



Glasgow City Council

Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community
and City Engagement City Policy Committee

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

Contact: John Foster

Ext: 76540

Item 1

3rd March 2022

GLASGOW BEGGING STRATEGY: ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

Purpose of Report:

To provide Members with an annual report on the progress made with the Glasgow Begging Strategy (GBS).

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Considers the contents of this report;
- (ii) Considers the progress made with the Glasgow Begging Strategy to date;
- (iii) Notes the planned activity for the next year of the Glasgow Begging Strategy.

Ward No(s): 10 / ALL

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes ✓ No consulted: Yes ✓ No

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members will recall that the draft [Glasgow Begging Strategy](#) (GBS) was previously presented to the Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community and City Engagement City Policy Committee (WECCE) for consideration in March 2021 following a public consultation exercise. The report can be viewed [here](#).
- 1.2 At that time, it was agreed that annual reports would be provided to WECCE. This reporting mechanism was subsequently agreed by City Administration Committee (CAC) on 25 March 2021 as part of the formal approval process. The previous CAC report can be viewed [here](#).
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with the first annual update on progress achieved over the past 12 months.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The context and background to the Glasgow Begging Strategy has been noted in previous reports and will not be repeated at length here, but a short summary of its origins is provided below:
 - (i) Cities in Scotland and across the UK have experienced an increase in begging.
 - (ii) Councils continue to explore options to deter or prevent this activity, including the possibility of enforcement action.
 - (iii) There has been an increased visibility of begging in Glasgow city centre.
 - (iv) There was an understanding that Glasgow City Integration Joint Board's Strategic Plan for Health and Social Care in the City of Glasgow lacked specific reference to street begging.
- 2.2 Accordingly, the Glasgow City Centre Strategy Board, chaired by the Leader of Glasgow City Council, instructed the development of a city begging strategy in June 2017 through a Short Life Working Group with two key objectives:
 1. Establish a begging strategy for Glasgow that recognises the complex issues and involves a multi-disciplinary group of statutory and third sector agencies.
 2. 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.
- 2.3 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. Since the GBS has gone live, the SLWG has since become the project Steering Group for the purposes of reporting.

3. CONTEXT & CHALLENGES

- 3.1 It has previously been noted that the issues usually associated with street begging may be further affected as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly if economic uncertainty continues with a corresponding impact on employment opportunities. In addition, there may be potentially increased health risks if mitigation measures like social distancing and the use of masks are not sustained in associated environments.
- 3.2 Furthermore, recently emerging increases to general costs of living (including significant food and energy price hikes) only raise the chances of more individuals/households slipping below the poverty line. The Council, in liaison with its project partners, continues to assess the potential impact of these issues. This reflects the Budget agreed for 2022-23 that focuses on pandemic recovery, communities and supporting households most vulnerable to a cost-of-living crisis.
- 3.3 Similarly, it should be noted that GBS project delivery has been impacted, like many other GCC projects and interventions, by the incidence of the Covid-19 pandemic. Overall, the Council has had to prioritise and focus resources on the economic recovery of the city, through such strategic workstreams as the City Centre Task Force (CCTF) and the Glasgow Economic Recovery Group (GERG).

4. ACTION PLAN: DELIVERY TO DATE & FUTURE ACTIVITY PROPOSALS

4.1 Alternative Giving (Street Change Glasgow)

- 4.1.1 Led by Simon Community Scotland (SCS), the [Street Change Glasgow](#) (SCG) initiative was formally launched in March 2020. Unfortunately, this event coincided with the initial emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated public health restrictions that essentially closed down offices and student campuses in the city centre. As the primary public facing infrastructure (donation points) relies on physical human interaction, the ongoing situation, recurring lockdowns and travel restrictions, has significantly impacted this activity.
- 4.1.2 While the donation points in Central Station (currently at two units) have continued to draw a residual income, the other four units have suffered given their position in city centre bars/clubs. Exploration of relocating these units to more effective sites (at least temporarily) remains ongoing.
- 4.1.3 Furthermore, some technical issues with the donation points in Central Station have arisen and continue to recur. Remedial support from the contracted infrastructure provider (Goodbox) has been sought, but the longer-term effectiveness of these units is under review.
- 4.1.4 Given these issues, it is the intention of Simon Community Scotland to relaunch Street Change Glasgow once conditions arising from the pandemic are less prevalent.

4.1.5 In the meantime, Simon Community Scotland are also supporting another recently launched project to help support vulnerable people. [Street Support Glasgow](#) (SSG) lists and details emergency advice and signposting to services for those who are vulnerable or experiencing homelessness. This involves a coalition of over 80 organisations working to reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness in Glasgow through the provision of over 200 services, including meals, drop-in services, food banks and accommodation in Glasgow as well as signposting to financial help, health services and training and employment opportunities.

4.1.6 This new initiative will continue to be monitored by the GBS Project Management Group (PMG) towards understanding how appropriate support might be provided within the constraints of the GBS Terms of Reference and project scope.

4.2 Financial & Digital Inclusion

4.2.1 Officers within GCC's Transformation and Financial Inclusion team have been working closely with Simon Community Scotland to achieve best practice and best value.

4.2.2 As outlined in previous reporting, the role of a Financial and Digital Inclusion officer as part of the SCS Outreach/Street Team was funded by both GCC and Simon Community Scotland. However, these annual costs were somewhat prohibitive and longer-term budget solutions remained unclear.

4.2.3 Instead, existing members of the Outreach/Street Team have been upskilled enabling them to provide the same services, thus superseding the requirement for a dedicated Financial and Digital Inclusion (FDI) officer.

4.2.4 In addition, further financial inclusion services have been identified within the Money Matters project in Govan. In this way, annual costs associated with the FDI officer post have been mitigated, whilst remaining funding will be more effectively used elsewhere. In particular, two areas have been highlighted for further investigation:

- Simon Community Scotland have been introduced to Glasgow Life who are able to provide a range of education/training services including digital skills within SCS premises (The Hub)
- Renovating available space within SCS premises would provide a meeting space for vulnerable woman. This would help to mitigate against the current lack of daytime facilities which lead to more people being on the streets, with increased risk of begging

4.2.5 Further opportunities for collaboration between SCS and GCC Glasgow Helps service will be explored over the coming year to help improve streamlined signposting through a single point of contact to service provision for vulnerable citizens.

- 4.2.6 SCS are also seeing an increase of clients who have lost housing because of employment ending. Consequently, collaboration between SCS and Jobs and Business Glasgow (JBG) will also be pursued to identify ways in which services to assist these clients back in to work, and thereby retain/regain housing, can be more easily accessed.
- 4.2.7 As part of assessment and monitoring processes, SCS will conduct consultation with service users to ensure targeted delivery going forward.

4.3 **Environmental Strategy**

- 4.3.1 As noted in **item 3.3** above, a vast body of work has been and continues to be undertaken through GERG and CCTF. In some instances, there has been an overlap with the aims and objectives of the Glasgow Begging Strategy, for example, those outputs linked to encouraging the positive use of public space. As such, GCC officers within GBS have been liaising with colleagues elsewhere to monitor and support these wider efforts for mutual benefit. This activity also links to the work being carried out by NRS City Services and the support which continues to be provided to local businesses.
- 4.3.2 In the same way, other strategic outputs, such as the Avenues Programme, District Regeneration Frameworks, and City Centre Lane Strategy, are intended to bring significant environmental enhancements to Glasgow city centre, with commensurate benefits to GBS.
- 4.3.3 More particularly, and as part of the Environmental Strategy's Cleaner City Centre work strand, new solar panel bins were procured and installed in Buchanan Street Precinct between Argyle Street and Nelson Mandela Place.
- 4.3.4 Additionally, as vacant shopfronts were identified as a specific issue within GBS, efforts focusing on identifying and mitigating against affected retail units are being progressed, with legal guidance being sought on possible enforcement measures.
- 4.3.5 As part of the Safer City Centre work strand, intelligence gathering has identified city centre locations where street begging tends to take place, with sites at Heilanman's Umbrella, Argyle Street, Buchanan Street and Gordon Street. In addition, rough sleeping sites have also been recognised at St Vincent Street, Berkeley Street, and in Glasgow Green. Outwith the immediate city centre, further sites in the west and south of the city have also been identified.
- 4.3.6 Whilst engagement with individuals at these sites remains ongoing, parallel efforts to address associated environmental issues are also being pursued. For instance, while the Argyle Street Avenue works are pending, interim measures to improve the quality of the Heilanman's Umbrella area are currently being pursued in collaboration with key stakeholders such as Network Rail. This follows previous similar projects such as the Central Station Action Plan and could also align with other recent initiatives around the Four Corners.

- 4.3.8 Furthermore, Best Bar None (an accreditation scheme supported by the Home Office and drinks industry to improve standards in the evening and night-time economy) is currently re-engaging with licensed premises and a formal launch is planned for March/April 2022. It is hoped that this initiative will continue to increase night-time safety, through a combination of responsible management and operation of licensed premises, ongoing improvements, and social responsibility.
- 4.3.9 The Best Bar None initiative has already directly supported GBS through the BBN Glasgow Awards 2019 as Street Change Glasgow benefitted from event fundraising.

4.4 Public Perceptions

- 4.4.1 A comprehensive draft comms plan has now been generated which details communication activity in relation to the work of the GBS (e.g. aims, key messages, stakeholders/target audiences, action plan and timeline) whilst emphasising positive outcomes.
- 4.4.2 Some of the initial key objectives contained within the comms plan have already been implemented including the creation of a GBS [webpage](#) within the GCC website. This is intended to act as a “landing page” and will provide the public with useful information as well as links to other associated projects, initiatives, and the work of partner organisations. The use of basic data analytics will be explored over the coming year to assess the reach and impact of this webpage and the information it contains.
- 4.4.3 It is intended that content will be regularly updated with relevant information, and that that it will be informed by key project partners and the personal testimony of those with lived experience.
- 4.4.4 It is envisioned that the curated content will consist of e.g. case studies, videos, images, blogs etc. Based on the experiences of real people, it is hoped that this evidence base will effectively communicate how GBS has positively impacted lives of those citizens who need it most. These can be widely distributed via social media platforms and the webpage.
- 4.4.5 Opportunities to also link to e.g. Glasgow Community Fund, and Community Council engagement to encourage wider participation with GBS, will also be explored over the next 12 months.
- 4.4.6 Elsewhere, development of a recognisable GBS brand will be scoped to enable effective public messaging as well as potential alignment to high profile events and sponsorship opportunities, with proceeds and donations (whether financial or in-kind services) going towards supporting project objectives.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Despite significant challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and other factors, progress with the Glasgow Begging Strategy remains largely on track.

5.2 Across each Key Project, the following points should be noted:

5.2.1 Alternative Giving (Street Change Glasgow)

- Over 1,600 donations have been received to date, totalling approximately £6,500
- An additional approx. £1,500 has also been donated via the SCG Just Giving page
- BBN Glasgow Awards 2019 funding was approx. £4,500, so the total raised by SCG to date is approx. £12,500
- This has helped support 35 people move on to more positive destinations, and their personal testimony is being used to encourage wider project engagement
- This has been in spite of the various issues impacting SCG effectiveness e.g. lockdowns/travel restrictions, technical issues, and brand awareness etc.
- A relaunch of Street Change Glasgow is planned by Simon Community Scotland to help improve brand awareness, especially as a transition to post-Covid recovery is anticipated
- Opportunities to roll out SCG and any other transferable projects to local town centres will also be explored and options will be reported back to this committee
- The recent introduction of the Street Support Glasgow initiative may also provide further opportunities to help support essential front-line services, and these will be assessed going forward
- SCS has also established data capture and reporting mechanisms for people begging and rough sleeping

5.2.2 Financial & Digital Inclusion

- The replacement of a dedicated FDI officer with an upskilled Outreach/Street Team has significantly reduced activity costs to both SCS and GCC. This annual saving has been calculated to be around £40k per annum
- Instead, these savings (either in part or in whole) can be redirected towards supporting the provision of essential front-line services
- Furthermore, additional service provision has been identified through collaborative working with multiple project partners to increase the range and scope of support for vulnerable people

5.2.3 Environmental Strategy

- Some actions identified against this Key Project have been progressed by harnessing the outputs of other work streams, such as those of the City Centre Task Force and the Glasgow Economic Recovery Group

- For instance, new street furniture has been introduced at Dunlop Street and Clyde Street, while new living roof bus shelters (“bee stops”) have replaced existing units in Broomielaw as part of a COP26 demonstrator
- This approach will also be utilised in relation to other city centre activities, most notably with respect to the Avenues programme and the District Regeneration Frameworks where capital funding remains available
- Targeted delivery will continue to be evidence based; utilising data captured by GCC operational teams and other project partners (such as Simon Community Scotland)

5.2.4 **Public Perceptions**

- Following the removal of most public health restrictions, liaison with project partners through associated activity (such as SCG and SSG etc.) to explore opportunities for wider promotion, brand awareness, stakeholder engagement, and marketing/events alignment will be progressed
- This collaborative working methodology will remain important for the collation and dissemination of public facing information designed to encourage active GBS participation
- The scope of this information will be considered in light of the ongoing pandemic situation

5.3 In more general terms, it is envisioned that further work will be required in respect of the following aspects:

- Development of appropriate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) based on data availability and effective project benefits measuring
- Ensuring opportunities for wider public and stakeholder engagement are identified and progressed accordingly, to encourage active project participation. As previously noted, GBS is intended to be a city-wide response to issues associated with begging, so success is predicated upon effectively achieving these aims
- As part of this engagement, project promotion and brand awareness will be crucial
- Encouraging and maximising collaboration with existing and potential project partners, especially those operating in the same social care sectors and with similar aims and objectives

6. POLICY AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Resource Implications:

Financial: Costs were in place for the initial delivery of this strategy including the pilot projects of Street Change Glasgow and the Financial and Digital Inclusion (FDI) officer. Since then, the need for a dedicated FDI post has been superseded. However, in general, further extension of existing activities or development of new projects may require additional funding. Suitable evaluation of resource requirements will therefore be undertaken as appropriate.

Legal: There are no immediate legal issues, however, this will be assessed as individual actions / projects are developed.

Personnel: There are no direct personnel issues.

Procurement: Any extension of Street Change Glasgow will require the procurement of further infrastructure to enable participation by a broader business base. An evaluation process will be undertaken as appropriate to determine procurement options at that stage.

Council Strategic Plan:

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

The project supports the following themes:

- **A Thriving Economy**, with specific outcomes:
 - More Glaswegians are in work or training.

Priorities: 3

- **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.
 - Our services are focussed on prevention and early intervention.

Priorities: 38, 46, 47

- **A Sustainable and Low Carbon City**, with specific outcomes:

- The city is clean and public spaces are well maintained.

Priorities: 54, 55, 64, 65, 66

- **Resilient and Empowered Neighbourhoods**, with specific outcomes:
 - Citizens can access good facilities, jobs, and services locally.
 - Extend the number of volunteers in Glasgow and record what skills they can offer the city.

Priorities: 74, 83, 86

- **A Well Governed City that Listens and Responds**, with specific outcomes:
 - Work in partnership with others to deliver the city's ambitions and improve its services and outcomes through third sector organisations and community groups.
 - The Council has open and transparent decision-making.
 - Citizens are more involved in local and citywide decision – making.
 - We listen to citizens and respond.

Priorities: 94, 95, 98, 99, 105

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 Begging Strategy will support the general principle of Tackling Poverty and Financial Exclusion. Additionally, the 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? The GBS will encourage skills development, employment opportunities and opportunities for the city's most vulnerable.
Effective support of the target group will enable more economic opportunity at both individual and city level.

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 reduce barriers to accessing services across areas such as Health & Wellbeing,

Housing, Education, and Learning Skills & Employment whilst encouraging vulnerable users to access appropriate support services.

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:

Climate Plan Theme 1: Communication and Community Empowerment

- Aim: To foster participation and collaboration.

Climate Plan Theme 2: Just and Inclusive Place

- Aim: Ensure that the transition to a net-zero society is a catalyst for building a fairer, healthier, prosperous, resilient, and greener city for all.

Climate Plan Theme 3: Well Connected and Thriving City

- Aim: Support decarbonisation of transport systems by helping to improve infrastructure for walking, cycling, wheeling, and reducing the need to travel.

Climate Plan Theme 4: Health and Wellbeing

- Aim: To support equitable access to good quality open space and green infrastructure in the city.

Climate Plan Theme 5: Green recovery

- Aim: Supporting improved infrastructure for walking, cycling and remote working.

What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?

The GBS Environmental Strategy Key Project will support and benefit from other projects such as the Avenues programme, DRFs, as well as other CCTF outputs. These are intended to bring significant environmental enhancements to Glasgow city centre, such as increasing active travel and improving the public realm across the city centre.

Additionally, supporting vulnerable individuals will promote and enhance social cohesion thus supporting the broader community.

Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?

As above, increasing and promoting the amount of active travel routes across the city centre will lead to a reduction in CO2 emissions.

**Privacy and Data
Protection impacts:**

A DPIA is required by law where the processing of personal data is likely to result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

The project will not collect personal data except through the provision of contact details for the purposes of community engagement. Permission for any other use, or any ongoing use, will be sought at the point at which contact details are provided.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is recommended that Committee:

- (i) Considers the contents of this report.
- (ii) Considers the progress made with the Glasgow Begging Strategy to date.
- (iii) Notes the planned activity for the next year of the Glasgow Begging Strategy.

JF 22/02/22
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