



Rochford District
Council

REPORT TITLE:	Cost of Living
REPORT OF:	Tracey Lilley, Director of Community and Health

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides an update to Members on the work undertaken by officers to respond to the Cost-of-Living crisis and ensure that we are supporting our residents, businesses and staff. The Council's function is to facilitate, co-ordinate and signpost individuals and organisations to where support is provided. It is important that this is communicated to as wide an audience as possible so that people can access the right help and support as soon as possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

R1 - For Members to note the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Rochford District Council has focused on 6 key themes to support residents, staff and businesses in the response to the Cost-of-Living crisis by utilising a number of communication methods. The 6 key themes are set out below:-

- Support with bills and money
- Support with food and essentials
- Support with wellbeing
- Support to Go Green
- Support for businesses
- Support with work

1.2 The Council's **website** (www.rochford.gov.uk/cost-of-living) provides a huge amount of information on each of the themes that can support residents, businesses and staff. The website is updated weekly so that information is up to date with the current advice and support that is available. There is a link

from this webpage to the warm hubs that are available throughout the Borough, with their location, hours of operation and the activities that are available there.

- 1.3 A collaborative working group is widely attended by key partners. This working group will help to understand and draw together the support that is currently available across the District. It will also identify any opportunities for further collaboration, and any additional resources required in order to provide targeted support for residents and businesses. This group and other key partners supported the Cost-of-Living Roadshow at the MegaCentre on 29 March 2022. The event was well attended with over 250 residents and visitors meeting with partners from 30 local organisations. At the event we focused on health and wellbeing, cost of living and community resilience. Through conversation, we were able to talk to residents about the struggles they face and the impact of cost of living. We were able to give away 8 slow cookers to residents in need and approximately £500 in supermarket vouchers. The event was so well received we are planning a further dual event in Rayleigh on Saturday 30 September 2022. More details will be released as the partners planning group develops the event.
- 1.4 The development of a dashboard is considered essential to support our work alongside our partners in addressing the challenges ahead. The dashboard will be presented alongside this report to show the impact of the Cost-of-Living. The Dashboard will also help to identify emerging support needs of our residents, businesses and staff, any funding gaps and resource issues that need addressing for our partner agencies who are already seeing pressures on their services. Representative from Citizens Advice, Active Essex and RRAVS will be present on the night to provide and update from their own organisations. The presentations will be available as a slideshow to members after the meeting.
- 1.5 The digital campaign with a strapline of #ByYourSide has been effective in that all partner agencies are using the branding to not only raise awareness of services available but to also assist with addressing the stigma associated with some of issues, that for many find themselves suffering hardship for the first time and not knowing where to go or what support is available for them.
- 1.6 Whilst the campaign is digital, officers are fully aware that not all residents, businesses or staff have access to the internet or who are comfortable online, as mentioned above. This is being reflected in the campaign and material will be available in **printed** form. The aim is to reach as many residents and businesses as possible through all available channels, social media, online, face to face, press, partners, and the communities themselves.

- 1.7 **Business Cards** were printed for partners to hand out to residents which has the QR code to the Council's website along with telephone and email contact details.
- 1.8 Officers have also developed an action plan which looks at a whole system approach to support, residents, businesses and staff to respond to the Cost-of-Living issues and enables an individual and collective support, through a suite of preventative and personalised measures. The Action Plan is a live document and will be informed not only from any governmental changes but also a number of sources., such as health colleagues, Housing, Revenue and Benefits, DWP, CAB and Voluntary, Community and Social (VCS) organisations that are on the front-line providing services to residents.
- 1.9 Food Support - there is advice and guidance on eating on a budget, finding your local foodbank in the district and money saving tips on the Council's Cost-of-Living webpage.
- 1.10 **Warm Hubs** were established across the District with ongoing activities being delivered. A full list of the warm hubs is on the Council's Cost-of-Living webpage.

2.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 All other costs are within existing budgets.
- 2.1 Consideration will need to be given for any additional financial support that is provided. Any central Government grants may need to be applied for and will need to be allocated accordingly.

3.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Any work undertaken by the Council, either by itself or in partnership will be in line with statutory legal guidance.

4.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 4.1 See under financial implications.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 5.1 Action plan is regularly updated and any risks and mitigations are added.

6.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Through the partners of the collaborative working group.

7 EQUALITY & HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that ‘marriage and civil partnership’ is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

7.3 The proposals in this report will not have a disproportionate adverse impact on anybody with a protected characteristic and provide support and guidance for residents, businesses and staff.

8.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no direct economic or environmental implications beyond those noted within the content of the report.

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APPENDICES

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cost of Living Update: The Executive	12 April 2023
Cost of Living Update: The Executive	7 February 2023
Cost of Living Update: The Executive	19 January 2023

Cost of Living Update: The Executive	6 December 2022
Cost of Living Update: The Executive	9 November 2022
Cost of Living Update: The Executive	11 October 2022