



Minutes

Housing, Health & Community Committee Monday, 19th June, 2023

Attendance

Cllr Dr Barrett (Chair)	Cllr Mrs Pound
Cllr Mrs Davies (Vice-Chair)	Cllr Russell
Cllr Mrs Francois	Cllr Sankey
Cllr Kendall	Cllr Slade
Cllr Mayo	

Also Present

Cllr Aspinell
Cllr Barber
Cllr Parker
Cllr Poppy
Cllr Rigby

Officers Present

Angela Abbott	- Corporate Manager - Housing Needs and Delivery
Kim Anderson	- Corporate Manager Communities, Leisure & Health
Zoe Borman	- Governance and Member Support Officer
Julian Higson	- Interim Director - Housing
Danny Hughes	- Surveying Director - Hamson Barron Smith
Tracey Lilley	- Director - Communities & Health
Nicola Marsh	- Corporate Manager - Housing Estates
Paulette McAllister	- Programme Lead - Strategic Housing Development Programme
Lauren Stretch	- Director of Housing

20. Apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

21. Minutes of the Housing Committee held on 27th February 2023

The minutes of the Housing Committee held on the 27th February 2023 were approved as a true record.

22. Minutes of the Community, Environment & Enforcement Committee held on the 13th March 2023

The minutes of the Community, Environment & Enforcement Committee held on the 13th March 2023 were approved as a true record.

23. Chairs Report

The report began on page 15 of the agenda and highlighted the work the Housing and Community Teams have done.

24. SHDP Tender Contracts

The Strategic Housing Delivery Programme (SHDP) is made up of two distinct elements, 1) the regeneration of Brookfield Close and Courage Court, Hutton, to develop 62 zero carbon homes alongside the Harewood Regeneration Project consisting of 40 new zero carbon homes, and 2) the development of a range of smaller HRA sites to deliver further affordable homes on council owned sites.

The Council's Corporate Strategy 'Brentwood 2025' commits to Introducing "innovative Carbon reduction and absorption schemes", "identify opportunities for low emission and green developments" and using 'brownfield sites efficiently, such as council owned garage sites, to provide affordable homes..."

Both Brookfield and Harewood Regeneration have extant Planning Permissions as resolved by members of Brentwood Borough Council's Planning Committee.

Committee approval is required to issue tenders for contracts in relation to these Regeneration sites as set out in this report.

Following a full discussion, Cllr Dr Barrett **MOVED** and Cllr Davies **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that:

Members were requested to:

R1. Approve the issuing of a tender for the construction of new buildings and associated works at Brookfield Close and Courage Court.

R2. Approve the issuing of a tender for the demolition of vacant site and buildings at Brookfield Close and Courage Court.

R3. Approve the issuing of a tender for the demolition and construction of 40 units at the Harewood Regeneration Site

R4. Give delegated authority to the Strategic Director(s) and, Section 151 officer acting in consultation with the Chair of Housing, Health and Community Committee to seek the Council's approval to award the contracts for Brookfield Close, Demolition of Brookfield Close/Courage Court and Harewood Regeneration.

Reasons for Recommendations

As a public sector organisation, the Council's procurement activity is governed by legislation, namely Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR2015). These regulations require that all purchases with estimated values over certain thresholds must be subject to open competition.

The threshold for construction contracts is currently £5,336,937 including VAT (assuming VAT at 20% this is £4,269,549.60 net). As pre-tender estimates for both projects exceed this threshold the Council is required to follow the PCR2015 rules.

A framework is a pre-selected list of contractors which has been established according to the principles of PCR2015 with the intention that it should be available for other public sector bodies to use.

It is therefore a compliant and efficient route to procurement of contractors for these regeneration sites.

25. Strategic Housing Development Programme

The report summarised progress of the development of a pipeline of new affordable homes through the development and regeneration of various Housing Revenue Account (HRA) owned sites. As a reminder, this Strategic Housing Delivery Programme (SHDP) is made up of two distinct elements, 1) the regeneration of Brookfield Close and Courage Court, Hutton to develop 62 zero carbon homes alongside the Harewood Regeneration Project consisting of 40 new zero carbon homes, and 2) the development of a range of smaller HRA sites to deliver further Zero Carbon affordable homes on further council owned sites.

The Council's Corporate Strategy 'Brentwood 2025' commits to Introducing "innovative Carbon reduction and absorption schemes", "identify opportunities for low emission and green developments" and using 'brownfield sites efficiently, such as council owned garage sites, to provide affordable homes..."

Following a full discussion, Cllr Dr Barrett **MOVED** and Cllr Davies **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that:

Members were requested to:

R1. To note continuing progress in the delivery of new Council homes through the SHDP.

R2. Resolve to submit a Planning Application for Affordable Homes at Highwood Close

26. Cost of Living Report

The report provided 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.

Kim Anderson presented committee members with a presentation regarding Cost of Living which is attached to the minutes.

This item was for information only and no voting was required.

27. Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance indicators are collected across all services in the Housing Department and help monitor how we are performing across a set list of key areas.

This report presented the Key Performance Indicators to Members of the Housing Committee with a commentary for each one which details why we are under performing and noting where a high level of performance has been achieved.

This item was for information only and no voting was required.

28. Policy Schedule

This report was an update for members to note and presents the Policy Review Schedule to ensure that the Housing Department has the relevant Strategies and Policies in place in order to provide a clear framework of its responsibilities.

This report was for information only and no voting was required.

29. Heat Billing Policy

The policy set out the way charges are raised for tenants and leaseholders from communal heating and hot water systems provided to a single building or several buildings (i.e. heat networks) in new and existing homes.

The policy also explained what the Council's approach will be when introducing individually metered supplies in existing homes.

Under the Heat Networks (Metering & Billing) Regulations, that was introduced in 2014 with amendments made in December 2015 and November 2020, we now have a legal duty to introduce heat meters on estates where it is cost effective to do so. In other words, the saving experienced by residents in the long run is greater than the initial cost of installing heat meters.

The Housing team have a number of capital projects which involves the replacement of communal heating systems which at present serves Victoria Court (27 units), Oldfields (19 units), St Georges (57 units) and we also have an existing site at Drake House (44 units). There are other sites that in the future would need upgrading or replacement. The Heat Interface Units (HIU) fitted are designed to be able to be individually metered which complies with the Heat Networks (Metering & Billing) Regulations.

Following a full discussion, Cllr Dr Barrett **MOVED** and Cllr Davies **SECONDED** the recommendation in the report. A vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that:

Members were asked to:

R1. To approve a Heat Billing Policy which covers our legal requirements in line with current legislation which outlines our legal duties to meter communal heating systems.

R2. To review the policy after one year and the affects it has had on the residents involved.

Reasons for Recommendations

The Council has a legal duty to individually bill tenants for what they use.

The resident would have flexible control of their actual heat usage and payments.

It would reduce our gas usage thus being more energy efficient and reducing our carbon footprint.

Currently our communal boilers are working 24/7 to supply unlimited heating and hot water of which most of it is wasted energy as there are no monitored systems in place.

With these benefits it can be measured by monitoring the current usage over a 5 to 10-year period.

Pay as you go billing systems can work in unison with the new future proof heat interface units that have been fitted to several of our blocks, as part of the communal boiler replacement programme. It has a number of flexible

payment methods, minimal maintenance and a 24/7 service that covers all our billing needs.

30. Garage sites options appraisal programme

This item was due to be published in a supplementary agenda. However, officers did not receive the information they required to compile the report. Therefore, it will be deferred to the next Housing, Health & Community Committee.

31. Co-option of Tenants Representatives

The report set out proposals to co-opt representatives of Tenants Talkback into the Housing, Health and Community Committee for housing related items, in accordance with the Council constitution.

Following a full discussion, Cllr Dr Barrett **MOVED** and Cllr Davies **SECONDED** the recommendation in the report. A vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that:

Members were asked to:

R1. Approve that Tenant Talkback be invited to send two representatives to each meeting of the Housing Committee where public housing items are to be discussed.

R2. Approve that the representatives of Tenants Talkback be co-opted onto the committee for the duration of the consideration of these items, and have the right to speak, but not vote.

R3. Request that the Corporate Manager (Estates) arrange appropriate training of the representatives.

Reason for Recommendations

To ensure that the Housing Department provides effective and transparent representation of local people's views

32. Repairs contract performance

The Council entered into a long-term partnership contract with Axis Europe Limited in June 2019 for the delivery of repairs, gas servicing and maintenance and planned works services to its social housing properties.

Performance of the contract is monitored closely and most areas of performance; gas servicing and breakdowns and planned works are exceeding contractual targets, however, several issues have been identified in the repairs service around service delivery and communication which have caused concern about the performance of the repairs service delivered by Axis Europe Limited in recent months.

This report explained the identified issues and actions being taken by the Council to improve the service to our tenants and leaseholders.

This item was for information only and no voting was required.

33. Quarterly Housing Compliance

The report set out the progress made in the last quarter (January – March 2023) in Housing within the areas of compliance; gas safety, electrical safety, asbestos management, water hygiene, fire safety and lift maintenance. It also included information on the emergency alarm equipment in our sheltered schemes, emergency lighting and building safety regulations.

This item was for information only and no voting was required.

34. Local authority housing fund progress

The report provided an update to Members on progress delivering the Council's commitments under the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Community Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) scheme.

Under the scheme Brentwood Council has committed to providing nine homes in total. These are to be used initially to provide housing for Afghan and Ukrainian refugee households.

This item was for information only and no voting was required.

35. Urgent business

There were no items of urgent business to discuss.

The meeting concluded at 8:30pm.

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National indicators

Spending

- Inflation has eased to **7.8%** in April 2023
- Around **two-thirds** of adults are spending less on non-essentials due to cost-of-living increases
- Around **one in 4** adults are borrowing more money or using more credit

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Energy

- Gas price inflation eases to 36.2% in the year to April 2023
- More than Half of adults are using less fuel in their homes due to cost-of-living increases
- Electricity price inflation eases to 17.3% in the year to April 2023

Food

- Inflation rate for food and non-alcoholic beverages eases slightly to 19.1% in April 2023
- Around half of adults are buying less food when food shopping in the past two weeks
- Inflation rates for restaurants and café's eased further to 9.4% in April 2023

Housing

- March 2023 saw UK house price annual percentage change slow to 4.1%
- Around 4 in 10 adults are finding it difficult to afford rent or mortgage payments
- The UK annual private rental price growth rose to 4.8% in the 12 months to April 2023

Transport

- Motor fuel inflation rates fell further to -8.9% in April 2023
- Around a third of adults are cutting back on non-essential journeys due to cost of living increases
- Rail fares up by 5.1% in the year to April 2023

Work

- After taking inflation into account , average pay has fallen
- The redundancy rate decreased in the last 3 months

ONS has a tool whereby you can look at how the increases in cost of living have affected you in the past year.

[How is inflation affecting your household costs? - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/how-is-inflation-affecting-your-household-costs)

Cost of Living Dashboard

TWO COUNCILS
ONE TEAM



Rochford
District Council

#ByYourSide Campaign

- Campaign ran **from December 22 to February 23**
- Provided a consistent message and branding across a number of social media platforms
- Total number of posts during this period 100 across all platforms
- Total reach was 47,667 people
- Total engagement (likes, comments, shares and clicks) was 777
- Cost of Living page views 3706, most viewed was the warm hubs
- Community Connect trailer last year April 22 – March 23 saw 1250 engaged
- Cost of Living event was delivered on April 19 April together with 50 partner organisations

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ActivAte programme

- The ActivAte programme provides free activities for those children that are in receipt of Free School meals or families on low income.
- In Brentwood there are 1,602 children in receipt of free school meals and the programme is delivered throughout the school holidays - In December 435 places were offered and 298 children attended
- In February 188 places were offered and 168 attended
- In April 1640 places were offered and 628 attended

#ByYourSide



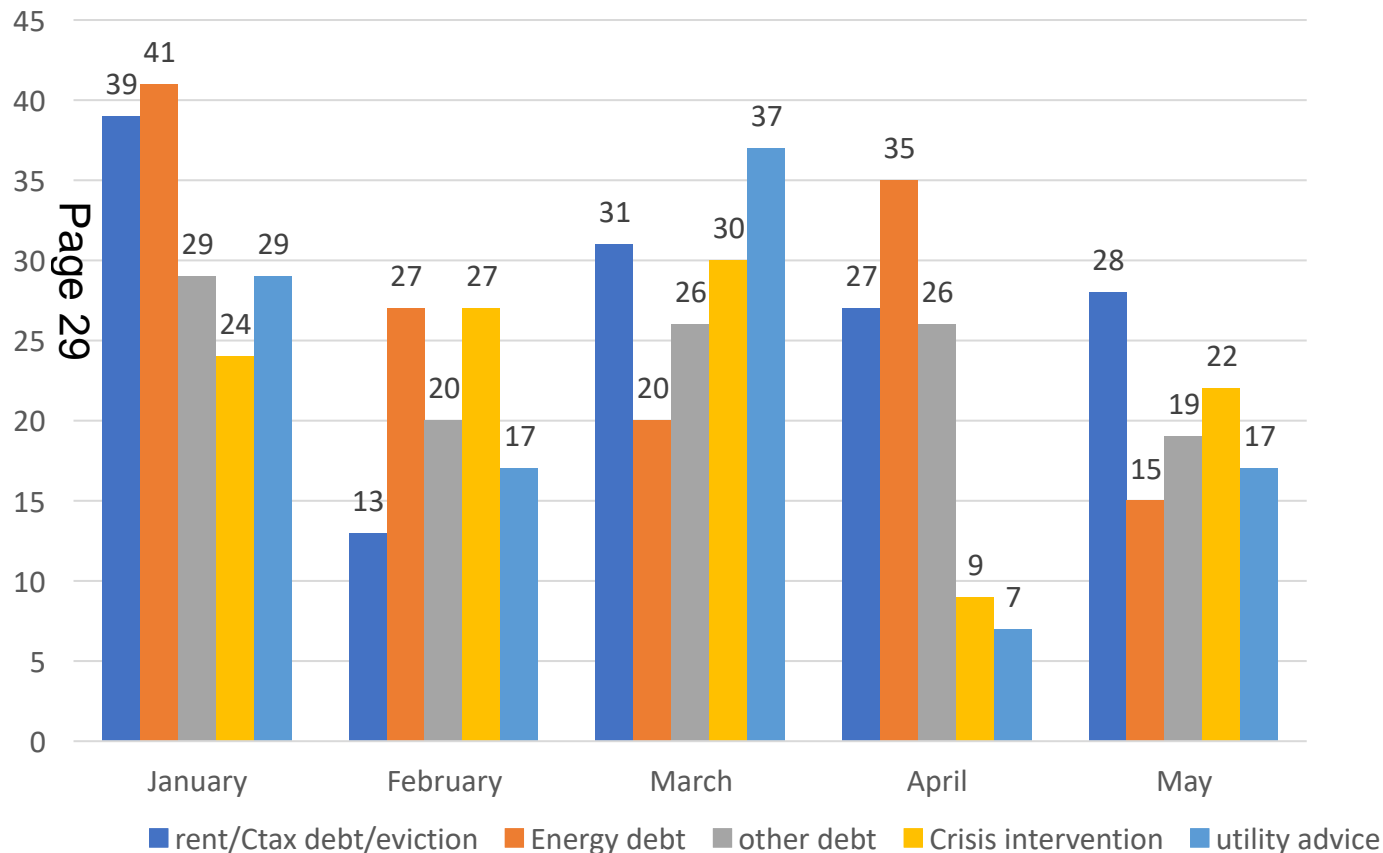
We are committed to helping you, your family and community as the cost of living increases. Click this banner for information, advice and support from us and our service providers.

Cost of Living Dashboard

TWO COUNCILS
ONE TEAM



Citizens Advice Brentwood



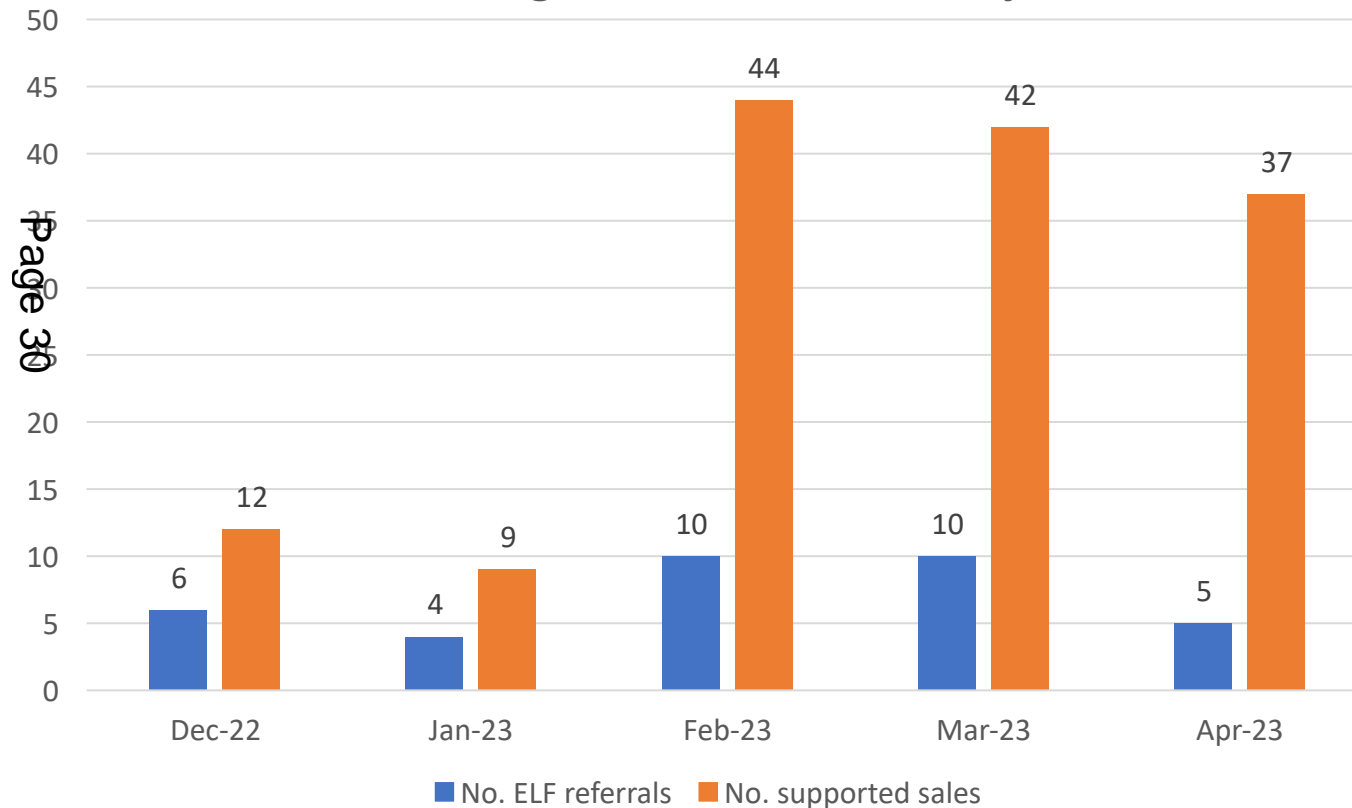
- 2022/23 CAB saw 3109 unique clients
- Higher demand, can only answer 20% of phone calls to the service
- Volunteers – working with 60% of the number of volunteers compared with pre-pandemic
- Increase in debt advice, charitable support and people struggling to pay utility bills
- More people seeking financial help food and fuel vouchers
- Some only engage with advice process until they receive their Household Support Fund, fuel voucher or food voucher, then come later because underlying issues have not been resolved
- New service with MacMillan to support people with a financial impact of a cancer diagnosis
- Every Penny Counts - budgeting support

Cost of Living Dashboard

TWO COUNCILS
ONE TEAM



Lighthouse Furniture Project



Essential Living Fund – to help vulnerable people live as independent a life as possible in the community – meet short term needs

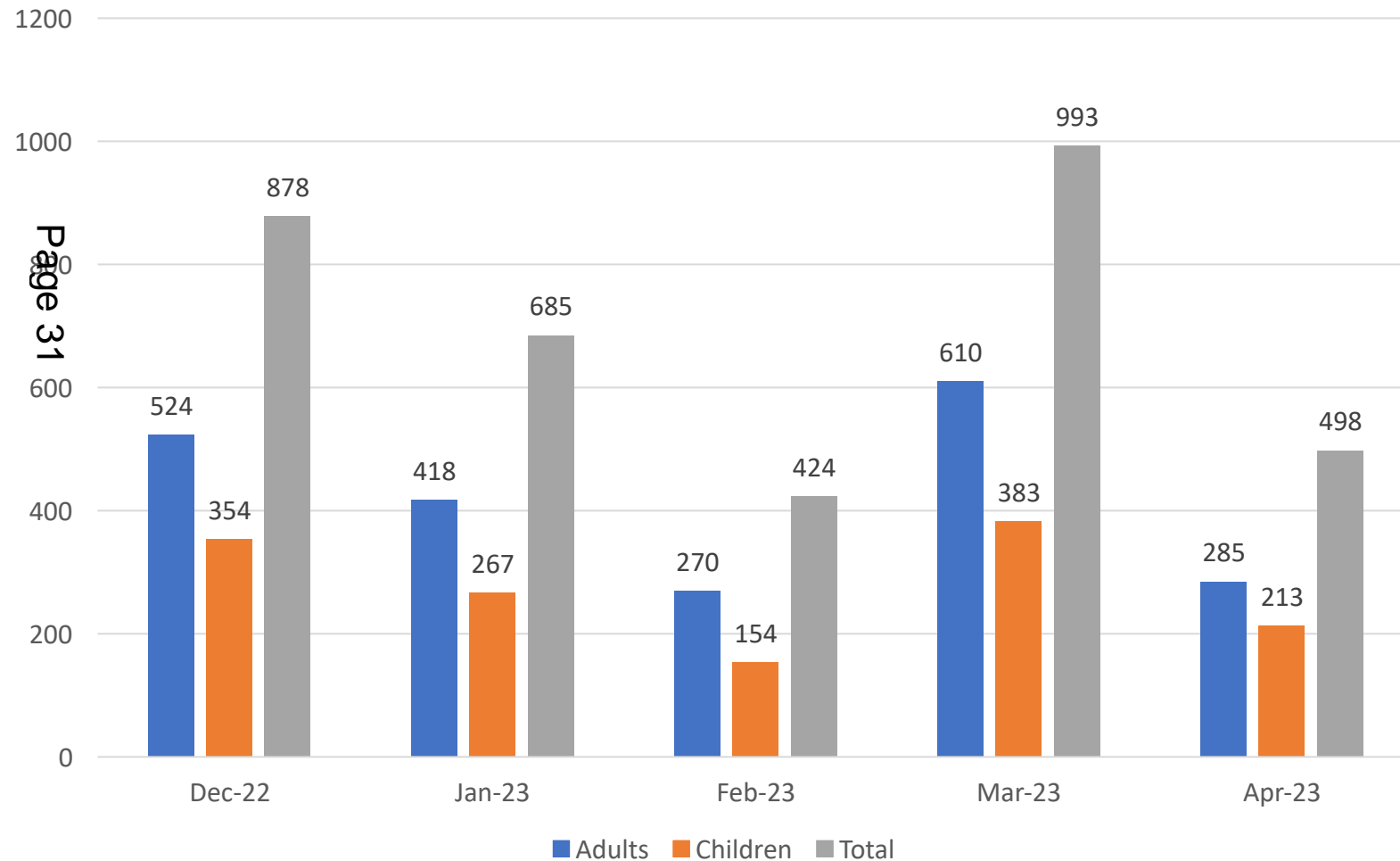
Supported Sales – Items that are discounted for those that are in receipt of benefits

Cost of Living Dashboard

TWO COUNCILS
ONE TEAM



Number of people utilising Foodbank



Nationally Foodbanks have seen a 37% increase in users compared with last year and this is reflected in the numbers seen at Brentwood Foodbank. Parcels last 4-5 days.

Total for all months parcels is 11,816 days of food.

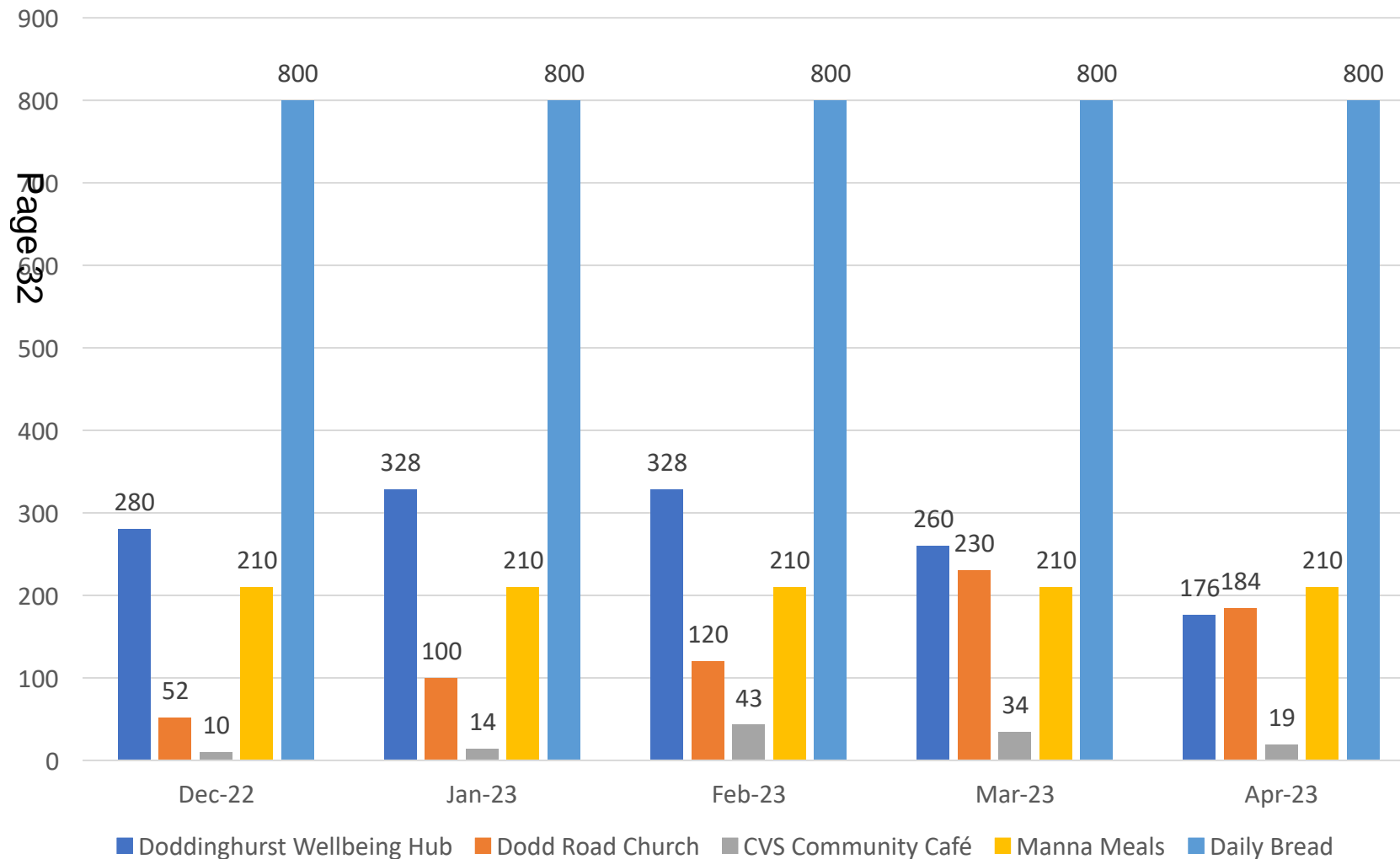
Can in the Van event on 9 June outside Sainsbury's

Cost of Living Dashboard

TWO COUNCILS
ONE TEAM



Warm Hub Attendance



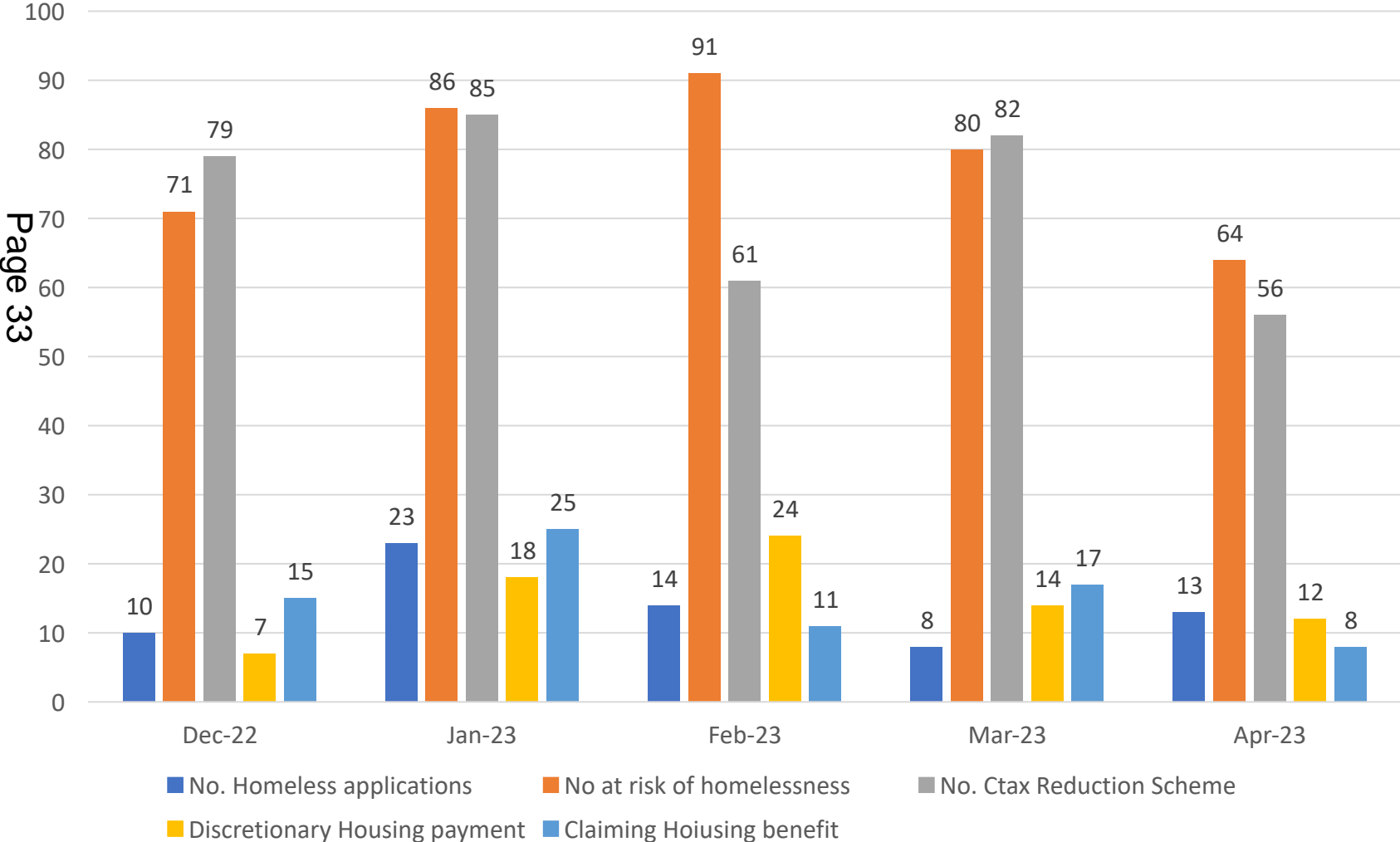
Figures for Manna Meals (based at Bishops Hall) and Daily Bread Café in Hutton have been estimated

Cost of Living Dashboard

TWO COUNCILS
ONE TEAM



Housing



Number of new Homeless applications, the number of people at risk of homelessness, Number of people applying for the Council Tax reduction scheme, The number in receipt of Discretionary Housing Payment and the number of people claiming housing benefit

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