0	298,050	298,050	1,132,461
2022/23	133,625	168,000	301,625	0	301,625	301,625	2,353,699
2023/24	144,105	168,000	312,105	225,865	86,240	312,105	3,572,795
2024/25	108,930	168,000	276,930	210,000	66,930	276,930	4,775,046
2025/26 - to date	121,695	168,000	289,695	122,500	167,195	289,695	6,518,314
TOTAL	638,405	840,000	1,478,405	558,365	920,040	1,478,405	6,518,314
Average Council Investment Delivers Client Gain per Year					920,040		6,518,314

Based on cumulative client income gains of approximately £6.52m relative to cumulative Council investment of £920k over the period shown. These figures are indicative and reflect recurring income secured through advice-led income maximisation, rather than one-off financial support. Over the period shown, every £1 of Council investment has supported an estimated £7.08 in additional household income. Average annual Council investment of approximately £184k has therefore underpinned cumulative client income gains in excess of £6.5m, demonstrating the preventative impact and value-for-money nature of the service.

APPENDIX 2 – REACH AND DEMAND (GRANT AND ADVICE-LED SUPPORT)

MEASURE	HOUSEHOLDS SUPPORTED GRANT V ADVICE ONLY	
	No.	%
Total Households Supported Jan 21 to Dec 25	4,139	100%
Households receiving Council Grants plus advice	1,712	41%
Households receiving advice only	2,427	59%

Partner data captures total advice-led support across the service; Council data captures direct grant payments only

APPENDIX 3 - CLIENT GAIN AND DEMAND OVER TIME

YEAR	CLIENT GAIN (£)
2021/22	1,132,461
2022/23	1,221,238
2023/24	1,219,096
2024/25	1,202,251
2025/26 - to date	1,743,268
	6,518,314

Sustained and increasing client income gains over time indicate ongoing unmet need for welfare rights and income maximisation support.

**APPENDIX 4 - CLIENT GAIN BY BENEFIT TYPE
(SUMMARY ONLY)**

Benefit Type	Total Gains	
	£	%
UNIVERSAL CREDIT RELATED BENEFIT	2,945,243	45.18%
PENSIONS	929,046	14.25%
DISABILITY RELATED BENEFITS	899,010	13.79%
FUEL POVERTY RELATED INTERVENTION	832,960	12.78%
HOUSING RELATED BENEFITS - LOCAL AUTHORITY DELIVERED	341,224	5.23%
GRANTS (SWF / FFFF – ONE-OFF SUPPORT)	315,826	4.85%
COUNCIL TAX RELATED BENEFIT	111,501	1.71%
CHILD BENEFITS	69,037	1.06%
CARERS	41,031	0.63%
OTHER BENEFITS (EDUCATION/JSA/BEREAVEMENT)	33,435	0.51%
TOTAL	6,518,314	100.00%

The majority of client income gain arises from recurring benefit entitlement secured through advice and income maximisation support. While the figures presented reflect single-year gains, many of these benefits continue in subsequent years, meaning the longer-term financial impact for households and the local economy is substantially greater.

APPENDIX 5 - AREA SPLIT BY CASELOAD

Area	Relative Caseload	Delivery Context
Bute	High	Face-to-face provision
Cowal	High	Face-to-face provision
Helensburgh & Lomond	Lower	Primarily remote
Oban, Lorn & Isles	Lower	Geography / capacity
Mid Argyll	Lower	Geography / capacity
Kintyre	Lower	Geography / capacity
Islands	Lower	Distance / access

Based on Bute Advice Centre rolling caseload and client gain reporting, January 2021–January 2026.

APPENDIX 6 - OPTIONS APPRAISAL AND COST SUMMARY

Option	Description	Council Funding (£ pa)	External Funding Levered (BLF)	Total Annual Cost	Overall Council Resource Requirement	Use of Earmarked Reserves	Key Implications
Option 1	Maintain current FFFF model (baseline) with limited expansion	388,000	85,000	473,000	High	Continued reliance on short term earmarkings	Highest cost; limited sustainability, Earmarking would be subsumed in a single year; continued grant levels
Option 2 (Preferred)	Reduced baseline FFFF + matched expansion for CFG funded with BLF	204,000	85,000	289,000	Medium–High	Time-limited use of existing earmarked reserves alongside a modest recurring Council contribution	Stable delivery; advice protected; time to secure new funders - will secure the full project for 4 years and allow partners time to approach other funders for longer term support
Option 3	No further Council support	0	0	0	Low	None	Service reduction; higher statutory pressure; equality risk

Figures shown are annual unless otherwise stated. Four-year totals are provided for planning and comparison purposes only.

Note on funding approach for Option 2**(Preferred):**

The Council's annual contribution of approximately £204k would be met through a combination of time-limited use of existing Scottish Welfare Fund / Flexible Food and Fuel Fund earmarked reserves (approximately £100k per annum for up to four years) and a modest recurring Council budget contribution (approximately £104k per annum) to act as match funding for external investment. This approach maintains full protection for the statutory Scottish Welfare Fund and avoids reliance on reducing approved cost pressures.

The options appraisal in Appendix 6 excludes any short-term transition costs that may arise due to the timing of external funding decisions. Any such costs would be time-limited, non-recurring and met from existing earmarked reserves. They are not considered to alter the relative affordability of the options presented.