

Birmingham City Council
Report to Cabinet
5th September 2023



Subject: **COST- OF- LIVING EMERGENCY PROGRAMME (CoL) - PHASE 2**

Report of: **Richard Brooks**
Director for Strategy, Equality & Partnerships

Relevant Cabinet Member: **Cllr Sharon Thompson - Deputy Leader**

Relevant O &S Chair(s): **Cllr Sir Albert Bore - Coordinating**

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Are specific wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Is this a key decision?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference: 011633/2023		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:		

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to seek approval for proposals for Phase 2 of the Cost-of-Living programme. The programme was initiated on 11th October 2022, following the Council's declaration of a Cost-of-Living Emergency.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is requested to approve; -
- The continuation of the Cost-of-Living programme until the end of 2023/24.

- The allocation of the remaining Financial Reserve budget, of which the balance is £1,300,000 to the Cost-of-Living Programme Phase 2.
- The Strategic Response Group (SRG) to take on the governance oversight for the allocation of the Household Support Fund for this financial year. The total UK government grant is £25m of which £5m is allocated to core Council Cost-of-Living activity.
- The expansion of the Cost-of-Living programme in Phase Two to include elements of employment and skills support for the most vulnerable communities, and activity to support inclusive growth.
- The continuation of the Cost-of-Living governance arrangements as set out in the Cabinet Report of October 2022. Some adjustments to the governance structure and membership are also recommended in the paper below at **Section 5** and in the diagram at **Appendix 2**.
- The delegation of procurement decisions to the Director of Strategy, Equality and Partnerships and the Section 151 officer, in consultation with the Assistant Director of Corporate Procurement and the appropriate Cabinet Members.

3 Background

Progress of the Cost-Of Living Programme to date

- 3.1 Since the commencement of the Cost-of-Living Emergency, as reported in the 25th April Cabinet Progress Report, the following has been achieved:
- 264 Warm Spaces have been created across the city.
 - 140 foodbanks have been provided cash contributions to allow continuation of their work over the winter months. On a weekly basis, this has provided at least 13,000 people with food.
 - A total of £1,934,639 in benefits maximisation through improved accessibility of in-person and telephone support.
 - 3,400 homes have received additional energy bill top ups.
 - Twenty percent of our staff have accessed support to help with the cost-of-living.
- 3.2 Further information is available in the Cabinet Report of 25th April 2023.
- 3.3 So far, the Cost-of-Living programme has concentrated on actions to alleviate hardship and meet pressing needs for warmth, food, and cash benefits. However, in many ways, this is tackling the symptoms rather than the cause. The reason there is an emergency is incomes for the most at risk households are too low. This makes for widespread food, fuel, and economic poverty.
- 3.4 Even before the emergency, our big challenges in the city were linked to poverty and economic inequality. This is caused in great part by relatively low rates of

employment (particularly among the young), a big earnings gap between workers (often commuters) and residents, and wider social exclusion.

3.5 Charts 1 and 2 below from the Birmingham City Observatory illustrate the structural challenge within the labour market. There is high unemployment among the working age population of Birmingham and a low employment rate among our population. Charts 3 & 4 show that earnings for those who work in Birmingham are relatively good, whilst the earnings of those who live here lag behind. What this means is that many of our residents are not currently benefiting from the employment opportunities of the city.

Chart 1: Employment rate (% of working age population)

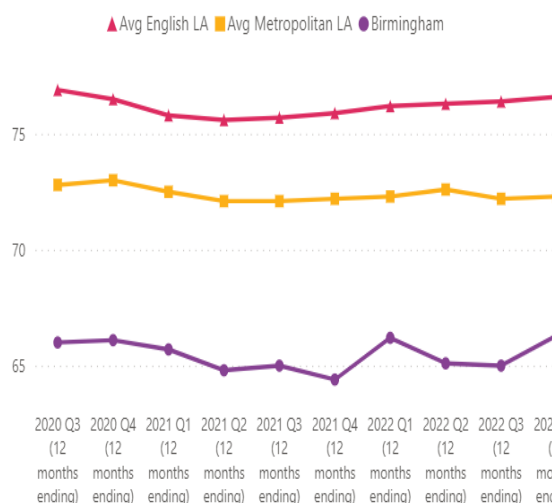
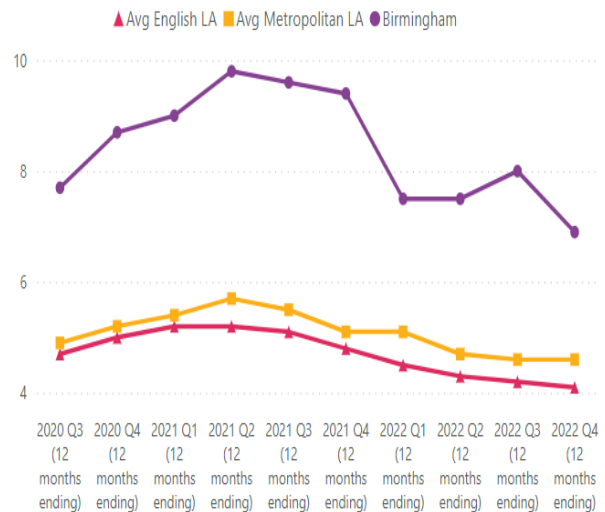


Chart 2: Unemployment Rate (% of those economically active)



Charts 3 Median Gross annual pay of employees based on workplace

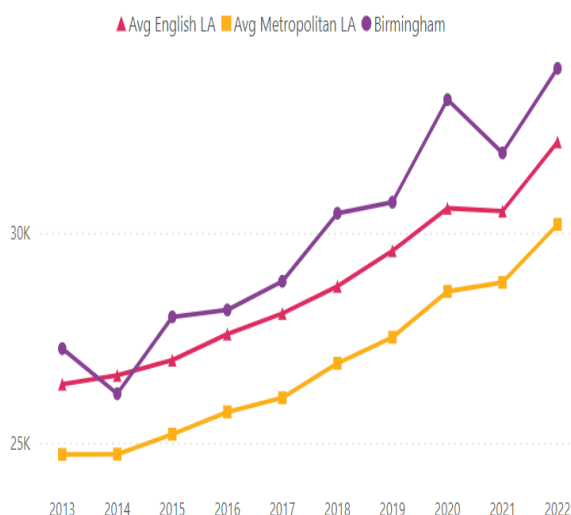
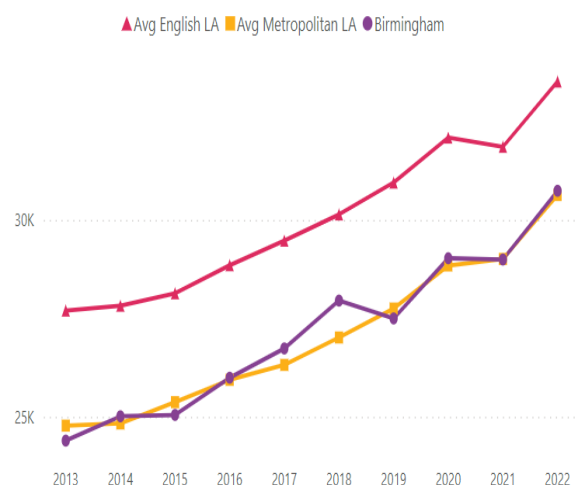


Chart 4 Median gross annual pay of employees based on residence



4 Response – The Need to Raise Household Income

4.1 Delivery Direct and Resource

- 4.1.1 This paper therefore recommends continuing to support our Cost-of-Living priorities, i.e., fighting fuel and food poverty. However, in order to manage future crises more sustainably, we must also seek to put the poorest households on a higher, lifetime income trajectory. This is partly through benefit maximisation for those receiving benefits. Then, as the charts above illustrate, the goal is to help more of the city's most economically deprived people whether they are on benefits, out of the labour market or in low paid work, with enhanced opportunities for sustainable, quality jobs and careers. This will be through co-ordinated cross Council and city working and a new focus on active labour market approaches.

The Household Support Fund

- 4.1.2 In June, the Cabinet approved a proposal that would see the Strategic Response Group take a central role in the review and oversight for the allocation of the Household Support Fund. To make the best possible use of resources we can align this cost-of-living government grant with our own programme. There are considerable synergies in areas such as energy resilience, food provision, and support for young people. The Cabinet's decision to allocate £5m of the HSF to the Council's own cost-of-living programme, within the government imposed parameters of the fund, will allow a scaling up of activity.

4.2 Lessons learned from CoL Phase 1

As set out in the April Cabinet Report, there is much we have learned as a Council on how to maximise city leverage to alleviate poverty. Lessons learnt include:

4.2.1 Cost-of-Living Ecosystem:

The Cost-of-Living programme has a focus on a city-wide, anti-poverty ecosystem. Birmingham's extensive network of partners and community organisations serve as a vital catalyst in delivering services.

4.2.2 Inter-department Collaboration:

The delivery of this programme is a "Whole Council" project, requiring close collaboration and cross working between multiple Council departments. Intelligence, expertise, and learning were shared; resources were pooled.

4.2.3 Finances:

The allocation of £5m by Cabinet allowed carefully targeted investment in CoL initiatives and led to significant leverage from across the city.

4.2.4 Community Assets as Warm Spaces:

There has been a genuine effort to avoid stigmatising people. The social aspect of these 264 spaces was designed in from the start. Many users visit the spaces for the social aspects rather than just the warmth. "Friendly" and

“welcoming” are words often used. This network provides a platform for the development of other services such as health or employment advice. Warm Welcome is also a network of open innovation and creativity.

4.2.5 Early Intervention and Prevention:

The Cost-of-Living programme was established as an emergency response. As the programme transitions from immediate actions to longer term capacity building, it will become mainstreamed within Early Intervention and Prevention (EI&P).

4.2.6 Communications:

As with the first phase of the Cost-of-Living work, this programme will be underpinned by a robust curriculum of communications, including messaging in several Birmingham languages, braille, and sign language. The ‘Help in Brum’ brand has brought together a wide range of partners and increased awareness of the help that is available.

4.2.7 City Observatory:

As with the first phase of CoL, this second phase will be strongly data led. The City Observatory will continue to provide evidence of need and progress. The Observatory leads on the completion of the CoL Evaluation Framework. Working with the Neighbourhood Advice and Information Centres and Contact Centre, the Observatory has access to anonymised data trends. The Observatory will also continue to publish information that is used by our partners including the NHS and DWP. Data and insight from COL are also helping to shape and inform future approaches for EI&P

4.3 Proposals for Phase Two of the Cost-of-Living Programme

4.3.1 Warm Spaces:

Phase 1 focused on developing the Warm Welcome network of over 200 spaces. In Phase 2, other Council priorities such as Financial Inclusion will be integrated into this project. Working with partners, a training offer for the Warm Welcome network will include volunteer management, bid writing (to secure additional income to support the network), and mental health awareness. A new “Warm Welcome @ Home” initiative will provide direct support to residents who are isolated or vulnerable. This will be through befriending and outreach. We will explore the possibility of upgrading the digital connectivity of the Warm Welcome Spaces to allow a greater level of digital communication, data sharing, and other applications.

4.3.2 Energy Resilience:

The Warm Welcome workstream has become closely aligned with energy resilience. Residents currently collect warm packs from Warm Welcome spaces. As part of Warm Welcome@ home, we want to send warm packs to those vulnerable residents who cannot themselves physically access Warm Welcome spaces (see 4.4.1). As part of the approach, we will provide

emergency gas and electricity funding to residents. If approved by Cabinet, we will also lend out slow cookers and other energy saving devices.

Part of any successful energy resilience workstream will be to increase education and awareness particularly with regard to dealing with damp and mould. There will be a focus on both the municipal and private rental sector. We want to create a “route to resolution” so social housing and private renting residents can learn how to remediate problems and engage with landlords and enforcement teams. We will identify 20,000 dwellings where support will be provided to alleviate this burden.

4.3.3 Food Provision:

There are three main priorities for Food Provision in Phase 2.

Building on the success of the Emergency Food Aid Fund and other related funds in Phase 1, we propose to run a similar Winter Food Aid application process in 2023/2024. We will again invite the 140 organisations supported through the Emergency Food Aid funds last winter, to apply again. We will also open up applications to new organisations. We expect the new Winter Food Aid Fund will be taken up by up to 170 organisations.

We will provide grants to allow local organisations to set up affordable food models (such as a food pantry or food club). An objective is to ensure that more than half of these are positioned in East Birmingham.

We will provide supermarket vouchers for families during February half term. These vouchers will be for food, to be distributed to families of children who qualify for Free School Meals during term time. This will be during February half term and is intended to fill the gap of the school holidays where there is no Holidays, Activities and Food provision.

In addition, we will use valuable experience gained in Phase 1 to help address shame and stigma in food aid use, and support people to access help with dignity. In Phase 1, we supported the setting up of the Balsall Heath Surplus Food Hub. Using this learning, we will continue to explore approaches to identifying and redirecting surplus food, so food goes onto people’s plates rather than to landfill. Finally, we will continue to work with the Food Justice Network on attracting corporate sponsorship.

4.3.4 Benefits Maximisation:

In Phase 1, a small grant to the Neighbourhood Advice and Information Service (NAIS) allowed overtime on one weekday and on Saturdays. As a result, nearly £2m in new benefits were identified for Birmingham citizens. We anticipate the Cost-of-Living programme will eventually generate £6m in previously unclaimed benefits.

It is proposed therefore that to further boost benefits, in Phase 2, a financial allocation is made to create a temporary expansion of the team. This larger

team would work as frontline, proactive, outreach advisors in a variety of community venues, particularly in East Birmingham. Foodbanks will also be targeted, and users of Warm Spaces will be another area that the team will support. This will be complemented by additional capacity for the Contact Centre, and these activities will be further supported by a community based outreach service.

A new element of Energy Resilience advice will be introduced, to assist citizens to apply for social tariffs and other assistance from utility companies. There will also be a dedicated post to support clients to better access the broadband social tariff, saving vulnerable households an average of £200 per year. Nationally, this tariff is undersubscribed with less than 5% take-up.

It is estimated that Free School Meals can save eligible families £400 per year. We propose this team also supports the uptake of this benefit, consulting with schools around eligibility and, in an effort to boost school attainment rates, facilitates the delivery of free beds to those families who struggle to afford them (see 4.4.8).

4.3.5 Staff Support

The extensive programme of staff support will continue. In May, Financial Wellbeing advice was launched for all staff. In addition, we continue to provide regular information through other bodies which offer financial advice, for instance CitySave & HSBC. There is also a structured schedule of events focusing on physical health: Cycle 2 Work, affordable gym membership and leisure days out. Similarly, health insurance is available. Elements of this Employee Assistance Programme are to be extended to include staff families. Anticipating the winter months, free flu vaccinations will be offered to the workforce. We will continue to run general awareness sessions, both virtually and face to face. These will cover Occupational Health; Wellbeing and our Total Rewards offer.

4.3.6 Employment, Skills, and Apprenticeships:

To further boost household income for the most vulnerable, Phase 2 will include the recruitment of two additional posts to support employment and skills:

A Principal Employment and Skills Officer: This post will encourage employers to sign up to a “Good Employment” Charter. A business kitemark scheme, the Charter is aimed at improving the quality, availability, and access to jobs; supporting higher employment standards and pay; diverse and youth recruitment; and the employee voice at work. The Charter is based on best practice in other cities. A delivery plan will be developed for the establishment of the Charter, in consultation and co-creation with local business organisations.

Twenty percent of Birmingham’s workers still do not receive the Living Wage, exacerbating the Cost-of-Living burden. Therefore, a second post, Principal Project Officer: will increase employer commitment to the Real Living Wage.

Birmingham became a Living Wage City in November 2021. The new post underpins the Council's commitment to promote and embed the Living Wage.

A first job is all important. Entry-level employment accompanied by continuous upskilling, can open the door to a fulfilling, long term career. These posts include Care Workers, Grounds Maintenance Operatives, Security Guards, Teaching Assistants, Customer Advisors, Catering Assistants and Administrators. These roles can be a "foot in the door" which then, through training and experience, can lead to new opportunity. However, residents spend considerable time applying for each separate role. Confidence can also be eroded by poor recruitment systems.

Collaborating with strategic partners and the Children and Families Directorate, we will also use these new posts to make additional efforts to support whole family employment where there is no one working in a household.

The Council works with the Birmingham Anchor Partnership in an innovative project called 'I CAN.' This initiative supports residents who experience profound disadvantage in the labour market. NHS Trusts collaborate to pool their entry level jobs, and have created a co-ordinated, navigable, and streamlined recruitment process which prioritises not only qualifications and direct experience but also transferable skills and personal commitment.

The 'I CAN' results are impressive. Of over 250 jobs filled so far, 69% were taken up by citizens of Black or Asian Minority Ethnicity, with age ranges spanning fairly evenly from 18 to 55+ years old; 37% had a declared disability. Encouragingly, evidence also shows people who are employed through this project do not tend to drop out and are therefore more able to progress into longer term careers.

Through CoL Phase 2, we will scale up capacity to bring more entry level roles into this streamlined recruitment pathway. We will also set up a new fund to help people obtain essential training, childcare, travel, and digital access. We will integrate this with the digital training in our libraries, the new digital champions and the distribution of sim cards and computing devices (see section 4.4.7) Finally we will use the apprenticeship levy to support training and pathways into jobs.

Apprenticeships, particularly for young people, are an increasingly vital route to long term, sustainable careers. There are two main ways in which we can use CoL resources to build capacity: (a) through increasing demand; promoting increased apprenticeship take-up amongst groups who suffer high unemployment or low wages, supporting them to access these opportunities. Then (b), through increasing supply; driving an increase in apprenticeships places including through the Anchor Network and Employment Charter.

Within ten years, 50% of the Council's own workforce will be near retirement age. There is considerable opportunity to harness our own future recruitment needs to promote both apprenticeships and equalities.

Over the next three years, the Council will generate approximately £9m in apprenticeship levies. If the levy is not invested in citywide apprentices, it will be clawed back by the government. Therefore, to stimulate investment, the Council has set up an Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Fund to use the levy outside the City Council and primarily to support other partners and SMEs in offering apprenticeships. Childcare employers are among the most likely to seek this funding. Using the fund in this way can create a win-win through the recruitment of new apprentices to the childcare sector and expanding the sector to help people return to work.

The two post-holders will enhance the focus on these dual objectives: enabling more entry level jobs, upskilling and apprenticeship opportunities.

The Council will also reach out to the city's Higher and Further Education establishments to achieve a strategic, scaled up approach to skills development and work based education. The focus will be on equipping the most economically deprived people, particularly the young, into fulfilling lifetime careers.

4.3.7 Digital Exclusion and the Cost-of-Living:

Digital exclusion is a major contributor to the cost-of-living crisis. YouGov estimates benefit claimants are six times more likely to cancel their internet access entirely when prioritising household spend. It is further estimated that those who are digitally excluded lose £286 income per month on average. Furthermore, the best tariffs on energy and broadband are hard to access without good digital skills and connectivity.

The libraries, as funded Warm Spaces, provide a safe, welcoming environment in which to learn. There is a convincing case to support people seeking self-employment or employment through the delivery of basic digital literacy skills. This will be achieved through interactive workshops and 1:1 advice sessions, both centrally at the Library of Birmingham, and locally at Community Libraries and other warm spaces. Tailored IT courses will be aimed at those aged 55 plus, and a weekly Coding Club will cater for those who are 17 or under. The latter will provide promising new career opportunities for young people.

In an important contribution to confronting the cost-of-living challenge, the Council's digital inclusion team aims to build a network of community-based, front-line digital champions. Recruited from appropriate corporations and educational institutions, and from our own supply chain, these champions will help citizens to acquire digital skills and to access affordable connectivity and devices. Further CoL resource is needed to develop this network which will complement existing EI&P initiatives such as the free distribution of sim cards and the Barclays Digital Eagle training programme.

4.3.8 Supporting Young People:

At the beginning of 2023, almost 900 young people took part in a Council survey. The respondents told us reducing poverty is crucial as is connecting young people to meaningful opportunities that build confidence and skills.

In the first phase of the Cost-of-Living programme, support was intended for a broad demographic. However, in Phase 2, there is considerable opportunity to develop cost-of-living initiatives specifically aimed at young people. We have mentioned some of these in this paper: Free School Meals, apprenticeships, and digital inclusion and upskilling.

There is a clear case for co-designing future plans with young people themselves. Plans that tackle the causes of poverty. We particularly need to reach out to young people who have a lived experience of deprivation, school exclusion or the youth justice system. As recommended by the City Partnership, further work also needs to be carried out to explore the link between employment and housing for young people.

More CoL resource for this co-design will improve life chances in areas such as future employment, upskilling and career paths. Through this exercise, a further set of proposals will be worked up and then tabled at the Strategic Response Group. These proposals will also be reported back to relevant Cabinet Members for review.

Career Development is a particular priority. Birmingham Careers Service report that there are young people who have never accessed careers advice; mainly those not in school, home educated, teenage parents or where there is no school place. These are children between 16 and 17 years old. We will work up proposals for engaging with these cohorts on a targeted basis to ensure they have access to meaningful work prospects.

Following a pilot called Partnerships for People and Place funded by the Department for Levelling Up, which saw local coach-mentors work with six schools in East Birmingham, we want to expand this collaboration. This will include mentoring, inspirational employer collaboration, and connecting students and parents to further skills development. To drive interest in entrepreneurship, the Cost-of-Living programme will also sponsor a roundtable of young people and youth entrepreneurship providers.

There are very practical areas where the CoL programme can help. The Children and Families Service aims to ensure all children and young people have a bed to sleep in, and no one is sleeping on the sofa, or sharing beds. Currently, in an innovative pilot, the Birmingham Playcare Network provides beds to vulnerable families in Perry Barr. The Network has persuaded Ikea to support this initiative. Volunteers deliver these beds to the families. Using additional HSF funding, or private sector sponsorship, and linking to the Benefits Maximisation teams (see 4.4.4), we could expand this pilot.

4.3.9 Volunteering:

To scale up the above programme, new capacity and expertise are required in the form of volunteers. Building on the civic pride generated by the Commonwealth Games, we propose to set up a Cost-of-Living volunteering pilot in collaboration with the Birmingham Voluntary Services Council. The pilot would recruit volunteers and broker volunteering opportunities to those third sector organisations most in need of new skills and human resource to fight

poverty. As stated above, the volunteers will support work experience, career development and digital learning.

4.3.10 Social Value:

Throughout the delivery of Phase 1, there have been substantial new offers of support from the private sector. In Phase 2, we will seek to formally capture this private sector contribution and focus it on the many CoL challenges the city faces. We propose therefore to establish a new, specialist Corporate Contribution resource. This would be a small team to engage with the private sector to efficiently enable and direct corporate social responsibility. Social value is generated through the requirements of the Birmingham Charter for Social Responsibility covering the City Council's procurement supply chain. The Corporate Contribution resource will link to this existing social value creation, and also engage with businesses that are not necessarily involved in supplying the Council.

Collaborating with the Council's own procurement service, we will also build on the work of the Employment Access team which generates already impressive local employment and upskilling opportunities and signs up employers to the City's Employment Charter (see section 4.4.6).

[Match my project](#) is an award winning Council initiative. On this online brokering portal, community organisations can post the support they need. This can be in the form of volunteer time, resources (old IT equipment or construction material), and funding. Businesses then offer support. This initiative requires new staff resource to engage businesses, both contracted and non-contracted, to deliver more social value through the portal. This will scale up engagement between businesses and community organisations, particularly those dedicated to alleviating poverty.

5. Refreshed Governance Arrangements:

- 5.1 Many of the proposals above, including Warm Welcome and Food Provision are well advanced. Other newer areas are at concept stage and will be developed in the same way as the initiatives delivered in Phase 1. This can be achieved through the next step which are the development of detailed proposals scrutinised by the Strategic Response Group (SRG).
- 5.2 In October last year, the Cabinet authorised the convening of the Strategic Response Group. The SRG sets strategic direction and agrees key priorities. The Group includes relevant service leads, finance, and legal representation. The NHS and BVSC provide an expert, external perspective. In the same vein, the Birmingham Children's Trust is also represented.
- 5.3 It is proposed that the Cabinet now authorise this governance structure to oversee both the second phase of this programme and the Household Support Fund (see 4.2). To reflect the broadening of this programme, membership would be reviewed. It is anticipated the refreshed forum would include relevant internal directorates, private sector employers through the Chamber of Commerce, external representation from the Education and Skills Sector, the Department of Work and

Pensions in the city, the Anchor Network, and potentially other partners. In recognition of the close links between the Cost-of-Living programme and Early Intervention and Prevention, the Assistant Director of EI&P will become the vice chair of the SRG.

- 5.4 The Deputy Leader will maintain political oversight and control and will be consulted on all material decisions. The Deputy Leader will also chair a wider City Task Force which the SRG will report to. The task force will co-ordinate activity across the city.
- 5.5 A Task and Finish Group has been set up to review Phase 1 of the Cost of Living programme. Chaired by Councillor Sir Albert Bore, this cross party group will report back to the Council on lessons learnt. The Task and Finish Group will hear first-hand from partners and clients across the city. Recommendations for improvements will be incorporated into the programme. Already the group has provided guidance in terms of transitioning to affordable food models such as food pantries, and the importance of attracting in new corporate sponsorship (see 4.4.3). The Task and Finish Group will report back to O&S Committee in October.

6 Options considered and Recommended Proposal

- 6.1 The main alternative option would be to wind down the Cost-of-Living Programme and revert to business as usual. If we had not established Phase 1 of the programme, the City Council would have failed to provide the extensive additional support that has already been delivered (see 3.1). In Phase 2, the main risk of doing nothing or winding down the programme is to create an unsustainable annual cycle of emergency support to citizens, and to miss the opportunity of leading and strengthening the city's response to its key challenges of poverty and exclusion. Instead, this paper seeks to improve sustainability and create new income opportunities for the city's most vulnerable citizens and households.

7 Consultation

- 7.1 The CLT has reviewed these recommendations and there has been wide consultation with key Cabinet Members and Officers who have contributed to and endorsed this progress report, as well as extensive input from external partners including the CoL City Partnership Group, BVSC, the NHS and Thrive.

8 Risk Management

- 8.1 The main risks considered were:

- Since the original drafting of this paper, new spending rigour has been introduced into the Council. This is in the form of a Spend Review process. As with all proposals of over £200,000, this Cabinet Paper, and particularly the Financial Reserve, will be subject to this review.

Mitigation: If it is decided, as a consequence, that the Financial Reserve Fund is to be withdrawn from this proposal, the Cabinet Paper will focus only on: Warm Welcome, Food Provision, Energy Resilience, Information Advice and Guidance, and Staff Support. The other proposals above: employment and apprenticeship

support, new procurement capacity, youth engagement and digital access will not go ahead until new resources are found.

- An inability to respond at the required scale and pace.

Mitigation: This risk was mitigated by the Cabinet decision to set up the Cost-of-Living Emergency Programme. Bringing the administration of the Household Support Fund within scope also helps to increase our capacity to respond.

- A lack of a coordinated response across the city. Given the urgency, partners as well as the Council may start putting into place actions that duplicate or do not align thus reducing the impact and causing confusion.

Mitigation: A high level City Task Force, chaired by the Deputy Leader, will avoid the lack of a co-ordinated response; a broadened Strategic Response Group as the main day to day governance mechanism, and a Warm Welcome network of warm spaces will share resources, best practice, and generate innovation.

- The inability to deliver at pace.

Mitigation: The programme is nimble and catalytic. It works under the auspices of a city wide governance structure, has a fast track decision making process, and it is proposed that there is financial delegation to officers under £250,000.

- Lack of sustainability.

Mitigation: The programme is increasingly focused on inclusive growth and is closely aligned with the Early Intervention and Prevention programme. The wider City Help and Support Directorate will be the home for much of the substantial activity developed and accelerated through the CoL programme. Phase 2 also seeks to establish new sources of funding, including from private sector organisations to increase long-term resources.

9. Compliance Issues:

9.1 How are the recommended decisions consistent with the Council's priorities, plans and strategies?

- 9.1.1 The actions described above are consistent with a number of Council priorities, particularly Early Intervention and Prevention, Inclusive Growth and Net Zero strategies, as well as the Council's broader aims of reducing poverty.

9.2 Legal Implications

- 9.2.1 Whilst there are no legal implications directly arising from this report, legal advice is provided as and when necessary, in respect of each of the various and wide-ranging initiatives considered by the Cost-of-Living project.

9.3 Financial Implications

- 9.3.1 By bringing the residue Financial Reserve Funding from Phase 1 together with the Household Support fund (HSF), a budget of circa £6.3m has been created for the rest of the financial year (to April 2024). The budget will be supplemented by a further £20m of the HSF which is more proscribed but still impactful. The Cabinet approved the financial allocations for the HSF in June 2023. Bids will be made for this funding through the SRG group. Allocation of funds will be in consultation with the Deputy Leader.
- 9.3.2 Since the original drafting of this paper, new spending rigour has been introduced into the Council. This is in the form of a Spend Review process. As with all proposals of over £200,000, this Cabinet Paper, and particularly the Financial Reserve Fund, will be subject to this review and approval of spend (see 8.1 on risk management).

9.4 Procurement Implications (if required)

- 9.4.1 There are no procurement implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Any procurement implications will be covered in separate reports and follow the Council's Procurement and Contract Governance Rules, and the Public Contract Regulations where applicable. It is proposed that decisions are delegated as set out in 2.1 above with the appropriate engagement of Corporate Procurement Services.

9.5 Human Resources Implications

- 9.5.1 The People Partner will continue to support the directorate to deliver this programme from a people services perspective.

9.6 Public Sector Equality Duty

- 9.6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken. The overall impact is positive (see **Appendix 3**).

9.7 Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 9.7.1 An Environmental and Sustainability assessment has been submitted to the Carbon Policy Officer. The overall impact for the programme is positive and the assessment is available as **Appendix 4**.

9 Appendices

10.1 Appendix 1 – Monitoring and Evaluation

- 10.2 **Appendix 2** – Governance Diagram.
- 10.3 **Appendix 3** – Equality Impact Assessment
- 10.4 **Appendix 4** – Environmental and Sustainability Assessment.

11 Background Documents

- 11.1 Cabinet Report 11th October 2022: Cost-of-Living Emergency Programme.
- 11.2 Cabinet Report 25th April 2023: CoL Progress Report