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**REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 19 JANUARY 2023****PORTFOLIO: COMMUNITIES, HOUSING & HEALTH****REPORT FROM DIRECTOR FOR COMMUNITIES & HEALTH****SUBJECT: COST OF LIVING UPDATE****1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1 For Members to receive an update on the cost of living response and work of the Cost of Living Working Group.

**2 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 To allow Members oversight of the work being undertaken by officers to respond to the crisis and ensure we are supporting our residents, businesses, and staff.

**3 SALIENT INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Council continues its focus on our response to the Cost-of Living crisis to support our residents, businesses, and staff. We have expanded our response from 5 to 7 key themes which are support with bills and money, support with food and essentials, support with wellbeing, go green, support for businesses, support with work and the development of warm hubs.
- 3.2 The action plan provides a whole system approach to support residents, businesses and staff respond to the cost of living issues and enable individual and collective support through a suite of preventative and personalised measures.
- 3.3 This 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, Revenues and Benefits, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations that are on the front line providing services to residents.
- 3.4 We recognise that although a number of services were digitised as a result of the pandemic we also need to make sure that the most vulnerable know how to access the support services that are available to them, which may include printed support material or face to face engagement.
- 3.5 A collaborative working group has been established which is widely attended by our key partners. Since forming two task and finish groups have been set up looking at data collation and communication. The 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 collaboration and

additional resources required to provide targeted support for residents and businesses.

- 3.6 The development of a dashboard is considered essential to support our work alongside our partners in addressing the challenges ahead. The dashboard is in the final stages of development and will contain key data that will be presented to future meetings of the Executive to show the impact of the cost of living and the support, advice and guidance being provided locally. It will also assist in identifying any emerging support needs for 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.
- 3.7 A digital campaign with a strapline of #ByYourSide has been launched. The objective of the campaign is to not only raise awareness of services available, but to also assist with addressing the stigma associated for many who will find themselves suffering hardship for the first time in their lives and not knowing where to go or what support is available for them.
- 3.8 Whilst the campaign is digital officers are fully aware that not all residents, businesses or staff have access to the internet or are comfortable online, as mentioned above. This has been reflected in the campaign and material is 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. Pocket cards have been produced and Members will be provided with copies for them to hand out when required.
- 3.9 Officers will be promoting the campaign heavily during January and February as many staff, residents and businesses will be experiencing additional financial pressures after the holiday period and this has been acknowledged by the working group and our partners.
- 3.10 Members will also be aware that a £5,000 grant has been approved by Members to support the establishment of warm spaces across the district. The grant is being awarded through RRAVS and we have already seen a number of requests, which is extremely encouraging. A detailed report of funding awarded will be brought to a future meeting of the Executive.

#### **4 RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The risk implications are set out in the action plan

#### **5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 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.

**6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

**7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed as no decision is being made.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

Lead Officer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



**Director of Communities & Health**

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**Background Papers:-**

None.

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