

Somerset County Council

County Council

– 23 November 2022

## **Report of the Leader and Executive – Items for Information**

Executive Member: Cllr Bill Revans – Leader of the Council

Division and Local Member: All

Lead Officer: Scott Wooldridge – Head of Governance & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer

Author: Mike Bryant - Service Manager – Democratic Services & Michelle Brooks – Senior Democratic Services Officer

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### **1. Summary**

- 1.1. Appendix 1 of this report covers key decisions taken by the Leader, Executive Lead Members and officers between 9 July 2022 and 11 November 2022, together with the items of business discussed at the Executive meetings on 17 August 2022, 21 September 2022 and 19 October 2022.

The Leader and Executive Lead Members may also wish to raise other issues at the County Council meeting.

- 1.2. Appendix 2 of this report details the work of the Council's Cost of Living Working Group. Council is recommended to note that following consideration of the Cost of Living Working Group report the Executive:
  1. Welcomed the considerable progress made to date and endorses the future direction of travel
  2. Supported the intention of the group to focus initially on the Period November 2022 - March 2023, with a review in early 2023 to determine whether there is ongoing need for support
  3. Supported the £200,000 contributed to the Somerset Community Foundation's Food Resilience project from the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable fund held by Public Health

## **2. Details of decisions**

- 2.1. Agenda and papers for the Executive meetings held on 17 August 2022, 21 September 2022 and 19 October 2022 are published within the Executive webpages on the Council's website. Individual Leader, Executive Lead Member and Officer key decision records and related reports are also published within the Executive webpages on the Council's website.

## Appendix 1

<b>Decision Title</b>	<b>Decision Maker and date of decision</b>	<b>Link to further information and decision paperwork</b>
Somerset Supplemental Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery Grant Award	18 July 2022 by Lead Member for Public Health, Equalities and Diversity	<a href="#">Decision Details</a>
Decision regarding Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) contracts	21 July 2022 by Chief Executive, Lead Member for Transport and Digital	<a href="#">Decision Details</a>
Deployment of the High Needs Provision Capital Allocation (HNPCA) for financial years, 2022-23 & 2023-24	05 August 2022 by Lead Member for Children and Families	<a href="#">Decision Details</a>
Creation of a new sponsored academy in Somerset	17 August 2022 by Director of Commissioning and Lead Commissioner for Economic Community Infrastructure, Lead Member for Children and Families	<a href="#">Decision Details</a>
Covid and National Driver Shortage Impact on Waste Collection Services and Costs Implications : Settlement of related contractual relief to SUEZ	22 August 2022 by Lead Member for Environment and Climate Change	<a href="#">Decision Details</a>

Contract Award: Mechanical and Electrical Works, Wadham School, Crewkerne	31 August 2022 by Somerset Waste Partnership Managing Director / Acting Lead Director for ECI	<a href="#">Decision Details</a>
Land at Cherry Grove / Colliers court	09 September 2022 by Lead Member for Development and Assets	<a href="#">Decision Details</a>
Contract Award: Window, Heating and Roof Works at Frome College	16 September 2022 by Somerset Waste Partnership Managing Director / Acting Lead Director for ECI	<a href="#">Decision Details</a>
Acceptance of Funding for the Multiply (Adult Numeracy) Programme	26 September 2022 by Director of Finance	<a href="#">Decision Details</a>
Resettlement Pledge 2022/23	27 September 2022 by Lead Member for Public Health, Equalities and Diversity	<a href="#">Decision Details</a>
Extension to the dynamic purchasing system for homecare providers in Somerset	06 October 2022 by Lead Member for Adult Social Care	<a href="#">Decision Details</a>
Wyvern Nurseries – Decision to Award following Competitive Tender	07 October 2022 by Lead Member for Children and Families	<a href="#">Decision Details</a>

Key Decision for the extension of the grant funding agreement for the management of the SSEF between SCC and SCF	27 October 2022 by Director of Commissioning and Lead Commissioner for Economic Community Infrastructure	<a href="#">Decision Details</a>
Contract Award: Somerset Innovation Support Service	31 October 2022 by Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure Commissioning	<a href="#">Decision Details</a>
Revenue Budget Monitoring Report - month 3	17 August by Executive	<a href="#">17 August 2022 Executive Agenda</a>
LGR Implementation Board – proposed Terms of Reference / proposed submission of Consequential Parliamentary Orders	17 August by Executive	<a href="#">17 August 2022 Executive Agenda</a>
Member Equality Steering Group	17 August by Executive	<a href="#">17 August 2022 Executive Agenda</a>
Revenue Budget Monitoring Report - month 4	21 September by Executive	<a href="#">21 September 2022 Executive Agenda</a>
Crisis Support Service for Adults with a Learning Disability and/or Autism	21 September by Executive	<a href="#">21 September 2022 Executive Agenda</a>
Commercial Decision: Education lease conditions Dillington House	21 September by Executive	<a href="#">21 September 2022 Executive Agenda</a>

Revenue Budget Monitoring Report - month 5	19 October by Executive	<a href="#">19 October 2022 Executive Agenda</a>
Somerset Integrated Domestic Abuse Services (Lots 1 - 5)	19 October by Executive	<a href="#">19 October 2022 Executive Agenda</a>
Temporary Worker Procurement	19 October by Executive	<a href="#">19 October 2022 Executive Agenda</a>

## Appendix 2

### Decision Report - Non-Key Decision

Forward Plan Reference: n/a

Decision Date - 19/10/22



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#### Responding to the Cost of Living Crisis

Executive Member(s): Cllr Liz Leyshon - Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Member on Finance and Human Resources

Local Member(s) and Division: Councillor Jo Roundell Greene

Lead Officer: Jan Gamon

Author: Jan Gamon – Director, Place and Recovery – South Somerset District Council and Alice Munro – Consultant in Public Health – Somerset County Council

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#### 1. Summary / Background

- 1.1** In the light of the current cost of living crisis it was agreed, at the July 2022 meeting of Full Council, that a politically proportionate cross-party cost of living working group would be formed. The working group is not a decision-making body. Its role is to recommend to the Executive, and the November 2022 full Council meeting, the steps that this Council can take to alleviate the impact of the cost of living on the most vulnerable.
- 1.2** Central government has announced a range of initiatives to support individuals and households through the cost-of-living crisis. The role of the Somerset group is to ensure that our residents are aware of the support already available and to tailor additional initiatives locally.

## **2. Recommendations**

### **2.1. Recommendations**

#### **That the Executive:**

- 1. Notes the considerable progress made to date and endorses the future direction of travel**
- 2. Notes the intention of the group to focus initially on the Period November 2022 - March 2023, with a review in early 2023 to determine whether there is ongoing need for support**
- 3. Notes the £200,000 contributed to the Somerset Community Foundation's Food Resilience project from the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable fund held by Public Health**

## **3. Reasons for recommendations**

### **3.1 Reducing fuel poverty**

Members felt that this was largely for central government to respond to and they have announced the £400 reduction to fuel bills per household, in addition to the Winter Fuel Payment and Cold Weather Payments for those eligible. Please note that Appendix A contains information of all of the known direct grants available to individuals and households at the time of writing. This is an evolving picture and will be added to over the coming weeks.

In addition to the above, Public Health (PH) has issued a grant to the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) Safe and Warm Somerset helpline to support people who are clinically vulnerable and struggling to afford their energy bills and living in a cold home. This funding will mean that in addition to delivery of their standard offer, CSE will do targeted outreach to clinically vulnerable householders in cold homes and:

- Facilitate the installation of insulation and heating measures to improve the energy efficiency of low-income and low EPC rated homes.
- Provide home energy advice and support to ensure that vulnerable households are better equipped to pay for their energy through improved income (such as benefits and debt reduction), and more confident in dealing with bills, tariffs and heating controls.
- Empower frontline health and social care workers and voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations to work together to ensure their clients live in safer and healthier homes.



**Funding provided:** £314,000 has been provided from PH' s Clinically Extremely Vulnerable grant.

### 3.2 Offering A Warm Welcome

The *Warm Welcome* initiative seeks to develop and co-ordinate a network of venues that can offer people a Warm Welcome over the course of this winter. These venues will be open to anyone who would like an inviting place to keep warm and, if they choose, take part in projects or activities, get some work or homework done, or just see a friendly face for a chat. No one will be asked questions about why they are there and the venues will all be community-led, with no personal data shared about anyone who attends.

The members' working group requested that all local councils be contacted and asked about their availability to offer a warm space. Almost fifty town and parish councils have also helped to identify potential spaces, and we expect many more to do so. Of the responses received, only one mentioned funding as a potential barrier to offering a warm space. The spaces identified by local councils will be added to those identified by village agents.

Public Health is tendering for an organisation to build the capacity of venues in the network, identify appropriate spaces where there are gaps, and co-ordinate the project moving forward. The provider will also be able to provide some quality assurance of the offer from venues and support the venues with infrastructure and training needs.

**Funding provided:** £50,000 to be funded from the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable grant

Once all of the warm spaces have been confirmed, they will be mapped across Somerset and will be widely publicised both on- and offline. Those providing warm spaces will be eligible to apply for grants of up to £1,000 from the Somerset Community Foundation 'Cost of Living Crisis Appeal, which is covered under item 3.5 below

### 3.3 Reducing food insecurity

This is felt by the Members' working group to be the highest immediate priority and reflects the recommendation to contribute £200,000 to the SCF's Food Resilience project.

The Food Resilience Steering group (FRSG) was formed in January 2022 to consider how to best build food resilience and reduce food insecurity in Somerset. It includes officer representation from across Districts, SCC and VCSE partners. The FRSG has identified a number of challenges facing food projects this winter, with priorities for relating to (1) supply and distribution of food, including to underserved communities; (2) developing cooking and budgeting skills and providing equipment; and (3) developing a basic standard offer that means all projects can contribute to reducing food insecurity.

As part of the tender discussed above, the same organisation is expected to both address these challenges and develop the warm space network, as both areas of activity involve activities to build the capacity of communities to respond to the cost of living crisis. The food strand will, in the first instance, involve convening three task and finish groups on the identified priorities for food resilience, with members invited who are in a position to identify opportunities and develop solutions.

All food banks, pantries and cupboards will be mapped across Somerset and this will be widely publicised.

### **3.4 Supporting older adults with mental health needs**

The aim of this area of work is to deliver mental health support face-to-face in people's homes. Relying on telephone support alone for this vulnerable group has been increasingly challenging due to the nature of rising mental health needs. Not being able to address this need is likely to incur wider system costs in terms of more significant mental health crises.

Open Mental Health will be funded to provide targeted home visits to approximately 500 older adults in need of mental health support, identifying those who would benefit from this more holistic face-to-face support offer via their existing telephone service. The home visit model proposed would also explore the needs of individuals more broadly and ensure that they can access wider support to all the other support over the winter, including financial, fuel and food support.

**Funding provided:** £65,715 taken from the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable grant

### 3.5 Funding community-based support

Somerset Community Foundation has established a 'Cost of Living Appeal' programme which in due course will support additional core costs for VCSE groups and projects that will help meet the needs of struggling and vulnerable households. In this first phase the Foundation has launched the Warm Somerset Spaces Fund, from which a venue can ask for up to £1,000 to stay open longer this winter to offer a warm place for people in their community. To receive the award venues are expected to extend their opening times by 5 or 6 hours a week over winter. We plan to ensure this is publicised widely as part of the communications plan.

**Funding provided:** To date, Public Health has contributed £50,000 from the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable grant. This has been matched by £150k from District Councils in Somerset.

### 3.6 Communications Plan

There is a detailed plan to develop standardised materials to be available across Somerset, both on a bespoke website and in physical form. It is likely that the website will be derived from the Somerset Saver website developed for Mendip DC and which they confirm they are willing to share more widely. It is anticipated that the website will contain information relating to sources of direct grant funding, sources of further advice and hints and tips for staying warm, safe and with sufficient access to food this winter. This work is being led by the Communications team within Public Health.

## 4. Other work currently underway

There is further work in progress which is not yet ready to be reported in its entirety and more details of this will follow.

### 4.1 Advice Services

Members are in receipt of a proposal for additional support from the Citizens' Advice Service. Members universally applaud the very important work of Citizen's Advice and the West Somerset Advice Service but have requested additional information before reaching a

decision about how best to respond to the proposal. We expect to be in a position to respond by late November

#### **4.2 Council Staff**

Staff who are residents of Somerset will have access to all of the support available elsewhere. In addition, Unison has recently published a plan of action to offer direct support to members who are struggling to meet costs and who meet eligibility criteria. Information will be updated, once the full details are known.

It is proposed to permit staff to work from council-owned offices to ensure that they also have access to a warm space. For some staff, their nearest office won't necessarily be the one that they are based in and the team is currently exploring the possibility of improving accessibility across the estate.

#### **4.3 Local Businesses**

We are aware that much of Somerset's employment relies upon a large number of SMEs. The government has recently announced a cap on the price of electricity but, for those businesses which rely on high usage of fuel, this may not be sufficient. The Economic Development team at SCC is working with local Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses to understand in more detail what they believe the need would be.

### **5. Other options considered**

- 5.1** Members considered providing targeted direct financial support. This was rejected due to the availability of existing mechanisms such as the Household Support Fund.

### **6. Links to County Vision, Business Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy**

- 6.1** It supports the County Vision through improving the lives of residents, developing community connections, improving partnership working and providing residents with the correct information and advice

### **7. Consultations and co-production**

- 7.1** Consultation took place with the member working group which was made up of cross-party councillors. Efforts were made to ensure the officer

working group was also made up of representatives from across the system, including SCC, Districts, Adults and Children's Social Care. Other organisations and relevant stakeholders were contacted directly during research into current support offers.

## **8. Financial and Risk Implications**

- 8.1** The majority of the funding identified is taken from the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable fund, held by Public Health. There are no additional funding requests as a result of the recommendations

## **9. Legal and HR Implications**

- 9.1** There are no legal or HR implications arising.

## **10. Other Implications**

### **10.1 Equalities Implications**

Some groups will be disproportionately affected by a change in their financial circumstances brought about by an increase in the cost of living, for example, those living with long-term health conditions, the disabled or elderly people who may be on a fixed income. Struggling families may also be impacted by rising food and fuel prices. The importance of ensuring adequacy of provision for these groups has been considered and will be given on-going consideration.

The Equalities Impact Assessment needs is appended to this report and referenced in this section.

### **10.2 Community Safety Implications**

Whilst it is not possible to directly link the cost of living crisis to community safety there is a strong likelihood that that crisis will impact on individuals quality of life and wellbeing. This will be considered further as work in this area progresses.

### **10.3 Sustainability Implications**

Whilst it is not possible to directly link the cost of living crisis to sustainability impacts, there are potential indirect impacts that should be considered for example a reduction in car usage due to the

associated costs and a potential corresponding increase in the use of public transport.

#### **10.4 Health and Safety Implications**

There are no health and safety considerations

#### **10.5 Health and Wellbeing Implications**

The potential health and wellbeing implications resulting from the cost of living crisis are wide and varied and will likely disproportionately affect certain groups of the population, this may include negative impacts on physical and mental health and may exacerbate inequality.

#### **10.6 Social Value**

There are no social value implications

### **11. Scrutiny comments / recommendations**

**11.1** Not directly applicable

### **12. Background**

**12.1** In the light of the current cost of living crisis it was agreed, at the July 2022 meeting of Full Council, that a politically proportionate cross-party cost of living working group would be formed. The working group is not a decision-making body. Its role is to recommend to the Executive, and at the November 2022 Full Council meeting, the steps that this Council can take to alleviate the impact of the cost of living on the most vulnerable.

3.1. The membership of the group comprises 10 elected members:

Jo Roundell Greene – Liberal Democrat (Chair)

Ben Ferguson – Liberal Democrat

Tom Deakin – Liberal Democrat

Tim Kerley – Liberal Democrat

Simon Carswell – Liberal Democrat

David Fothergill – Conservative

Mandy Chilcott – Conservative

Dave Mansell - Green Party

John Hunt - Independent

Kathy Pearce - Labour

The Members' Working Group is supported by an officer working group comprising representatives from Public Health, Communications, Children's Services, HR, Economic Development and the four District Councils.

#### 4. Background Papers

##### 4.1. Appendix A – Direct Grants Available to Households/Individuals

#### **Report Sign-Off**

		Date completed
Legal Implications	Honor Clarke	n/a
Governance	Scott Wooldridge	10/10/22
Corporate Finance	Jason Vaughan	n/a
Customers, Digital and Workforce	Chris Squire	10/10/22
Property	Paula Hewitt / Oliver Woodhams	10/10/22
Procurement	Claire Griffiths	n/a
Senior Manager	Alice Munro, Public Health Consultant	10/10/22
Commissioning Development	Sunita Mills / Ryszard Rusinek	10/10/22
Executive Member	Cllr Liz Leyshon - Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead Member on Finance and Human Resources	
<b><u>Sign-off Key Decision / Consulted on Non-Key Decision</u></b>		
Local Member	Cllr. Jo Roundell Greene	10/10/22
Opposition Spokesperson	Opposition Spokesperson - Leader - Cllr David Fothergill	
Scrutiny Chair	<a href="#">Click here to select the relevant Scrutiny Chair</a>	n/a