

## Item 2

5th March 2020



Glasgow City Council

Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community  
and Citizen Engagement City Policy Committee

Report by Councillor Allan Casey, Chair of the Begging Strategy  
Working Group

Contact: John Foster

Ext: 76540

### GLASGOW BEGGING STRATEGY

#### Purpose of Report:

To update Members on the development of the Glasgow Begging Strategy.

#### Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Considers the contents of this report;
- (ii) Considers the proposed thematic activity of the emerging Begging Strategy;
- (iii) Considers the proposed next steps at section 5 of this report;
- (iv) Notes that the draft Begging Strategy and Action Plan will be brought back to this Committee for consideration in April 2020, prior to the proposed public consultation activity.

Ward No(s): 10

Citywide:

Local member(s) advised: Yes ✓

consulted: Yes ✓

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Begging is a complex issue in Glasgow, and beyond. Over recent years many cities in Scotland have experienced an increase in begging, and Glasgow has been no exception. Further afield, major cities in Europe and North America have seen the issue exponentially grow with the emergence of “tent cities” in many urban areas. Begging is a matter that has a significant life impact on vulnerable individuals as well as on wider society. It is a multifaceted issue and requires innovative, integrated partnership working to deliver sustainable solutions and interventions.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide an interim update on the Glasgow Begging Strategy in order to provide some context around recent media coverage which has highlighted some of the early interventions being progressed now due to the urgency of the situation. It will briefly outline the background and process to the Glasgow Begging Strategy, along with the key findings and emerging strategic objectives. It will also outline the four proposed themes to be included in the Strategy and Action Plan, and the key next steps.
- 1.3 The full Begging Strategy and Action Plan is now in the final stages of development, along with the governance structure for the project’s delivery stage. This will be reported back to committee in April, along with details of the public consultation plan for the draft Strategy.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Over the last few years many cities in Scotland and across the UK have experienced an increase in begging, with a number of councils exploring options to deter or prevent this activity, including the possibility of enforcement action (to date, the legislation in Scotland has prevented any proactive enforcement activity).
- 2.2 Whilst the Glasgow City Integration Joint Board already has a Strategic Plan for Health and Social Care in the City of Glasgow<sup>1</sup>, this strategic framework makes no specific reference to street begging. Recent research conducted by Simon Community Scotland found that on an average day in Glasgow there are between 60 and 80 people begging on the streets<sup>2</sup>. It should be noted that while begging is often conflated with rough sleeping and homelessness, the majority of those begging in the city have accommodation.
- 2.3 The visibility of begging in Glasgow city centre has become more prevalent in recent years. Accordingly, the Glasgow City Centre Strategy Board, chaired by the Leader of Glasgow City Council, instructed the development of a begging strategy in June 2017 through a Short Life Working Group with two key objectives:

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<sup>1</sup> [https://glasgowcity.hscp.scot/sites/default/files/publications/GCHSCP\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_2019\\_1.pdf](https://glasgowcity.hscp.scot/sites/default/files/publications/GCHSCP_Strategic_Plan_2019_1.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Simon Community Scotland, 2019

- (i) Establish a begging strategy for Glasgow that recognises the complex issues and involves a multi-disciplinary group of statutory and third sector agencies
- (ii) Establish a public awareness campaign to encourage a greater understanding of services available for vulnerable and homeless people and encourage public support for alternative giving

2.4 The Short Life Working Group (SLWG) was established as a multi-partner forum, chaired by Councillor Allan Casey and comprising a wide range of public sector agencies, third sector groups, and private businesses and business networks. A full list of members is provided at Appendix A.

### **3. EMERGING GLASGOW BEGGING STRATEGY**

#### **3.1 Research and development**

3.1.1 Prior to the establishment of any new strategy of this nature, it is important to undertake research and gather evidence that can underpin any strategic objectives or action plan recommendations. A new report was consequently commissioned by the SLWG for this purpose, and this was progressed by a team from MacMillan Rome<sup>3</sup>. The objectives of the MacMillan Rome commission were:

- (i) To conduct a review of published research and strategy on positive approaches to reducing street begging
- (ii) To collect evidence from local stakeholders on current patterns and prevalence of begging behaviours in the city centre and the associated problems
- (iii) To explore the challenges and opportunities associated with the current model(s) of begging management
- (iv) To contrast and compare the current model(s) of delivery with similar schemes operating elsewhere in the UK and in comparable countries and cultures
- (v) To conduct a thematic analysis of the data collected

3.1.2 This report became the first key output for the SLWG. The information, context and recommendations that it provided was extremely useful, and supported by a range of other activities including development sessions, public workshops that directly involved people with lived experience (48 participants in total), evidence provided by SLWG membership organisations, and specific sub groups and workshops established for thematic issues like “alternative giving” (a relatively new concept operating in other cities, which provides digital facilities for those people who wish to help beggars without providing direct cash contributions).

#### **3.2 Key findings**

3.2.1 Some key findings have been established through this collective development process:

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<sup>3</sup> *A Review and Investigation of Responses to Street Begging*, MacMillan Rome, 2018

- (i) Most people do not want to beg; and there are different reasons involved ranging from addiction to poverty. Some people who beg do view it as a business opportunity. Local people do generally want to help people who beg, as evidenced through their cash donations;
- (ii) A high proportion of those who beg are leading chaotic lives and would like more stability in their lives. Mortality rates are high for people who beg;
- (iii) There are many services who make substantial effort to reach out to people begging, however these services have often been/appeared to be uncoordinated or linked to barriers that inhibit access by the target group (e.g. a range of criteria have to be met; attendance at clinics must be on certain days, etc.);
- (iv) Most people appear to be unaware of the services offered and the efforts being made, which feeds into headlines and media coverage;
- (v) Begging tends to take place in areas of high footfall. Sometimes, people begging can congregate in groups where drinking and drug activity takes place. This can create issues for local businesses, public services, and the general public. Detritus can result in significant environmental degradation in these areas, with associated cost implications;
- (vi) A range of approaches have been tried in different places, but there is no panacea or one-size-fits-all to this complex issue. It is clear however that there is an important job to do to help people understand what services are available, to better coordinate services, and to better harness the empathy and generosity of the public so that it really makes a positive difference to peoples' lives.

### **3.3 Strategic objectives and themes**

3.3.1 The collective evidence has therefore established that the Begging Strategy should be focused around three primary objectives:

- (i) To help people on the street who are begging.
- (ii) To reduce the need for people to have to beg.
- (iii) To help the public understand what work is being done and to offer alternatives to directly giving money to people begging.

3.3.2 In order to achieve this, interventions are intended to be structured around four principal themes:

- (i) Alternative Giving
- (ii) Financial/Social Inclusion
- (iii) Environmental Enhancements
- (iv) Public Perception/Communications

3.3.3 The four key themes have been further developed into specific projects and actions that will be delivered over the five-year period of the Begging Strategy. These will be fully detailed in the draft Begging Strategy document to be considered by Committee in April. In the meantime, a short summary of the respective thematic objectives is provided in section 4 of this report.

### **3.4 Geographical scope**

3.4.1 In terms of the Begging Strategy's geographical scope: as outlined above at 3.2(v) there is a correlation between begging and areas of high footfall. Accordingly, it is suggested that the draft Begging Strategy and Action Plan should initially focus on Glasgow city centre, before a progress evaluation is undertaken at the end of Year 2 (estimated June 2022) to inform the future strategy.

3.4.2 At this point, subject to partner agreement and available resources, the Begging Strategy could be expanded to local town centres and/or other areas of concern across the city.

## **4. EMERGING ACTION PLAN**

4.1 This section summarises the overall headlines of the four emerging Action Plan themes.

### **4.1.1 Alternative Giving**

- (i) The Alternative Giving theme will investigate ways to provide the public with alternatives to on-street cash giving. The objective is to essentially provide a digital infrastructure where people wishing to donate to beggars can do so electronically, with funds raised going directly to third sector organisations working with the homeless & begging community to assist and direct more people to positive destinations.
- (ii) It will also work to change perceptions and instigate conversations with the public about associated issues and challenges, as well identifying and promoting ways in which they can become involved. In the same way, it will seek to obtain buy-in from and develop partnership working with local businesses and city entrepreneurs, especially in connection with the hosting of the relevant donating infrastructure which utilises contactless technology.
- (iii) Various aspects to the Alternative Giving theme are being considered including the role of local businesses, the application process, and the funding award process.

### **4.1.2 Financial/Social Inclusion**

- (i) The Financial Inclusion theme will investigate ways to increase access by vulnerable users to employment and housing, as well as skills training and development opportunities and any other appropriate services. This is also a valuable mechanism for continuing to gather data on the city centre begging issue as the strategy is delivered.
- (ii) Evidence gathered during the research and development process of the emerging strategy confirmed that many individuals who are begging are not fully cognisant of the financial supports and services available to them. Accordingly, as part of this emerging strategy a Digital Inclusion Officer post for

the city centre has been created and funded by GCC and Simon Community Scotland. In recent months the new post has been working on the streets alongside the Simon Community's Street Team and, equipped with a tablet computer, been helping people to navigate the benefits system in the wake of the introduction of the Universal Credit system.

- (iii) To date, the Digital Inclusion Officer has ensured that every vulnerable user they have interacted with has had access to 100% of their income entitlement, whilst simultaneously seeking to reduce the impact of any sanctions. Funding is only in place until March 2021 – extending this arrangement will be a priority of the Begging Strategy once approved.

#### **4.1.3 Environmental Enhancements**

- (i) The Environmental Enhancement theme will explore options through which appropriate interventions to restrict antisocial behaviour such as public drinking and drug taking can be identified and implemented. Local businesses will be encouraged to take a more pro-active approach to securing the shopfronts of vacant units, thereby further limiting opportunities for the negative use of space.
- (ii) Similarly, opportunities to de-clutter street furniture and build upon the impact of other initiatives such as the Commercial Waste Project will be explored. Continuing within the theme of safe and secure by design, as the Avenues programme is developed its designs will incorporate measures to maximise the positive use of space.
- (iii) Measures to improve the interventions and impact of public services will also be explored under this theme.

#### **4.1.4 Public Perception/Communications Strategy**

- (i) The Public Perception theme will be important to help raise public awareness and change behaviour, to ensure that members of the public understand the range of support services which exist across Glasgow and can be accessed by vulnerable users. It will also enable the public to access information about what they can do to become involved and help and how to do it, as well as enabling them to remain better informed about the key issues which the Begging Strategy is looking to address.
- (ii) Measures to deliver improved and effective communications are being considered as part of this theme.

## 5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 The Glasgow Begging Strategy and Action Plan is in the final stages of development and on completion in April 2020, the intention is to submit the draft document to:

No.	Committee/Purpose	Date
1.	<b>Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community and Citizen Engagement City Policy Committee</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To consider the draft Begging Strategy and note the intention to submit to City Administration Committee for approval to proceed to public consultation</li></ul>	16 April 2020
2.	<b>City Administration Committee</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To approve the draft Begging Strategy and its progression to a formal public consultation process</li></ul>	7 May 2020
3.	<b>Public consultation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>6 weeks</li></ul>	May/June
4.	<b>Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community and Citizen Engagement City Policy Committee</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To consider the outcomes of the public consultation and consider the final Begging Strategy</li></ul>	13 August 2020
5.	<b>City Administration Committee</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Final approval</li></ul>	3 or 17 September 2020

- 5.2 The proposed governance structure going forward will be reported to Members in the next round of reports.

## 6. POLICY AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

### Resource Implications:

- Financial:* Project costs are being assessed and will be detailed in the next committee report.
- Legal:* Legal implications for specific strategy projects are being assessed and will be detailed in the next committee report.
- Personnel:* There are no direct personnel issues.
- Procurement:* Procurement implications are being assessed and will be detailed in the next committee report.

### Council Strategic Plan:

*Specify which theme(s) and outcome(s) the proposal supports*

The project supports the following themes:

- A Healthier City, with specific outcomes:
  - Support service redesign that will result in Glasgow becoming a healthier, empowered city, with early intervention and prevention approaches at the heart of what we do;
  - Deliver the homelessness strategy in partnership with providers, building on the recommendations of the homelessness summit and strengthening the Rough Sleepers' Initiative approach.

Priorities: 38, 46,

- Resilient and Empowered Neighbourhoods:
  - Extend the number of volunteers in Glasgow and record what skills they can offer the city

Priorities: 86

- A Well Governed City that Listens and Responds:
  - Work in partnership with others to deliver the city's ambitions and improve its services and outcomes through third sector organisations and community groups.

**Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:**

*Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2017-22*

People begging on the street do not necessarily fall within the protected characteristics groupings. However, the Glasgow Begging Strategy will support the general principle of Tackling Poverty and Financial Exclusion. Additionally, the Glasgow Begging Strategy may also provide an opportunity to interface with other relevant equalities-based support networks (e.g. ROMA-NeT and URBACT) and this will be investigated going forward (e.g. in support of Outcome 11).

*What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?*

None

*Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.*

Yes. People engaged in street begging are usually the most socially and economically disadvantaged amongst us and may come from the most deprived areas of Glasgow. The Glasgow Begging Strategy will look to assist in reducing barriers to accessing services across areas such as Health & Wellbeing, Housing, Education, and Learning Skills & Employment by encouraging vulnerable users to access appropriate support services.

**Sustainability Impacts:**

*Environmental:*

None

*Social, including opportunities under Article 20 of the European Public Procurement Directive:*

None

*Economic:*

None

***Privacy and Data Protection impacts:***

None

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Considers the contents of this report;
- (ii) Considers the proposed thematic activity of the emerging Begging Strategy;
- (iii) Considers the proposed next steps at section 5 of this report;
- (iv) Notes that the draft Begging Strategy and Action Plan will be brought back to this Committee for consideration in April 2020, prior to the proposed public consultation activity.

JL/JF 26/02/20  
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### **Appendix A: Glasgow Begging Strategy Short Life Working Group: Membership**

1. Big Issue
2. British Transport Police
3. City Centre Retail Association
4. GCHSCP
5. Glasgow Chamber of Commerce
6. Glasgow City Council (Chair: Councillor Allan Casey)
7. Glasgow City Mission
8. GGC NHS
9. Glasgow Homelessness Network
10. Marie Trust
11. Police Scotland
12. Simon Community Scotland
13. Turning Point Scotland