

Committee: Extraordinary Council	Date: 10 th October 2022
Subject: Cost of Living Crisis	Wards Affected: All
Report of: Steve Summers – Strategic Director	Public
Report Author/s: Name: Jacqueline Van Mellaerts – Corporate Director (Finance & Resources) Telephone: 01277 312 500 E-mail: jacqueline.vanmellaerts@brentwood.gov.uk	For: Decision

SUMMARY

A request was made to the Mayor in accordance with the constitution from five members of the Liberal Democratic Group (Appendix A) on 5th September 2022.

“To call for an Extraordinary Council meeting to be held to discuss the cost of living crisis affecting our Country and what Brentwood Borough Council can do to ease the problems our residents are facing not just now, but in the future years”.

A report was taken to Policy, Resources and Economic Development on 3rd October 2022 on the Cost of Living Crisis (Appendix B), which was resolved unanimously.

The report recommended that the Council responses to this crisis in the development of an action plan across both Brentwood and Rochford to support our residents, businesses, and staff. This will involve a mixture of signposting, guidance, and support to the most vulnerable, working in partnership with Essex County Council, health partners and Voluntary and Community organisations.

Reference was made to what efforts were being made both locally, countywide and nationally.

The action plan will be continuously reviewed and updated with regular reports to be taken to Community, Environment and Enforcement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked:

- R1. That any recommendations agreed by the Council are added to the Cost of Living Action Plan (Appendix C).**
- R2. Recommendations that require further financial and legal review to be considered at an appropriate Policy, Resources and Economic Committee.**

Main Report

Introduction and Background

1. At Ordinary Council on 27th July the Council recognised the impact of the cost of living crisis on many residents and groups in Brentwood and there could be further opportunities to enhance the support available.

Reasons for Recommendation

2. To support our residents, businesses, and staff through this crisis to provide guidance, signposting to support services and assistance. The action plan will provide a clear report to Members on the actions and expected outcomes from each of the thematic workstreams with short, medium, and long-term objectives.

Implications

Financial Implications

Name/Title: Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Corporate Director (Finance & Resources) and Section 151 Officer

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3. Consideration will need to be given for any additional financial support that maybe required for the cost of living crisis. Any new additions to the Action Plan which require further financial review would need to be considered at an appropriate Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Steve Summers, Strategic Director

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4. Any work undertaken by the Council, either by itself or in partnership will be in line with statutory legal guidance, this will apply to an additions made to the Action Plan.

Economic Implications

Name/Title: Phil Drane, Director of Place

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5. Increases to the cost of living are likely to have significant impacts on the local economy. This is a fast evolving situation and so the council will need to monitor impacts and identify necessary and deliverable measures to support the economy over time. With less disposable income it is likely that residents and visitors will spend less locally, although this needs to be balanced with the increased cost of essential items that may still be purchased and the ability for businesses to identify customer

needs and related opportunities for growth, for example. The Government has introduced an energy cap scheme to limit the price that suppliers can charge for gas and electricity. This provides some certainty on the upper limit of costs for residents and businesses, although electricity prices for business customers are still likely to be double what they were this time last year. The council continues to engage with local businesses via groups such as the Brentwood Business Partnership and Chamber of Commerce, where regular feedback on economic performance is shared, and as above should be monitored to identify support.

Equality and Diversity Implications

Name/Title: Kim Anderson, Corporate Manager (Communities, Leisure & Health)

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6. 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. 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).
8. The proposals in this report will not have a disproportionate adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic. More funding is likely to be allocated to pensioners and those with disabilities.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

9. None.

Appendices to this report

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| Appendix A | Request by the Liberal Democratic Group to the Mayor on 5 th Sept 2022 |
| Appendix B | Cost of Living Crisis report to Policy, Resources and Economic Development on 3 rd October 2022. |
| Appendix C | Cost of living Action Plan – as at 4th October 2022. |
| Appendix D | Information on Government's Mini Budget September 2022 |