

Committee(s): Community, Environment and Enforcement Committee	Date: 19 December 2022
Subject: Cost of Living Update	Wards Affected: ALL
Report of: Tracey Lilley, Director of Community and Health	Public
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Summary

To allow Members oversight of the work being undertaken by officers in order to respond to the crisis and ensure we are supporting our residents, businesses, and staff. The Council's function is to facilitate, co-ordinate and signpost individuals and organisations to where the 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.

Main Report

Introduction and Background

1. As the Country prepares for the impact of the cost-of-living crisis the Council is focused on our response in order to support our residents, businesses and staff. We have developed our response around 6 key themes which are support with bills & money, support with food, support with wellbeing, support to go green, and support with work.
 - Support with Bills and Money
 - Support with food and essentials
 - Support with wellbeing
 - Support to Go Green
 - Support for businesses
 - Support with work
2. The Council's **website** (www.brentwood.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.
3. A **collaborative working group** has been established which is widely attended by key partners. There have now been two task and finish groups set up looking at data collation and communication. This working group will help to understand and draw together the support that is currently available across the Borough. It will also identify any opportunities for collaboration, and additional

resources required in order to provide targeted support for residents and businesses.

4. The develop of a **dashboard** is considered essential to support our work alongside our partners in addressing the challenges ahead. The dashboard is currently being developed and will containing key data that can be presented to a future Community Environment and Enforcement Committee to show the impact of the cost-of-living and the support, advice and guidance that is being provided locally. It will also assist in identifying 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.
5. Officers are also working on a **digital campaign** with a strapline of **#ByYourSide**. 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 and not knowing where to go or what support is available for them.
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 though all available channels, social media, online, face to face, press, partners, and the communities themselves.
7. **An action plan** has been developed which looks at a whole system approach to support, residents, businesses and staff to respond to the cost-of-living issues and enable a individual and collective support, through a suite of preventative and personalised measures.
8. 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, Revs and Bens, DWP, CAB and VCSE organisations that are on the front-line providing services to residents.
9. Part of the collaborative work has involved Brentwood CVS and the Police organising joint **Christmas presents** for some of our more vulnerable elderly residents as well for children and young people. A business card is also being developed so that any frontline staff who are visiting residents.
10. **Food support** - There are a number of organisations that are providing food support such as Foodbank at Doddinghurst Road Church, The Daily Bread

Café at St Peter's Church in Hutton, and Manna Meals from Bishop's Hall. If you visit the websites for these organisation's they are requesting some additional food to help families cover the Christmas period. The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme also offers children that are in receipt of free school meals an activity programme over the Christmas Holidays.

11. A number of **warm welcome hubs** have been established across the Borough with activities in each of the hubs. A full list is on the Council's website from a link from the Cost-of-Living webpage.
12. Everyone Active, the operators at the Brentwood Centre are supporting the Essex wide campaign '**Ask for Tommy**' whereby members of the public who may be struggling with utility costs can access a hot shower at the leisure Centre.
13. Members of the public can also get involved by **volunteering** and the Council would direct them to Brentwood CVS if they are interested.

Financial Implications

Financial Implications: Tim Willis, Interim Director of Resources

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At the 3 October 2021 Policy Resources and Economic Development Committee, members approved to fund a part-time Community Engagement Officer, in order to support Brentwood residents, businesses and communities to be managed by the revenues and benefits partnership. This post would assist and address one of the key actions arising from the cost-of-living crisis action plan.

All other costs are within existing budgets

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.

Legal Implications

Andrew Hunkin, Interim Director of People and Governance

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

Economic Implications

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The cost-of-living crisis is causing a national economic downturn that is likely to result in a period of recession. Therefore, this will also affect the local economy in the broadest sense. Specifically, the council's cost-of-living webpage has a section on business support. The site is updated regularly to ensure that all information is up to date. Joint working with groups such as the Brentwood Business Partnership also enables the council to signpost businesses to relevant support, as well as identify ways to maximise economic opportunities that may be available through times of difficulty.

Equality and Diversity Implications

Name/Title: Kim Anderson, Partnerships, Leisure & Funding Manager

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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.

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).

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.