Item 1

2nd March 2023

Glasgow City Council

Wellbeing, Equalities, Community, Culture and Engagement City Policy Committee

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

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GLASGOW BEGGING STRATEGY: ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

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): Citywide: ☒

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

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Members will recall that the Glasgow Begging Strategy (GBS) was previously approved by City Administration Committee (CAC) on 25 March 2021 following a public consultation exercise. The relevant CAC report can be viewed here.

1.2 At that time, it was agreed that annual reports would be provided to the Wellbeing, Empowerment, Community and City Engagement City Policy Committee (WECCE). The first annual report was presented on 3 March 2022 and can be viewed here.

1.3 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with the second 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 here. However, Members can access previous reports via the links provided above for reference and review.

3. CONTEXT & CHALLENGES

3.1 Previous reports outlined the challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. It was highlighted that the issues usually associated with street begging were further affected, particularly in relation to continuing economic uncertainty and corresponding impacts on employment opportunities, as well as the possibility of increased health risks.

3.2 Furthermore, the ongoing cost of living crisis has only raised 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.

3.3 Again, as previously reported, GBS project delivery has been impacted by these factors as 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), the Glasgow Economic Recovery Group (GERG), and the City Centre Recovery Plan (CCRP).

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

4.1 Alternative Giving (Street Change Glasgow)

4.1.1 Managed by Simon Community Scotland (SCS), the Street Change Glasgow (SCG) initiative was formally launched in March 2020, coinciding with the initial emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, and associated public health restrictions. This had a significant impact on the primary public facing infrastructure (donation points) which relies upon in-situ human interaction.

4.1.2 While the Central Station donation points continued to draw a residual income, the other four units suffered given their position in city centre bars/clubs. Attempts to relocate these units to more effective sites were largely unsuccessful.

4.1.3 Additionally, this physical infrastructure was found to suffer from various issues such as IT failures and vandalism, whilst incurring ongoing running costs. Consequently, the longer-term effectiveness of these units was reviewed.

4.1.4 Despite these issues, Simon Community Scotland successfully relaunched Street Change Glasgow at an event hosted by the social enterprise Blankfaces at their Great Western Road shop on 11th August 2022.

4.1.5 Given the recurring issues affecting the donation points, it was decided to promote the use of QR codes as a more appropriate alternative platform. Not only will this action reduce costs and increase flexibility, but it has already encouraged several retailers to display signage and support the SCG scheme. Posters have also been installed at various locations within City Chambers and Council offices at 231 George Street. Efforts remain ongoing to promote their wider use and display elsewhere.

4.1.6 This improved support is also evidenced by the generosity of organisations such as Best Bar None, which sponsored SCG at the BBN Awards Glasgow 2022 event generating vital funds, and it is hoped that further opportunities to build similar relationships with other potential project partners can be realised.

4.1.7 With Council support, a range of promotional materials has been created to help encourage interested businesses to get involved, including QR code posters and branded items. It is hoped that this activity may help inform the development of a proposed SCG Ambassador Programme and work will be undertaken to better understand potential initiative shape/scope, as well as to identify possible key partners/stakeholders.

4.1.8 As previously reported, another initiative coordinated by Simon Community Scotland is Street Support Glasgow (SSG) which lists and details emergency advice and signposting to services for those who are vulnerable or experiencing homelessness. Involving a coalition of over 80 organisations, it provides information on how to access 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.

4.2 **Financial & Digital Inclusion**

4.2.1 Following the completion of the joint-funded Financial and Digital Inclusion officer role within the SCS Outreach/Street Team, and the successful upskilling of front-line staff to provide the same services, a range of additional support activities is also being delivered to assist vulnerable people, including:

- **Digital skills training**
  A project being delivered by Glasgow City College in collaboration with SCS is currently in place, whilst similar arrangements with Glasgow Life have also been discussed and may be pursued subject to resource availability.

- **Women's Centre embedded within SCS premises**
  Internal refurbishment works are expected to commence pending on-site arrangements. Additional funding from the Glasgow Communities Fund to assist this project is also being considered. In the meantime SCS are continuing to run women's groups within their Access HUB premises.

- **Support service signposting through Glasgow Helps**
  Additional support services are being explored and available resources can be accessed as required.

- **Training/employment opportunities with Jobs & Business Glasgow**
  SCS staff can make referrals to J&BG for service users keen to move towards employability.

- **Partnership with Govan Law**
  A series of weekly welfare rights clinics delivered by Govan Law at SCS premises has been extended due to demand. This weekly drop in now lasts for four hours instead of two. Govan Law also hold a women's only drop-in service providing legal advice relating to accommodation.

- **Early poverty intervention measures with GHeat**
  SCS staff make referrals to GHeat for service users requiring support in this area. Opportunities to provide support clinics are also being explored but are subject to resource availability. Additionally, SCS have also become a referral partner for the Fuel Bank Foundation, providing monetary support to those needing assistance with utility bills and who are on a prepaid metre.

4.2.2 SCS and GCC continue to review and monitor this wider support service provision to ensure targeted delivery going forward, and to identify other project opportunities.

4.3 **Environmental Strategy**

4.3.1 As previously reported, and as noted in **item 3.3** above, a vast body of work has been and continues to be undertaken to support the city's economic recovery. In some instances, these activities have overlapped with the aims and objectives of the Glasgow Begging Strategy, for example 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 Similarly, 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 Elsewhere, a range of different project activities are being undertaken through the various strategic workstreams, including:

- **City Centre Action Plans**
  Various location-based activities including:
  - Re-hoarding and dressing of Victoria's site
  - Vinyl applications to vacant shopfronts in Sauchiehall St/Argyle St
  - Targeted environmental actions around Buchanan Bus Station
  - Exploring feature lighting opportunities

- **Graffiti Action Group**
  A multi-strand action plan has been generated with actions progressing.

- **Hielanman's Umbrella redevelopment**
  Procurement of a design consultant is now complete, and a preferred bidder has been successfully appointed for delivery.

- **Locally Targeted Actions**
  - Refurbishment of Argyle Street benches has been completed
  - Interventions in New Wynd including proposed installation of gated area
  - Improved lumen levels in Mitchell Street

4.3.4 Ongoing collaboration with internal services continues to be explored and delivered through ETAC (NRS operational co-ordination group) subject to resource availability.

4.3.5 As part of the GBS Safer City Centre work strand, intelligence gathering continues to monitor locations and target outreach support where street begging tends to take place, with sites at Heilanman's Umbrella, Argyle Street, Buchanan Street and Gordon Street, and rough sleeping sites 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.

4.4 Public Perceptions

4.4.1 Officers continue to promote the aims and aspirations of the Begging Strategy through highlighting the different project work being undertaken. For instance, the relaunch of Street Change Glasgow provided a platform for increased exposure in local and national media channels, whilst also demonstrating the growing trend amongst retailers to become more actively involved in supporting SCG. This has been especially true for partnership working with members of the Best Bar None night-time entertainment accreditation scheme.

4.4.2 The established GBS webpage continues to serve as a "landing page", providing the public with useful information as well as links to other associated projects, initiatives, and the work of partner organisations. Regular updates

strive to ensure that the public is kept informed of ongoing progress, while social media is used to highlight specific outputs and outcomes.

4.4.3 As SCG is the most prominent public-facing element of the Begging Strategy, officers continue to liaise with SCS staff to better promote the initiative and coordinate messaging. This is intended to enhance the SCG website which contains more detailed project information and curated content including case studies, videos, images, blogs, and personal testimonies. Based on the experiences of real people, it is hoped that this evidence base will effectively communicate how GBS has positively impacted vulnerable people.

4.4.4 Opportunities to link promotional activity through other organisations, including members of the GBS Steering Group, and the wider Glasgow Family etc. will also continue to be explored over the next 12 months.

4.4.5 Building upon the relationships already formed and the partnership working undertaken to date, development of wider ties will continue to be scoped to encourage engagement with 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 the significant challenges faced over the past twelve months, progress with the Glasgow Begging Strategy remains positive.

5.2 The Glasgow Begging Strategy was successful in the Town and City Management Awards 2022, winning the category for the 'Best Social and Community Contribution'. This achievement was announced at the ATCM Summer School Awards dinner on the evening of the 21st May 2022 in Cardiff[1].

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

5.3.1 **Alternative Giving (Street Change Glasgow)**

- Over 1800 donations have been received via the contactless tap points since the inception of the campaign, totaling £6,950.
- A total of £4,612 has been raised through the SCG Just Giving page. £1,971 of this was raised at the BBN Glasgow Awards 2022. An additional £1,025 was raised through an auction at the event, totaling approximately £3,000.
- An additional £875 was donated to SCG in January 2023 from a company choosing to donate their Christmas fundraising to the campaign.
- Accounting for the £4,385 raised at the BBN Glasgow Awards in 2019, a total of £17,847 has been raised for Street Change Glasgow.
- Street Change has been accessed over 100 times by support workers from Simon Community, Glasgow City Mission, The Marie Trust, Lodging House Mission, and Waverley Care - to assist people they support to move on to more positive destinations.

[1] https://www.atcm.org/atcmawardsreturn2022

- The relaunch of Street Change Glasgow has helped improve brand awareness, especially as part of the post-Covid recovery transition.
- The recent introduction of the QR code format has assisted this improved brand awareness, as well as increasing flexibility and making it easier for local businesses and other interested parties to become involved, an aspect which will continue to be developed. Eighteen BBN member premises are currently promoting the QR codes, as well as several additional businesses, and further partnerships are being developed.
- SCS have improved the SCG website, with additional content added to help the public understand the project benefits, and personal testimonies provided to encourage wider project engagement and donations.
- Members can find out more about the impact of SCG, and personal testimonies, within the Impact and Street Sucess Stories section of the website.

5.3.2 **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.
- These savings have facilitated wider support service provision through a variety of different initiatives with SCS as primary coordinator. The on-site improvements scheduled to take place in SCS premises are also expected to bring significant benefits.
- The range of services now being offered to vulnerable people has grown beyond original project expectations and is clear evidence of positive partnership working models and of maximising available resources.

5.3.3 **Environmental Strategy**

- This Key Project has benefitted from progress made on other strategic work streams where shared goals and outputs have aligned and overlapped.
- This includes such actions as refurbishing existing street furniture and implementing new infrastructure, and again demonstrates the effectiveness of collaborative working.
- Additional funding made available through the strategic workstreams has assisted operational frontline services in programme delivery and leveraged targeted local interventions beyond usual resource availability.
- Though this additional funding is time-restricted, further benefits are anticipated through other capital investment projects, such as the Avenues programme and the District Regeneration Frameworks.
- Co-ordinated activity delivery has been particularly helpful, and this methodology will continue to be followed wherever possible.
- Similarly, targeted interventions will continue to be evidence based and follow best practice/best value principles.

5.3.4 **Public Perceptions**

- The continued support and generosity of external partners such as Best Bar None and Blankfaces not only help to generate vital funding, but also promote project activity and raise public awareness[2].

[2] https://www.glasgowlive.co.uk/news/glasgow-news/donate-glasgows-homeless-beggars-qr-24730587

- These examples, in association with the new SCG QR code platform, demonstrate the benefits of effective engagement and are useful models for future reference.
- Additionally, the project's Town and City Management Awards 2022 success highlights the meaningful positive impact which GBS can play in people's lives. It is hoped that this recognition will aid in exploring opportunities for wider promotion, brand awareness, stakeholder engagement, and potential marketing, events, and sponsorship alignment.
- This collaborative working methodology will remain important for the collation and dissemination of public facing information designed to encourage active GBS participation.

5.4 In more general terms, the following project aspects are also noted for reference and review:

- Development of appropriate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) based on data availability and effective project benefits measuring remains ongoing.
- In response to a Member enquiry raised at the last annual report, an Equalities Impact Assessment screening exercise was carried out. The Council's Equalities team also met with GBS officers and key project partners and their guidance will continue to be applied, informing future actions going forward.
- The importance of public and stakeholder engagement cannot be understated, as is the need for building strong partner relationships. GBS is intended to be a city-wide response to issues associated with begging, so success is predicated upon encouraging wider participation to effectively achieve project aims.
- It follows that encouraging and maximising collaboration with existing and potential project partners remains vital, especially those operating in the same social care sectors and with similar aims and objectives. It is hoped that the continued development of SCG as the "public face" of GBS will assist in these goals.

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: The transition away from the use of physical donation points now supersedes any requirement to procure further infrastructure to enable SCG participation by a broader business base. Any future procurement needs would be evaluated as appropriate, though none are currently envisioned.

Council Strategic Plan:

Specify which Grand Challenge (s) and Mission (s) the proposal supports. Where appropriate the relevant Commitment can also be listed.

The project supports the following items:

- **GRAND CHALLENGE ONE – Reduce poverty and inequality in our communities**
  - MISSION 1: End child poverty in our city using early intervention to support families
    - Commitments: 7
  - MISSION 3: Improve the health and wellbeing of our local communities
    - Commitments: 1, 2
- **GRAND CHALLENGE TWO – Increase opportunity and prosperity for all our citizens**
  - MISSION 1: Support Glasgow residents into sustainable and fair work
    - Commitments: 7
  - MISSION 2: Support the growth of an innovative, resilient and net zero carbon economy
    - Commitments: 2

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.	People begging on the street do not necessarily fall within the protected characteristics groupings. However, the Begging Strategy supports the following Outcomes: ● Outcome 1 – access to training opportunities ● Outcome 3 – signposting Council Family services ● Outcome 4 – provision of spaces/services for women ● Outcome 6 – improved social inclusion
What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?	An EqIA screening process has been completed. GBS is intended to have positive impacts and supports identified Outcomes.
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:	GBS indirectly supports various actions, primarily through aspects of the Environmental Strategy Key Project which seeks to encourage positive uses of space, thereby promoting active travel i.e.: **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: *Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report Y/N*	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.