

North Ayrshire Council response to Public Petitions Committee Petition PE1571 Foodbank funding

1. Introduction

- 1.1 North Ayrshire Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Public Petitions Committee's request for information relating to the support that the Council has provided to North Ayrshire Foodbank.
- 1.2 The support provided ranges from financial assistance, facilitating the issue of food vouchers, providing a food parcel distribution service to general advice and guidance; this is detailed in the sections below.

2. Foodbank voucher system

- 2.1 Council Services for example Health and Social Care Partnership, Housing Services and Scottish Welfare Fund Team facilitate the issue of food vouchers to customers on behalf of the Foodbank. The voucher is redeemed by the customer at various locations in North Ayrshire for a three-day food parcel.
- 2.2 Vouchers are only issued after all other Council support has been exhausted.

3. Distribution of food parcels

- 3.1 The Council's Economy and Communities Service supports the Foodbank by providing a food parcel distribution service from Community Centres located in the following six local areas:

Ardeer;
Beith;
Dalry;
Irvine;
Kilwinning; and
Whitlees
- 3.2 North Ayrshire Foodbank provide a regular supply of food parcels to the designated Community Centres and venue assistants issue a food parcel to customers on receipt of a Foodbank voucher.
- 3.3 Council staff also arrange for the food parcels to be delivered from the Foodbank to the Council distribution centres. A stock supply of 30 boxes is kept at the Community Centres in case urgent issue to customers is required.
- 3.4 Posters are used in the local community to promote the Foodbank and distribution centres.

4. Financial Support for Community Shop

4.1 North Ayrshire Foodbank is considering opening a Community Shop (CS) in North Ayrshire and the Council has provided a Community Benefit grant of £5,790 to help the Foodbank develop a business plan for its CS.

The current thinking for the CS is as follows:

- The CS will complement and not replace the Foodbank but it is expected to reduce the number of referrals and meals provided;
- The CS will have charitable status and be run by volunteers; there may be an opportunity for the Council to establish links to training and employability programmes and modern apprenticeships;
- The CS will be open to all local people but customers on low income will receive a higher discount provided they meet defined eligibility criteria for example benefits in payment;
- The location of the CS is undecided but may consist of a central hub and a mobile “pop-up shop” that can be quickly erected across all local areas throughout North Ayrshire; this may have license implications;
- The CS would provide more than food and may include other products for example arts and crafts; and make referrals to other organisations or services for example Employment Hub;
- The CS may forge links with FareShare’s current supply chain and other local retailers to source food. FareShare has 20 year experience working with the Food Industry and currently sources food that is in date but is not required due to over-production, labelling or short shelf life.

4.2 The Council provided a Community Development Fund grant of £28,956 in 2014/15 to ensure the ongoing operation of the foodbank before the Scottish Government made available a funding stream for foodbank applications.

4.3 The Council’s welfare reform working group has provided guidance and advice to the Foodbank on how to develop a business case for the Community Shop.

4.4 The Council is represented on a CS working group by Health and Social Care Partnership. The key issues currently under consideration are:

- Business plan;
- Branding, marketing and communications plan;
- Sourcing and supply of products;
- Membership structure;
- Use of technology;
- Location and property requirements; and
- Legal structure and governance.