

# Report

## Cabinet

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### Part 1

Date: 10 April 2024

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

**Purpose** To present an update to Cabinet on the external pressures impacting on the delivery of Council services, and a summary of Newport City Council's response.

**Author** Policy and Partnership Manager

**Ward** All Wards

**Summary** This monthly report provides an update on the external pressures facing the Council which include the cost-of-living crisis and pressures on housing and homelessness services across Newport.

As with previous months, 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:

- Head of Prevention and Inclusion
- Head of Housing and Communities
- Deputy Head of Education
- Head of Finance
- Head of Law and Standards
- Head of People, Policy, and Transformation

**Signed**

## Background

This report informs Cabinet members about the main challenges that Newport communities, businesses, and council services are facing, as well as how the Council is collaborating with our partners and communities to help those who need it across the city.

It was reported this month that [UK inflation fell to 3.4% in the year to February 2024](#). Although, overall, the cost of living is not falling but prices are rising less quickly than they were previously.

According to the latest [Public Opinions and Social trends report](#) released on 15 March 2024 by the Office for National Statistics, survey results showed that 46% of adults said their cost of living had gone up in the past month. These figures remained steady from the previous report.

The most common reasons given for increased cost of living were increases in the price of food shopping, the price of gas and electricity bills, and fuel. Within these figures, the proportion reporting the price of their fuel had increased (55%) has gradually risen since the start of 2024.

We are also aware that this crisis affects some of our communities more than others, and particularly those people living in Newport who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF). NRPF is a condition imposed by the Home Office on some migrants, which prevents them from accessing most forms of welfare benefits and public services.

A recent report from the [Bevan Foundation](#), supported this view and made recommendations as to how local authorities can work with partners to improve outcomes for people with NRPF. Over the coming months the council's Connected Communities Team will consider what practical steps the council can take to move any relevant recommendations forward.

### NCC and Partner Cost of Living Support

The cost-of-living crisis continues to impact upon our residents, staff, and businesses. Officers across NCC continue to collaborate with internal and external partners to provide advice, guidance, and support.

Examples of activities and support offered during this period included:

- Dissemination of shopping vouchers to 103 carers via grant funding.
- Facilitation of Think Wise Live Wise surgeries across the city providing multi-agency advice and guidance on income maximisation and managing bills.
- Dissemination of ten personal care and 195 cleaning packs to those in need.
- Dissemination of Trussel Trust crisis food parcels.
- Distribution of dry and tinned staple food as a bolt on to existing Fayre Share provision in Pill Mill and Beaufort Centre, Food Cycle at Eton Road, Duffryn Link Food Centre, and the Hope Centre, benefitting 160 families.
- Distribution of 350 Riverfront tickets to flying start families leading up to the Easter holidays.
- Facilitation of four February half term sessions with 960 people taking part.

NCC and partnership support planned for April includes the below.

- Further City wide 'Think Wise – Live Wise' drop in events planned for April.
- Family Wellbeing Sessions in four areas.
- Distribution of carers support fund shopping vouchers.
- Easter Family Fun Days across five areas.
- Save the Children Grant funded sessions in Alway.

### Warm Spaces

Shared Prosperity Funding has been secured to support the delivery of Warm Spaces during Winter 23/24 and 24/25. The funding will provide small grants directly to community organisations and will be overseen by GAVO, building on the successful scheme implemented last year. To end of February 27

grant awards have been made, totalling £59,367 of the £60,000 available. This has supported delivery of 388 warm spaces sessions, with a total attendance of 6879.

### Education

Supporting pupils and their families during this period is a continued focus within our education department and schools with educational achievement being one of the routes into employment and out of poverty.

Activities in education and schools during the period included:

- A three day 'Moving On' event facilitated by the Education Service and hosted at Coleg Gwent. Grant funding was provided to all secondary schools and settings to enable learners to attend with school-based staff. The event brought together a wide variety of providers to demonstrate options available to learners at the end of their compulsory education as part of the offer to students at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).
- A 'Welcome to Newport' breakfast event hosted by the Gwent Education Multilingual Service for newly arrived families to our city. Approximately twelve families engaged, with interaction with families enabling the Education Service to identify specific areas of query and support required by families to facilitate children's transition into our school system.
- Provision of breakfast clubs in forty of the forty-five primary schools with almost 300,000 breakfasts provided since September 2023.
- Provision of primary school free meals with an increase in uptake from 72% to 79% since January 2024.

In addition, the Education Service has successfully bid for £800,000 of central education grant funding as part of the national Shared Prosperity Fund Multiply project. This funding will be allocated directly to schools to support parents and support staff to access Maths and Numeracy courses. The overall objective of Multiply is to increase the levels of functional numeracy in the adult population across the UK, supporting access to employment opportunities.

### Homelessness and Financial Resilience

Pressures on housing and homelessness services in the city continue to be a concern, with the lead reason for homelessness continuing to be due to loss of rented accommodation followed by parent/relative/ friend no longer willing to accommodate. The council has taken on more units of temporary accommodation (TA) to meet the additional demand. However, this has placed further pressure on the housing budget because Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) regulations relating to TA cap the amount of money that councils are able to reclaim in fulfilling its statutory duties.

As part of the strategy to tackle these challenges the council has joined the Welsh Government Leasing Scheme Wales to secure more properties in the private rented sector. It currently has eighteen properties in the pipeline. Through the Strategic Housing Forum and its various subgroups including the Rough Sleeping Task Force as well as the Homewards Coalition NCC is working with a wide range of partners to prevent homelessness in more cases and increase the support of affordable housing. To set this in context the council's Social Housing Grant has been fully spent for the last 2 years and is forecasted to fully spend in the next financial year.

### Ukrainian Support Scheme

There are currently 143 households supported through the Ukrainian Support Scheme with four due to arrive in the next couple of months. Of these forty-five are living in hosting placements. One household has been rehoused recently with another two sponsorships ending imminently. The team are now focusing on rehousing these guests and preventing them going into the homeless system. Alongside this, the team are reassessing cases and collaborating closely with clients and hosts to ensure they are well supported, identifying alternative options should placements be at risk.

There have been recent changes to the rules regarding the various Ukraine schemes, the key changes include:

Ukrainians currently in UK: Ukrainian citizens are no longer able to sponsor family members into the UK through 'chain sponsorship.' This means that we are receiving correspondence about previous hosts wanting to sponsor family members of their previous guests into Newport. This will need to be closely monitored to ensure that we do not end up with overcrowding situations.

## Risks

<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> What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect?	<b>Risk Owner</b> 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
Homelessness and housing concerns across the city.	4	4	See this Report on the Council's response to these issues	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

Our residents and staff are still feeling the effects of the cost-of-living crisis, and this report demonstrates how we are working together to help lessen the impact where possible. Following the principles of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, officers and partners are providing immediate assistance as well as a long-term emphasis on resilience through direct contact with residents.

We keep on cooperating closely with our workforce and service areas to deal with and support any HR issues during this period.

## Comments of Monitoring Officer

This report is for noting only and there are therefore no legal implications arising directly from it.

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

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Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, officers and partners are providing immediate assistance as well as a long-term emphasis on resilience through direct contact with residents.

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### **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 Generation (Wales) Act**

**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 our external public, private, third sector, voluntary, and housing sectors.

**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.

#### **• Equality Act 2010**

Consideration of protected characteristics as detailed within the Equality Act has informed the activities and support provided.

#### **• Socio-economic Duty**

The support provided is fully congruent with the requirements of the socio-economic duty.

#### **• Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011**

All information is provided bilingually.

### **Consultation**

Not applicable

### **Background Papers**

Monthly reports to Cabinet.

Dated: 20 March 2024