

# Report

## Cabinet

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### Part 1

Date: 14 June 2023

**Subject** Newport City Council response to external pressures impacting Council services.

**Purpose** To present an update to Cabinet on Newport City Council's response to external factors impacting on delivery of Council services.

**Author** Policy and Partnership Manager

**Ward** All

**Summary** This report provides an update on the external pressures facing the council including the cost-of-living crisis, which has been the main external pressure faced by our residents, communities, and services during this month.

Collaboration and partnership working is key to supporting our citizens and therefore this report provides information on how this way of working is enabling a greater access for our residents to support, advice and guidance.

**Proposal** Cabinet to consider the contents of the report on the Council's activity to respond to the external factors on Newport's communities, businesses, and council services.

**Action by** Executive Board and Corporate Management Team

**Timetable** Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Executive Board
- Corporate Management Team

**Signed**

## Background

This report is a monthly update to Cabinet members on the key pressures facing our communities, businesses, and council services, along with updates on how we are working collaboratively with our partners to help support our residents.

### Cost of Living Crisis

This crisis continues to impact on our residents, businesses, staff, and services. This month has seen an announcement of a fall in inflation rates for April 2023, raised interest rates announced by the Bank of England at the end of May and the Office for National Statistics reporting a continued rise in food and non-alcoholic drinks prices for April.

[The long shadow of the cost-of-living emergency](#) report based on a survey of over 2300 people undertaken by Carnegie UK into the wider impact of the cost-of-living crisis found that as a consequence of rising living costs 34% of people in the UK aren't eating as healthily, while 16% have cut down on regular exercise. 35% of people say that the crisis has reduced their ability to spend time with friends, while 24% say the same about spending time with family.

### National Support

Welsh Government have revised their [Statutory Guidance on School Uniform policy](#), due to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis and increasing financial burden on families across Wales. This has been sent to all schools to ask all governing bodies to review their current school uniform policies in readiness for the 2023/24 academic year.

Households in receipt of Department of Work and Pension benefits have been receiving the first 2023/24 Cost of Living Payment of £301 between 25th April and 17th May. This is the first of up to three payments totalling £900 for those eligible and on means tested benefits in 2023/24. NCC officers are working closely with the DWP in promoting accurate information to families and individuals including awareness of the Cost-of-Living Stakeholder toolkit. The toolkit includes information about the eligibility criteria, details about how and when payments will be made and a range of materials for organisations to use to ensure people have access to the right information including accessing pension credit, which is a gateway to receiving the cost-of-living payment.

### Newport City Council Support

As noted in last month's report the Council's Cost-of-Living officer Task and Finish Group worked with partners to facilitate a Cost-of-Living event on 26 April. In addition to support from NCC officers and teams, other agencies in attendance included Newport Citizens Advice, Age Cymru Gwent, Melin Homes; Newport Credit Union, DWP, Newport Nappy Library, Wastesavers, and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. Feedback is now actively being sought from partner agencies about the day, and capacity to participate in localised smaller events going forward during June and July. It is hoped these will be held across the city to ensure the reach and offer of support is as inclusive as possible.

A new dedicated Cost of Living email address has been created to support those unable to access events. This provides the opportunity for residents to email directly with their query and they will be signposted to the right organisation to respond.

### Cost of Living Grants

NCC Officers within our Community Connector and Carers Teams continue to research and facilitate grants to our most vulnerable residents to support them during this cost-of-living crisis. These grants include the Carers Support Fund from the Welsh Government which provided supermarket shopping vouchers to the value of £100 and the Cost-of-Living Disabled Facility Grants which support early intervention and preventative measures or to assist current care and support needs.

### Warm Banks

In addition to the city-wide warm banks offered across the city over the winter between January and April 2023 the Community Connector for Ethnic Minorities supported a Warm Bank for ethnic minorities

providing citizens with information, advice and assistance on the cost-of-living crisis, carer's grants, social groups, housing, immigration, employment, and volunteering opportunities.

#### Homelessness and Financial Resilience:

Pressures on housing and homelessness services in the city continue to be very high. This is caused by a range of factors including the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on household finances, high rents within the private rented sectors and challenges in developing new housing projects. Whilst most people living in temporary accommodation under homelessness legislation continue to be single adults, officers are observing an increase in family homelessness.

NCC have confirmed Multiply Funding through the Shared Prosperity Fund. The council will establish a team which supports citizens to improve their levels of numeracy by focusing on financial inclusion. There will be a particular focus on engagement and outreach within the community. A specific team will work within the housing service to prevent homelessness and to ensure that people have the financial skills and resilience to move away from homelessness in the long term.

NCC have also recently completed the recruitment of a dedicated homelessness prevention team focused on negotiating with landlords and hosts to sustain accommodation or, where this not possible, supporting them to secure alternative housing before they become homeless.

#### Ukrainian Support Scheme

The use of one of Newport's hotels which being used by the Welsh Government "Super Sponsor Scheme" will cease at the end of May. The Connected Communities Team are working with the 9 households currently still at the hotel to find move on options with hosts in the local community or the private rented sector. Where this is not possible residents will be supported to move to alternative "Super Sponsor" accommodation elsewhere in Wales.

The council requires more people to come forward as "hosts" willing to accommodate people from the Ukraine. We are currently promoting the opportunity and would encourage all Councillors to promote hosting opportunities within their wards.

#### **Risks**

Newport Council will be reviewing the Council's Corporate and service area risks as part of the new Corporate Plan.

| <b>Risk Title / Description</b>           | <b>Risk Impact score of Risk if it occurs* (1-5)</b> | <b>Risk Probability of risk occurring (1-5)</b> | <b>Risk Mitigation Action(s)</b><br>What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect? | <b>Risk Owner</b><br>Officer(s) responsible for dealing with the risk?                  |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| Cost of Living impact on Council services | 4  | 4   | See this report on the Council's response to the cost-of-living crisis.   | Corporate Management Team   |
| Supporting refugees to settle in Newport. | 4  | 2   | See this Report on the Council's response to re-settlement programmes.  | Corporate Management Team, Head of Housing and Communities, Director of Social Services |
| Housing availability across the city      | 4  | 4   | See this report on the rough sleeping task force  | Corporate Management Team, Head of Housing and Communities, Director of Social Services |

\* Taking account of proposed mitigation measures

## **Links to Council Policies and Priorities**

Corporate Plan  
Strategic Equalities Plan

### **Options Available and considered:**

1. To consider and note the contents of the report on the Council's response.
2. To request further information or reject the contents of the report.

### **Preferred Option and Why**

1. To consider and note the contents of the report on the Council's response.

### **Comments of Chief Financial Officer**

The report highlights the various support which is available to citizens who are struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. Whilst a significant amount of this specific support is funded from UK Government and Welsh Government, certain factors are having an impact on the Council's finances, both in the short term and across the medium-term.

Especially in the context of an extremely challenging medium-term horizon, budget managers and Heads of Service will be expected to continue to monitor the impact of the external factors included in this report, especially in areas where grant funding ends, and work with Finance colleagues to escalate any material financial implications and report them where relevant. This will need to also include plans to mitigate any issues, as far as is possible.

### **Comments of Monitoring Officer**

There are no legal issues arising from the report. Any specific legal implications will be addressed as part of the Council's operational responses to the key issues identified in the report.

### **Comments of Head of People, Policy, and Transformation**

The cost-of-living crisis continues to impact on our residents and staff and this report highlights how we are working with partners to raise awareness of how to access advice and support, along with direct support to those most at need across Newport. This partnership approach is equally important in addressing the housing issues across the city.

The council is continuing to consider HR implications for our workforce and working with all service areas closely during this period.

### **Scrutiny Committees**

Not applicable as this an information only report and no decision is required from the Council.

### **Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment:**

Not applicable as this is an information only report and no decision is required.

### **Wellbeing of Future Generations**

**Long Term** – The short term actions the Council is taking now is considering the longer-term impacts which the cost of living is having on communities and businesses in Newport. Newport Council alongside partners are providing financial and non-financial support to help households and businesses.

**Collaborative** – Newport Council is working collaboratively across the organisation and also our external partners from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, schools, Welsh Government and other local partners to support cost of living support.

**Integration** – The actions that the Council and is taking supports the Council's organisational priorities for community cohesion, early intervention, and prevention. This also supports the Welsh Government's priority for Wales being a nation of sanctuary.

**Involvement** – We are involving communities and residents who are providing vital front-line support and helping vulnerable / disadvantage households, and refugees. The Council is also providing regular updates and communications to those impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.

**Prevention** - The short term actions the Council is taking now is considering the longer-term impacts which the cost of living is having on communities and businesses in Newport. Newport Council alongside partners are providing financial and non-financial support to help households and businesses.

### **Consultation**

Not Applicable

### **Background Papers**

Monthly reports to Cabinet.

**Dated: 7 June 2023**