



**COMMITTEE TITLE: Housing Health and Community Committee**

**DATE: 19 June 2023**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	Cost of Living
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	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**

For Members to note the report

## **SUPPORT ING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

Brentwood Borough 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

1.1 The Council's **website** ([www.brentwood.gov.uk/cost-of-living](http://www.brentwood.gov.uk/cost-of-living)) provides a huge amount of information on each of the themes set out above 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.

- 1.2 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 Borough. 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 were in attendance at the Cost-of-Living Roadshow which took place on 19 April at the Nightingale Centre to look at ways in which it can overcome some of the challenges and work more collaboratively. The afternoon session was open to the public to enable them to get information, support and guidance. It is proposed that that another roadshow will take place at a different location later this year.
- 1.3 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. The dashboard will be presented tonight to Members.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 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, Revs and Bens, DWP, CAB and VCSE organisations that are on the front-line providing services to residents.

1.9 **Fridge Magnets** have been produced with Axis, which has a QR code which takes tenants directly to the Council's website.

1.10 **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. The Council organised a 'Can in the Van' on Friday 9 June, outside Sainsbury for people to donate food items. All items were distributed between Brentwood Foodbank and the Daily Bred Café.

1.11 **Warm welcome Hubs** were established across the borough with ongoing activities being delivered. A full list of the warm welcome hubs are on the Council's Cost-of-Living webpage.

1.12 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.

1.13 Members of the public can also provide support by volunteering and the Council would direct them to Brentwood CVS to register their interest.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**Name & Title: Tim Willis, Director – Resources & Section 151 Officer**  
**Tel & Email: 01277 312500 / tim.willis@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk**

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.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**Name & Title: Claire Mayhew, Joint Acting of Director People & Governance & Monitoring Officer**

**Tel & Email 01277 312500 / [claire.mayhew@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk](mailto:claire.mayhew@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk)**

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

#### **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

See under financial implications

#### **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

Action plan is regularly updated and risk and mitigations added.

#### **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

Through the partners of the collaborative working group.

#### **9.0 EQUALITY & HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

**Name & Title: Kim Anderson, Corporate Manager - Communities, Leisure and Health**

**Tel & Email 01277 312500 [kim.anderson@brentwood.gov.uk](mailto:kim.anderson@brentwood.gov.uk)**

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.

#### **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

**Name & Title: Phil Drane, Director - Place**

**Tel & Email 01277 312500 / [phil.drane@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk](mailto:phil.drane@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk)**

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

None identified

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**APPENDICES**

None

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Community, Environment and Enforcement Committee</b>	<b>19 December 2022</b>