

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Cabinet	REPORT NUMBER: BCa/22/35
FROM: Cllr Mary McLaren Cabinet Member - Communities and Wellbeing	DATE OF MEETING: 05/12/22
OFFICER: Di Robinson – Interim Director for Communities	KEY DECISION REF NO. CAB392

Cost of Living Crisis: 5 Point Action Plan Progress Report (Phase 1) and Phase 2 Action Plan

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The Report aims to provide the following:

- Context and background as to the changing landscape of the cost of living crisis
- A summary of the work undertaken over the last 6 months against the 5 Point Action Plan (Phase 1) which was agreed by both Babergh and Mid Suffolk Cabinets in June 2022.
- Note the Phase 2 Action Plan for the next 6 months through the Winter into the Spring, recognising the need for Winter preparedness and the required flexibility to enable the Councils to respond to emerging needs in this fast-moving environment. As agreed in the recommendation 3.2 from the 8/6/21 Cabinet recommendations.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 To consider ending our co-ordinated approach to the Cost of Living crisis and to rely only on co-ordinating and promoting any national government support forthcoming over the next 6 months.
- 2.2 To develop a Phase 2 Action Plan, which incorporates the learning from the past 6 months, continuing and developing the growing partnerships across the system which support this work, and improve access to support for our communities, both via internal colleagues and through external partners.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To review and note the content of the Phase 1 Cost of Living 5 Point Action Plan Dashboard Report at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 To note the focus of the Phase 2 Cost of Living Action Plan at Appendix 2

REASON FOR DECISION

Both papers are for noting. No decision required.

4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 The Cost of Living Crisis has been building over the past few months and continues to impact on our communities in the District, particularly those who have already been experiencing inequalities pre and post the Covid 19 pandemic. It is also important to note that this impact is also being seen in groups who have previously not been on our radar, who had been managing despite some level of difficulty to maintain their resilience and independence, but who are now needing to come forward for support.
- 4.2 The predictions of impact discussed in the previous Cabinet Report of 8/6/22 have been realised, with warnings of 10% inflation and the associated Cost of Living increases now in effect. The drivers for addressing the Cost of Living crisis were well articulated in the Cabinet Report of June 2022. Details of how these issues are developing are included in the Dashboard Report. Covering the past 6 months at Appendix 1. There has been a wide range of national information and thinking to influence how we go about supporting people through this crisis, both as residents of our areas and also for our own staff who are also experiencing some of the same issues and indeed, some of our small businesses which are also experiencing these effects. Local demands are rising as evidenced by our colleagues and partners in the Voluntary & Community Sector across the board, including the changes seen and responded to by Sudbury and District & Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice, who have seen exponential increases in the demands for their debt advice services.
- 4.3 The attached 6 month Dashboard Report provides detail of the impacts and issues arising, the work we have undertaken to date to address these issues and some detail on how this has been progressed and delivered.
- 4.4 There has been a great deal of learning and development from the initial plan, and it important to note how quickly different issues have arisen and needed a different or amended response. The approach adopted in June 22 to create a clear action plan to support both our internal coordination and our relationships and joint working with external partners has been very beneficial. It has enabled the Councils to better understand the impacts across our services and customers of these changes and enabled us to focus our resource in the areas we believe will deliver the most impact. It has also supported conversations with partners and inform our priorities.
- 4.5 The appointment of the Cost of Living Coordinator in October has immediately made a significant difference to our ability to respond to changes, build more conversations with partners and to support our reporting.
- 4.6 As a result of this, the Phase 2 Action Plan has a level of embedded flexibility which allows the team delivering the opportunity to react quickly to changing circumstances, such as new national government support funding/guidance or specific local issues.
- 4.7 We have incorporated the national and regional thinking in our responses over the last 6 months and into the shaping of the Phase 2 Action Plan. We have changed the headings for the Phase 2 Action Plan to reflect this national thinking. These are now:
- Maximising Income
 - Accessing Advice

- Food insecurity and Poverty
- Fuel Poverty
- Health & Wellbeing

4.8 The Phase 2 Action Plan is also shaped to demonstrate where actions are responsive to the existing and emerging crisis issues, and also looking to the medium and longer terms to create opportunities to address the issue of resilience and supporting people beyond their immediate crisis to build their capacity beyond emergency measures, once those key issues have been managed or met. This latter part of the work is informing our thinking about a wide range of our work, seeking to build in resilience for our residents most at risk.

5. LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

5.1 This work aligns to the Corporate Plan Vision to have:

- “Great communities with bright and healthy futures that everyone is proud to call home”.

5.2 This work aligns to all the corporate plan strategic priorities.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Phase 2 Action Plan does not require additional funding from the Council over and above existing budgets. The team has been maximising the opportunities of external funding, through the Collaborative Communities Board, national government programmes. The team has also been working to use our internal grants process to focus on what is most needed, such as through the Winter Warmth Grants and Community Development Grant funding, where the focus has been on supporting the VCSE to continue providing services and activities which are essential of our communities, particularly those most at risk of the impacts of the Cost of Living Crisis

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 Key risks are set out below:

8.2

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Those most at risk from the cumulative impacts of the cost of living crisis do	Medium	High	Coordinating and promoting Government financial support to ensure we are

not receive the support they need			targeting those who most need it Using our knowledge of local circumstances and communities to target our financial support into the VCSE who offer the most support to those at risk
Support provided to our communities and those in most need is not sufficient, aligned or coordinated	Medium	High	Maximise our system wide partnership working, internally and externally of the District Council. Aiming to provide targeted support in our localities where we have identified trends and needs. Appointment of Cost Of Living Coordinator to support our coordination and partnership working
The impacts of the Cost of Living crisis undermines the wellbeing and resilience of our communities	Medium	High	Bringing together our existing delivery to support communities and their wellbeing, and focus this effort where we can have the greatest impacts .

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 Portfolio Cabinet Members have been consulted about this work and kept informed as it has been developing and wider Cabinet have been consulted.
- 9.2 Our internal stakeholder group which operates across Housing, Customer Operations, Shared Revenue Partnership, Communications and Communities and Wellbeing

9.3 Our external stakeholder panel includes our colleagues in Sudbury & District & Mid Suffolk Citizens Advice and local Health Partners and we have discussed Cost of Living work and priorities with this group and with colleagues on the Collaborative Communities Board.

9.4 The sixth month Cost of Living dashboard report has been shared with Overview and Scrutiny, from that the following recommendations were made:

- That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the contents of the report and commends the work being undertaken in response to the Cost of Living crisis.
- That the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee supports the 30% uplift to Local Citizens Advice and the work being conducted as a result and recommends that this support continues for a further 2 years.
- That the Councils facilitate a more collaborative approach between organisations by encouraging the promotion of joint working.
- That officers work with relevant agencies to understand the situation for young people under 25, specifically men, to build a proactive response to support them as an at-risk group.
- That Cabinet and Officers explore how we can embed the cost of living into the culture of the organisation for all staff when working with residents across all departments as part of a more integrated system of support.
- That a Joint All Member Briefing be arranged for all Councillors on the Cost of Living crisis with input from Local Citizens Advice

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

There is no requirement to complete an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) at this time. The core content of the work is intended to tackle and prevent inequalities and make sure there is no discrimination against the 9 protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. The impact of the plan in terms of key groups in our communities will be further developed as part of the 2nd Phase.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct environmental implications of this work. There is however some added environmental benefits where retrofitting of some housing stock and some county wide work to support residents to maximise home energy efficiency.

12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Cost of Living Phase 1 Action Plan: Dashboard Report	Attached
(b) Phase 2 Cost of Living Action Plan	Attached

13. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 13.1 Cost of Living Crisis: 5 Point Action Plan Dashboard Report, highlighting the work undertaken over the past 6 months since the previous Cabinet decisions 8/6/22.
- 13.2 Cost of Living Crisis: Phase 2 Action Plan.

14. REPORT AUTHORS

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