

Appendix 3 - Environment and Sustainability Assessment

Project Title: Cost of Living Programme Extension (Phase 3)				
Department: SEP	Team: Cost of Living			Person Responsible for assessment: Alison Muckersie
Date of assessment: March 2024		Is it a new or existing proposal? Existing		
Brief description of the proposal: The expansion of the Cost-of-Living programme in Phase Three will include elements of enhancement to employment and enterprise opportunities for the most vulnerable communities in Birmingham, whilst retaining interventions to mitigate challenges of fuel and food poverty across the city.				
Potential impacts of the policy/development decision/procedure/ on:	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	No Specific Impact	What will the impact be? If the impact is negative, how can it be mitigated, what action will be taken?
Natural Resources- Impact on natural resources including water, soil, air			x	The programme does not have an effect on air, water, or soil quality.
Energy use and CO ₂ emissions	x			<p>Through phases 1 & 2 of the Cost-of-Living programme, the development of the Warm Welcome network extended to over 300 individual locations. The enhanced usage at these spaces is a result of both the general cost-of-living pressures, and the increased visibility as a result of BCC support. Therefore, we recognise a marginally increased environmental impact through increased electricity and gas consumption from those spaces.</p> <p>The majority were operating prior to direct BCC support and co-ordination. The increased usage across these spaces in isolation has increased cumulative energy demand, with many spaces being considered energy 'inefficient'. However, by bringing larger groups together,</p>

				<p>the net environmental impact is negligible. While residents are utilising the Warm Welcome network services, they are benefitting from a collective approach to energy consumption through heating, food and warm beverages, which is far more efficient than individuals all in their homes.</p> <p>In early 2023, we supplemented the LWP's resident support budget enabling additional energy support vouchers to be distributed to residents of Birmingham. These were reserved for those most in need across the city, with all recipients undergoing needs assessment by trained advisors.</p> <p>We followed up this direct resident support by engaging with Groundwork, through a collaboration with Cadent Energy. This work with Groundwork has allowed us to distribute direct voucher support to over 2,000 individuals and families. Further, we connected the support scheme to Groundworks 'Green Doctor' initiative. This initiative is designed to work closely with each individual and provide enhanced assessments and energy advice and guidance with the goal of reducing long term dependency on Council/provider support.</p> <p>We provided, through a sample of Warm Welcomes, slow cookers and guided lessons on how to get the most out of them with the support of local partners within Birmingham. These slow cookers provide an extremely energy efficient cooking solution for residents and the feedback was extremely positive.</p> <p>Moving forwards, following the learnings from the Warm Welcome activity, as well as the directed energy resilience</p>
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				<p>activity, we plan to engage further with partners on the ground to further develop sustainable solutions for residents and the Warm Welcome network.</p> <p>For residents, we are working with partners to devise a new approach which has sustainability and longevity at its hearts. This will combine the short-term crisis support, but further develop the longer-term crisis prevention element. This will take the form of acute direct support, as well as a more engaged pathway for a longer-term solution to energy demand from residents. The goal here is to improve the efficiency of energy consumption within households and that can be done by introducing an array of solutions.</p> <p>For Warm Welcomes, we are planning to introduce a range of support mechanisms designed to make the physical buildings more energy efficient, as well as to dispense enhanced energy resilience IAG across the network. We have engaged with a partner on the ground who has already developed 'Energy Centres' and plan to integrate that approach within the network more broadly to ensure we maximise our energy efficiency over the coming period.</p>
Impact on local green and open spaces and biodiversity			x	None of the work impacts positively or negatively on green spaces or biodiversity
Use of sustainable products and equipment	x			The foodbanks we support have often used disposable packaging, and the warm spaces may use paper cups for warm drinks. However, we have restricted the purchase the foodbanks make of disposables, with our grants, to 5% of the total cost of their purchases. This was during a crisis but, as we move forward, we will continually make the case to our partners for more use of sustainable products.

				<p>There is some waste created in the making of tea and coffee and the batching of food at our partner's Warm Spaces and Foodbanks, respectively. However, this is offset by the fact that the foodbanks and surplus food hubs use a great deal of surplus food that would otherwise go to waste. The foodbanks often offer predominantly vegetarian and vegan meals, and they play an educating role in the preparation of such food.</p>
Minimising waste	x			<p>Although there are enormous amounts of food waste in Birmingham City, there is also significant food insecurity amongst its residents.</p> <p>Birmingham City Council are already working to combat this issue through a strategic commitment to support the reduction of food waste within the Food System Strategy. Further support has been provided through the Cost-of-Living Programme, with innovative approaches to re-direct the surplus food on people's plates rather than into landfill.</p> <p>As part of Phase 1, a first surplus food hub was funded in Balsall Heath. During Phase 2, an Affordable Food Models fund was actioned, with a particular focus on provision in East Birmingham.</p>
Council plan priority: a city that takes a leading role in tackling climate change	x			<p>By promoting energy efficiency and reduction in food waste the programme aims to promote sustainable lifestyles amongst vulnerable residents</p>
Overall conclusion on the environmental and sustainability impacts of the proposal	<p>There is some waste and potentially additional energy use because of the Cost-of-Living Programme. However, it is more than offset by offering communal warm spaces to prevent vulnerable citizens from needing to use their own fuel and incur expense and energy in cooking their own food from scratch. Furthermore, our work to increase education and awareness in relation to damp and mould in the private rental sector, where capacity to do this is low, has the potential to improve living environments for some of our poorest citizens. Our energy saving advice, our warm packs and our rudimentary insulation saves additional domestic energy.</p>			

	With a focus on reducing food waste in Phase 2, we aimed to redirect surplus food so that it goes on people's plates rather than into landfill. By working with some of the most vulnerable citizens in the city we aimed to improve social, economic and environmental outcomes city-wide which we encouraged through the Winter Food Aid Fund, enabling Birmingham citizens to purchase food through Fair Share.
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If you require assistance in completing this assessment, then please contact: ESAGuidance@birmingham.gov.uk