

Appendix 1

Cost of Living Pressures Action Plan as at 24 October 2022

1. People - Support people with access to good information and advice

Good information and advice that is easy to access and is communicated out to residents, community groups, parish councils, faith groups, businesses and VCSE organisations.

Action	Progress
Updated 'Here to Help' website as the front page to access all types of help and support pulling together information in one place on money, debt, heating, food and advice from across the system. Including identification of content owners for Here2Help themes.	Ongoing
Coordination of in-person and phone-based access to help via Connect, Community Advice Hubs and Act On Energy (SMBC and Commissioned Providers) and a "Warm Hubs" single point of contact for triage.	In place
Research of best practice locally, regionally and nationally to inform local response and to regularly update content picking up on good practices advice and guidance from Gov., partners and advice agencies.	ongoing
Comms plan so that information and links to website are regularly communicated to the public front line staff (Council, NHS, other), elected members, partners and our employees. Directed comms and engagement to promote access to advice and support for most vulnerable households. Information sharing, coordination and collaboration between services and orgs, which are part of the cost-of-living response.	ongoing

Financial Inclusion Group that coordinates access to support and guidance

Coordination of SCH, Council, VCSE Money and debt services through attendance at the Financial Inclusion Group – sharing information relating to support available and gaining intelligence based on direct feedback from members of the FIG.	Ongoing
Review approach to debt recovery (council tax, business rates, sundry income and housing benefit overpayments), discretionary grants and social care financial assessments in relation to the cost-of-living pressures. Liaise with SCH re approach to rent recovery.	Ongoing
Establish money management support through signposting to most appropriate organisations based on capacity, criteria, commissioned service and accreditation.	Ongoing
Consider Council Tax and Rent Recovery timetable and impact.	Ongoing

2. Collaborate with Public Sector & VCS

The development of ‘warm hubs’ working in partnership with the VCSE, parish councils and libraries

Regular engagement with the wider VCSE who work with the vulnerable to see how can support them to keep going and to manage demand. Via fortnightly meetings.	in place
Develop the Warm Hub principal in line with the Community Development aim, places to go, things to do where people can talk and listen (but also access advice and support). Ensure the correct narrative about these being places where people can go to do activities (ideally free activity) where they can get a ‘warm welcome’ i.e. cup of tea and a warm environment rather than just come in here to get warm.	ongoing
Work with the VCSE, parish councils and faith groups to encourage them to be a ‘warm hub’ and supporting them with access to small grants towards their running costs.	ongoing

Establish how we use our libraries as active spaces where people can access books and free activities such as films, art and culture – invest in that activity using any new Government Grant Funding.	ongoing
Maintain readiness to respond to concurrent incidents during the winter period (for example power outages or severe weather).	ongoing

Maximise Opportunities for Household Support Fund/Domestic Energy Support/Food bank Network

Allocation, distribution and oversight of Household Support Fund via internal and external delivery partners	in place
Keep supplies to the foodbank network under regular review and support where necessary.	in place

Work with Partners to ensure we are consistent in our messaging and we are all aware of the support available

Establish a way to exchange and share information across the borough. Develop the 'Here 2 Help' resources and consider 'My Solihull Maps' as a tool for partners (Inc. GPs and police officers) to access and to be able to sign post people. Work with Solihull ICB to ensure consistency of advice and support and clear referral pathways.	in place
Look at improved mental health support – reinstate mental health help line and set up a buddy system for frontline staff and VCSE partners to access and use to support residents before they go into crisis.	in place
Link with Community Wellbeing Service to ensure they are well linked into all advice and support and that they are making referrals appropriately.	in place

Link and review Winter warmth Offer. Coordinate the publication of the 2021 Here 2 Help Winter Warmth leaflet (promoting the support and advice available to those who are most vulnerable from the cold). Distribute to 15,000 over 75's households.	To go out by end of October
Understand the risks and role of the Fire Service with residents using cheaper forms of heating and lighting, have clear referral pathways for home safety checks.	in place
Re-establish the Community Champions Group – and set out what types of support our communities can provide	planned to recommence in November

3. Work with Businesses to protect jobs and support their employees

<i>Support to SMBC / SCH Employees</i>
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Staff in “low income” households identified as being at risk – access to information and advice.	ongoing
Identify warm offices and review the numbers working in the office during the winter	ongoing
Employee mental health and wellbeing support and resilience via Employee Assistance Programme.	in place
SCH - Mental Health Advisor - training for staff re: Cost of Living impact and signposting	in place
SCH Mental Health Advisor - Provision of case work for most vulnerable residents impacted by Cost of Living.	in place
Review of employment and skills support to ensure it is in the most effective way to deal with impact of Cost of Living.	ongoing

Link business related information to our website

Develop a training package on key issues such as mental health and domestic energy bills and a MECC programme for front-line staff to raise awareness of local offer/ access points.	Planned
Link to information provided by businesses i.e. discounts, free to access items (kids eat free), employee support schemes and the national 'Help for Households' information (for inclusion in Here2Help)	ongoing
Gather business intelligence regarding financial pressures, energy bills, closures and potential redundancies.	ongoing

4. Places - Increase energy efficiency

Work with SCH to plan and deliver energy efficiency improvements to Council housing (including leasehold) – promoting sustainable warmth and tackling fuel poverty.	in place
Promote and enable energy efficiency improvements to privately owned homes (working with SCH, Act on Energy and West Midlands Combined Authority). This includes direct delivery via government funding and partnership with Trustmark for the “able to pay” market.	ongoing
Work with housing associations in Solihull and National Residential Landlords Association and private landlords in Solihull	ongoing
Via Act On Energy, promote free energy saving information and advice, home safety and access to community support (working with Warwickshire Rural Community Council and community and voluntary sector).	in place