

***AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET***

<b>Report Title:</b>	Cost of Living
<b>Name of Committee:</b>	Scrutiny Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	30 January 2023
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Michelle Dickson Chief Officer - Communities and Homes 01788 533843; michelle.dickson@rugby.gov.uk  Mike Connell Chief Officer - Digital and Communications 01788 533466; mike.connell@rugby.gov.uk
<b>Summary:</b>	A summary of the conclusions of the subgroup appointed to consider work in progress in respect of cost of living issues.
<b>Financial Implications:</b>	There are none associated with this report.
<b>Risk Management/Health and Safety Implications:</b>	There are none associated with this report.
<b>Environmental Implications:</b>	There are none associated with this report.
<b>Legal Implications:</b>	There are none associated with this report.
<b>Equality and Diversity:</b>	There are none associated with this report.

**Scrutiny Committee - 30 January 2023**

**Cost of Living**

**Public Report of the Chief Officer - Communities and Homes**

**Summary**

Members of the appointed subgroup concluded that:

- 1) Substantial assurance was provided by the robust plan of action in place.
- 2) The additional actions identified by the subgroup would be beneficial and should be Red-Amber-Green rated and implemented.
- 3) Work around cost of living has already been integrated into business as usual.
- 4) Further updates to Members should be provided through existing communication mechanisms – primarily utilising the fortnightly update.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

At the 14 November 2022 meeting of Scrutiny Committee, it was agreed that a small cross-party subgroup would be appointed to work with officers to review workstreams in progress in respect of cost of living and to provide updates to the Committee and their own political groups.

The subgroup, comprising Councillors Maggie O'Rourke (Chair of the subgroup), Noreen New and Simon Ward, met on 1 December 2022 and 19 January 2023.

**2. WORK OF THE GROUP**

The activities in progress, as summarised in Appendix 1, were reviewed and rated Red-Amber-Green (RAG). All actions are either green or amber.

6 new potential actions were identified by Members and these too are highlighted in the spreadsheet attached at Appendix 1.

**3. CONCLUSIONS**

The subgroup has conducted an in-depth review of actions and has generated some additional ideas for inclusion in the work plan.

Councillor Maggie O'Rourke, as Chair of the subgroup, has offered her thanks to officers, Members and our external critical friends who have supported this piece of work.

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**Date of Meeting:** 30 January 2023  
**Subject Matter:** Cost of Living  
**Originating Department:** Communities and Homes  
Digital and Communications

**DO ANY BACKGROUND PAPERS APPLY**       **YES**       **NO**

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

<b>Doc No</b>	<b>Title of Document and Hyperlink</b>
App 1	Cost of living spreadsheet of actions in progress

**Actions in progress / identified ahead of appointment of scrutiny subgroup**

<u>Action</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Timescale</u>	<u>Responsible CO</u>	<u>Narrative</u>	<u>Last updated</u>	<u>Progress</u>	<u>RAG Rating</u>
Develop and maintain support for the community web page, providing information for residents on the Council's website	OBJECTIVE 1 - Delivering Effective Communication	Q3	Mike Connell	This information is continuously updated. This includes data provided by government. Daily updates and resources . UX review being undertaken by Customer Services.	02/12/2022	Delivered	
Provide cost of living content within tenant newsletter	OBJECTIVE 1 - Delivering Effective Communication	Q3	Michelle Dickson	All monthly Tenants Newsletters contain Cost of living content & this will continue with timely & relevant info. MD to refer RPs to our Cost Of Living information	11/01/2023	Delivered	
Develop business focussed page on Council's website	OBJECTIVE 1 - Delivering Effective Communication	Q3	Mike Connell	Content collated, reflecting the Warwickshire page, and in comms workplan for publication. <a href="https://www.rugby.gov.uk/info/20067/housing/539/help_for_households_and_businesses/10">https://www.rugby.gov.uk/info/20067/housing/539/help_for_households_and_businesses/10</a>	12/01/2023	Delivered	
Utilise internal communication channels to signpost staff towards advice and practical support.	OBJECTIVE 1 - Delivering Effective Communication	Q3	Mike Connell	Financial wellbeing and support advice provided through intouch 7/10. Pre-Christmas refresh of Cost Of Living support and warm hubs	29/11/2022	Delivered and to be repeated	
Utilise social media and other comms channels to provide timely information	OBJECTIVE 1 - Delivering Effective Communication	Q3	Mike Connell	Depts engaging directly with comms to push out information	29/11/2022	Delivered and to be repeated	
Deliver specific Christmas campaign, relating to seasonal challenges	OBJECTIVE 1 - Delivering Effective Communication	Q3	Mike Connell	C&P team in regular contact with area partnership team and food bank to understand initiatives	11/01/2023	Delivered	
Provide a single point of contact for businesses	OBJECTIVE 1 - Delivering Effective Communication	Q3	Nicola Smith	Recruitment to two Economic Development Officer posts was unsuccessful. New recruitment drive proposed in new year. Temporary support currently being investigated.	29/11/2022	In progress	
Provision of relevant training (Customer Care, Financial Wellbeing and Safeguarding) to contact centre staff	OBJECTIVE 2 – Empowering staff	Q3	Mike Connell	Training delivered. Signposting training. Refresh of Cost Of Living support highlighted in team training and 121s.	29/11/2022	Delivered	
Provision of relevant training to housing staff	OBJECTIVE 2 – Empowering staff	Q3	Michelle Dickson	Mandatory training on supporting those in very challenging circumstances has been rolled out to most frontline staff.	29/11/2022	Delivered	
Provision of relevant training to PRS, Refuse and Grounds Maintenance Staff	OBJECTIVE 2 – Empowering staff	S, M Q3	Clare Preston	PRS aware and active. Refuse and grounds staff training to be delivered as a toolbox talk.	11/01/2023	In progress	
Investigate opportunities across all services for increased presence and welfare checks for residents / tenants	OBJECTIVE 2 – Empowering staff	S, M Q3	Leadership Team	Housing Staff are using RentSense data to identify tenants who are going to potentially be struggling.  Will also be prioritising reaching out to those living in solid wall properties and those below an EPC of C (Council housing)	29/11/2022	In progress	
Supplement in house expertise with access to external (including online) support and advice	OBJECTIVE 2 – Empowering staff	Q3	Mike Connell	Single source of truth through RBC website relating to support for the community and upcoming business support.	29/11/2022	Delivered	
Explore a contract with Act on Energy to provide increased and more targeted information to Rugby residents regarding energy efficiency and usage	OBJECTIVE 3 – working with partners	Q3	Michelle Dickson	Meeting booked in with Act ON Energy 17/1/23	11/01/2023	In progress	
Work with BRANCAB to provide appropriate support to residents including financial capability support, debt advice and benefits advice.	OBJECTIVE 3 – working with partners	Q3 and Q4	Michelle Dickson	We continue to work closely with Brancab including preparation of recommendations for their funding post March 2023	29/11/2022	Delivered	
Signpost residents towards the governments 'MoneyHelper' programme, providing free impartial advice on a range of financial matters	OBJECTIVE 3 – working with partners	Q3	Mike Connell	MoneyHelper part of the Support for the community page, including in internal comms too and within the CSC training.	29/11/2022	Delivered	
Engage with the BEAM project to support homeless and potentially homeless people into education and meaningful employment	OBJECTIVE 3 – working with partners	Q3 and Q4	Michelle Dickson	We continue to promote Beam, we are meeting with DWP in Dec 2022 to ensure that Beam is an active resource for the DWP Work Coaches in Rugby	29/11/2022	Delivered	

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Work with Community Organisations to provide targeted neighbourhood support	OBJECTIVE 3 – working with partners	Q3 and Q4	Michelle Dickson	Our community organisations, funded & supported by RBC are delivering a wide range of targeted neighbourhood support. We use the Tenants Newsletter and other channels to promote to tenants & residents.	29/11/2022	Delivered	Green
Working with our funded Community Associations to explore a warm hub network in Rugby	OBJECTIVE 3 – working with partners	Q3	Michelle Dickson	There is a warm hub network, operating in a co-ordinated way so as to make best use of our collective resources.  There are two warm hubs available from council buildings - based at RAGM and QDJC.	29/11/2022	Delivered	
Support WCAVA to undertake "health checks" of all of our funded Community Associations.	OBJECTIVE 3 – working with partners	Q4	Michelle Dickson	WCAVA undertake robust "health checks" as part of the infrastructure support for funded CA's.	29/11/2022	Delivered	
Support WCAVA to investigate / develop a summit for the local third sector	OBJECTIVE 3 – working with partners	Q3	Michelle Dickson	We will support WCAVA investigating/developing this. The Communities & Projects Manager and the Manager for WCAVA are meeting in Dec 2022. WCC hosted a cost of living summit for Warwickshire in November 2022. WCAVA have invested in actively reaching out to the sector during Autumn 2022 and did a VCS survey to understand how the cost of living issues were impacting on them. The main issues that came forward were lack of volunteers and lack of funding to cover day to day running costs, reducing capacity to deliver new projects. This is reflective of national findings too. WCAVA felt that another summit would duplicate work already done. Members assistance on attracting new volunteers and encouraging both awareness and take up of the Lottery would be of help in addressing these issues. and therefore most welcome.	29/11/2022	In progress	Yellow
Further explore work with WALC and Parish Councils to maximise the support through their networks – for example warm hubs, information and advice, support over the festive season	OBJECTIVE 3 – working with partners	Q3	Aftab Razzaq	WALC and PC contact list now available and comms to go out once Cost Of Living business webpage is active Cost Of Living Business now available. <a href="https://www.rugby.gov.uk/info/20067/housing/539/help_for_households_and_businesses/10">https://www.rugby.gov.uk/info/20067/housing/539/help_for_households_and_businesses/10</a> WALC hosted a cost of living event on Tuesday 10 Jan 2023 - audience was parish and town councils across Birmingham, Solihull and Warks. This event focused on information sharing to enable effective signposting. Rugby's Communities and Projects Manager - Mary Jane Gunn provided an update ref Rugby Comms went out via social media on 18/1/23	13/01/2022	In progress	
Explore with third sector partners a bespoke package of support for residents over the festive period.	OBJECTIVE 3 – working with partners	Q3	Michelle Dickson	We are promoting the Household Support Fund across all channels & all partners. We are investigating with CA's how we can support as many Rugby families as possible in accessing this support.	11/01/2022	Delivered	Green

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Continue to work with local authority partners across the County and region to identify best practice and opportunities for joint working	OBJECTIVE 3 – working with partners	Q3 and Q4	Leadership Team	Warwickshire Heads of Housing have worked with Public Health to produce a new leaflet on damp and condensation. This is at sign off stage ahead of distribution (suitable for tenants of both private sector and public sector housing). Making sure that information from county ref the Household Support Fund is being shared with customers and potential referral agencies (including our own teams).	29/11/2022	In progress	Yellow
Audit of the energy efficiency of each council home	OBJECTIVE 4 – delivering support	Q4	Michelle Dickson	This is a work in progress and will build on the baselining work that was undertaken by PRS last year. Additional dedicated staff resource in place from January 2023 to increase the focus on this work. Staff in place and commencing work w/c 16/1/23	11/01/2023	In progress	Yellow
Install High Efficiency Boilers where it is appropriate to do so	OBJECTIVE 4 – delivering support	Q4	Michelle Dickson	The boilers that we use are high energy efficient rated.	29/11/2022	Delivered	Green
Identify those households that are most likely to be in fuel poverty and benefit from energy efficiency upgrades.	OBJECTIVE 4 – delivering support	Q3	Michelle Dickson	Solid wall properties are going to be the most challenging to heat. A report being prepared for Council in February in respect of upgrades to solid wall properties in Long Lawford. Report delivered on 9/1/23 to Cabinet. Proposals now include Rokeby estate. Awaiting outcome of bid to Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. Results released end of March 23.	11/01/2023	In progress	Yellow
Ensure that all new housing developments by RBC will be A or A* EPC's	OBJECTIVE 4 – delivering support	Ongoing	Michelle Dickson	This forms part of the strategic brief for our new developments at Rounds Gardens and Biart Place. The updated part L building regulations will also enable this.	29/11/2022	Delivered	Green
Undertake a survey of council owned buildings to understand their capacity for delivering warm hubs	OBJECTIVE 4 – delivering support	Q3	Leadership Team	Warm hubs are now provided at both RAGM and the QDJC.	29/11/2022	Delivered	Green
Provide advice to private rented sector tenants and landlords on compliance with energy efficiency legislation	OBJECTIVE 4 – delivering support	Q3 and Q4	David Burrows/ Michelle Dickson	Independent living schemes with community rooms are readily available to residents that live on site. A leaflet on condensation and mould has been prepared by Warks Heads of Housing in consultation with Public Health. The final amendments are being made ahead of going to print and being published on websites. The leaflet is suited to both residents of private rented and social housing.	11/01/2022	Delivered	Green
Provide staff with a guide to free independent financial information & support from a range of support organisations	OBJECTIVE 4 – delivering support	Q3	Mike Connell	Provided through intouch 7/10 and Business Services provided to manual workforce. Available on Sharepoint and linked in regular communications. HR aware.	02/12/2022	Delivered	Green
Ensure that staff are aware of professional and support services which are available	OBJECTIVE 4 – delivering support	Q3	Mike Connell	Provided through intouch 7/10 and Business Services provided to manual workforce. Continual messaging ongoing. Wellness messaging provided pre Christmas. HR monitoring and actions coming out from employee consultation for wellness being implemented. Available on Sharepoint and linked in regular communications. HR aware.	11/01/2023	Delivered	Green

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Consider further schemes to support staff including car sharing, financial capability training, hybrid working and targeted toolbox talks	OBJECTIVE 4 – delivering support	Q3 and Q4	Leadership Team	Toolbox talks scheduled.	11/01/2023	In progress	Yellow
Refresh staff training offer to include training appropriate to cost of living pressures	OBJECTIVE 4 – delivering support	Q3 and Q4	Leadership Team	Ongoing	29/11/2022	Delivered and to be repeated	Green
Use UKSPF money to target support for local businesses and our town centre	OBJECTIVE 4 – delivering support	Q4	Nicola Smith	Schemes identified for year 1 spend. Still awaiting notification from the government about whether scheme is still going ahead. Report produced, and funding obtained. Report to Council on 23/11/23	11/01/2023	Delivered	Green
Identify and bid for additional funding streams that can help support local businesses	OBJECTIVE 4 – delivering support	M, L Q3 and Q4	Nicola Smith	Bid Officer post approved by Council. Recruitment drive for this post proposed for Q4.	29/11/2022	In progress	Yellow
<b>New additional actions identified and recommended by sub group</b>							
Promote volunteering opportunities within communities	OBJECTIVE 3 – working with partners		Members		01/12/2022	In progress	Yellow
Promote the availability of the Lotto to support VCS day to day running costs	OBJECTIVE 4 – delivering support		Members		19/01/2023	In progress	Yellow
Are there any third sector partners we can assist with in communications?	OBJECTIVE 3 – working with partners		Mike Connell	Added to communications conversation	19/01/2023	In progress	Yellow
Can there be some marketing around the Rugby lotto? Has support actually gone down?	OBJECTIVE 4 – delivering support		Mike Connell, Michelle Dickson	Added to the communications forward plan	19/01/2023	In progress	Yellow
Investigate and align with health partners Cost Of Living messaging to staff	OBJECTIVE 3 – working with partners		Mike Connell, Michelle Dickson		<b>19/01/2023</b>	In progress	Yellow
MC to review "Web site information action plan" email trail	OBJECTIVE 1 - Delivering Effective Communication		Mike Connell	Initial review undertaken 23/01/23	23/01/2023	In progress	Yellow