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28 June 2023

The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
Westminster
London, SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

As the Leader of Glasgow City Council and City Treasurer we are writing to you and the Chancellor of the Exchequer following our recent 'Full Council' meeting which debated child poverty last Thursday 22 June. (See appendix 1).

This coincided with the Bank of England being forced to raise interest rates to 5% in an inflation-busting move that risks driving the economy into recession. The 'shock and awe' interest rate rise leaves the Prime Minister's cost of living pledge in tatters and is predicted to further increase to 6%. The UK Government must intervene. Recent statistics published by the End Child Poverty Coalition showed that, after housing costs, Child Poverty in 2021/22 in Glasgow stood at 32%; and that continued inflation and the continuing cost of living crisis is likely to continue to exacerbate child poverty.

As noted in the motion passed by Council below, we urge the UK Government to follow the Scottish Government's lead in committing to deliver a UK wide action plan to end the need for food banks which was welcomed by the Trussell Trust as the *" first plan to end the need for food banks from any government in the UK".*

The April 2023 new annual figures from the Trussell Trust show that almost 3 million (2,986,203) food parcels were given out – more than ever before, alarmingly more than a million of the parcels were provided for children, and the number of parcels provided between April 2022 – March 2023 is more than double the amount distributed by food banks in the same period five years ago. Of further concern, the increase in the number of parcels provided for children in the second half of the year was 17% in Scotland, and 42% in England.

Glasgow believes that one of the best ways to prevent poverty is through the introduction of a Universal Basic Income and has raised this with the UK Government since 2017, and most recently Council in October 2020, to begin work towards a UBI pilot in Glasgow. We urge the UK Government to collaborate with the Scottish Government to fund and commission the possibilities offered by the feasibility study including exploring the potential for economic renewal and stability, thus supporting a sustainable, inclusive and wellbeing economy

We look forward to receiving your Government's response as soon as possible by return correspondence before Westminster's summer recess begins on 21 July 2023. Glasgow will continue its efforts to protect all those living in the city from poverty, but those efforts can and must be supported by the UK Government and no time must be lost in responding and taking decisive action to address ongoing and escalating poverty.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Susan Aitken
Leader of the Council

Councillor Richard Bell
Depute Leader of the Council

Enc.

(appendix 1)

Council notes: the statistics published by the End Child Poverty Coalition which showed that, after housing costs, Child Poverty in 2021/22 in Glasgow stood at 32%; that continued inflation and the continuing cost of living crisis is likely to continue to exacerbate child poverty; and notes the reaction of organisations like the Trussell Trust to the Scottish Government's plan to end Foodbank use in Scotland, saying that the "has the right vision but it needs to go further faster if Scotland is to end the need for charitable food aid"; however notes that recent analysis by the Scottish Government to accompany the first annual report on its Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan which estimated that 90,000 fewer children will live in relative and absolute poverty this year as a result of Scottish Government policies, such as the Scottish Child Payment, the Adult Disability Payment and the uprating of Scottish benefits in line with inflation, mitigating the increases in food bank use in Scotland, and that the Trussell Trust wishes that "the UK Government follow the lead of the Scottish Government and commit to delivering a UK wide action plan to end the need for food banks".

Council believes the new statistics serve as a wake-up call that further action is required from all levels of government and is therefore deeply disappointed that the Scottish Government has - to date - failed to provide promised funding and guidance for the Council's Holiday Food & Activity Programme in 2023; and believes that a universal rather than targeted approach to delivering such programmes is preferable given negative effects of stigmatisation and onerous reporting duties for community organisations and council staff.

Council recommits itself to the principle of removing any stigma from potential food provision; believes that food provision for our young people within and out with school should be delivered on a universal basis; and commits to engage with Scottish Government on these terms. Council welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to deliver universal free school meals for all primary school-aged children and looks forward to a report setting out next steps in free school meal expansion coming to Education, Skills & Early Years City Policy Committee at the earliest opportunity.

Council therefore resolves to write to the Scottish Government: expressing its preference for a universal approach to food provision including its expansion of free school meals; expressing its deep disappointment that the Children's Holiday Food & Activity programme in 2023/24 was put at risk by a failure to provide adequate funding or guidance in a timely manner and that this has hampered planning for community groups and Council in providing an open process; and to reiterate the Council's expectation that Ministers will provide an urgent response. Council will also request that the City Treasurer writes to the UK Government, suggesting it follows the Scottish Government's lead in committing to deliver a UK wide action plan to end the need for food banks.

Council additionally believes that one of the best ways to prevent poverty is through the introduction of a Universal Basic Income. Council recalls the decisions taken previously by this Council in February 2017 and October 2020 to begin work towards a UBI pilot in Glasgow and, given the need for any pilot to include input from HMRC and DWP, regrets that the current UK Government has refused to support the scheme. Council therefore asks the Leader of the Council and City Treasurer to jointly write to the Prime Minister & Chancellor of the Exchequer to ask that they provide the necessary support to a UBI pilot in Glasgow, reiterating the Council's expectation that they will provide an urgent response.