

APPENDIX B

Response to Recommendations – CASSC report ‘Cardiff Council’s Support to Residents with the Cost-of-Living’- November 2023 Update

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
Context			
R1.	<p>To ensure support to residents is not delayed, undertake a review of all relevant internal processes that relate to both strategic and operational matters, identifying where simplification can occur. The review should be done in consultation with relevant managers and frontline staff. In particular, the review should consider the decision-making process in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of Living Discretionary Schemes • Relocation of advice services • Publication material <p>KF4, KF5, KF6, KF7</p>	Partially Accepted	<p>Processes are regularly reviewed. We have already simplified some processes such as the application for Free School Meals and ask for the minimum amount of evidence allowable for support schemes, where we have the discretion to do so. This helps to make the process of claiming and administering payments quicker. However, the application process of some benefits and grants that are funded by Central or Welsh Government dictate eligibility and evidence requirements and these requirements have to be abided by.</p> <p>Currently there are no specific Cost of Living Discretionary schemes. Should this change, we will consider the process that was used previously and amend to provide simplification where</p>

APPENDIX B

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			<p>required and link this with action 1 below.</p> <p>We regularly review the location of our Advice Services, looking at data in terms of footfall and where able add additional resources to areas in high demand. We have also recently expanded our services to include schools and supported accommodation as locations where advice sessions are provided. We also work with our partners, to ensure that we are not duplicating efforts but are providing services where there is a need.</p> <p>Action 1 - We will carry out a full review of our website and publication material by September 2023, ensuring it is accurate up to date and available in community languages. <u>Sept 2023 Update</u>, this action has been completed. All publicity materials and website has been updated to reflect support available ahead of winter</p>

APPENDIX B

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			<p>pressures and the UC Managed Migration in October. An action plan has been put in place to ensure to drive through support during the coming months.</p> <p>Nov 2023 Update: The Universal Credit Migration action plan has been completed, a FAQ sheet has been written and training for front line staff has been carried out. The Advice Teams have contacted all those who will be affected (2,600 households) via letter and a follow up phone call. A communication plan has been drawn up, including social media and online articles to outline support available.</p> <p>The newly aligned Money Advice and Welfare Liaison team (money advice for council contract holders) have recently added to outreach provision and now provide sessions at the University Hospital of Wales and new supported accommodation settings.</p>

APPENDIX B

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			<p>Action 2 - A task and finish group will be set up with managers and frontline staff to investigate and then implement any additional changes to process that need to be implemented to make any existing and planned processes simpler. This will be completed by December 2023.</p> <p>Nov 2023 Update: This action has now been completed, the group has reviewed and streamlined a number of internal processes, including the Rent Rescue Pathway.</p>
Demand			
R2.	<p>Due to the current, and highly anticipated continued demand, invest in more long-term employment opportunities for advice staff members. This could be achieved through an increase in permanent positions, or where temporary contracts are deployed, a year-by-year basis is avoided wherever possible.</p> <p>KF2, KF6, KF7, KF11</p>	Partially Accepted	<p>There are a significant number of permanent members of staff with the service. However, unfortunately historically, funding has often only been allocated on a year-by-year basis and therefore posts have reflected this. This is similar to many advice services across the sector as grant funding is often relied on to provide resources.</p>

APPENDIX B

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			<p>Support is provided to staff and to date, though funding streams have changed there have been very few members of staff that have no had contracts renewed.</p> <p>With the introduction of the Shared Prosperity Fund, funding is in place until 2025, which has allowed us to commit to these posts for 3 years, which we hope will bring some additional stability to officers.</p> <p>We also have a dedicated bid writer that continues to bid for further funding opportunities.</p> <p>Action 3 – To work with finance colleagues identifying crucial posts that although may be funded temporarily could be made into permanent posts. Sept 2023 update, this work is ongoing, working with HR to identify members of staff who have reached their 4 year’s service.</p>

APPENDIX B

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			<p>Nov 2023 Update: To date, 10 temporary members of Advice Staff have been identified as reaching their 4th year anniversary and have been made permanent. This work will continue, and staff service monitored as officers approach their 4th year anniversary.</p>
R3.	<p>To strengthen the council's mental health support, widen the partnership work with primary mental health services and mental health related organisations.</p> <p>In addition, look to enrol 'mental health champions' across the teams who can establish links with local mental health organisations, utilising the externals knowledge and training on offer.</p> <p>KF7, KF8, KF9, KF10</p>	Partially Accepted	<p>Support to staff is provided by seniors and managers who are always in hand should officers require. Officers also have access to the CareFirst service and the Councils employee counselling service. However, we are aware that our frontline staff especially deal with many vulnerable clients who have been through very difficult times. It is therefore vital that we strengthen support on hand from within our teams.</p> <p>Action 4 – To create 'mental health champions' in our teams by September 2023. Staff will be made aware of who these champions are and who they can</p>

APPENDIX B

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			<p>talk to. Training will be sourced for these champions but will not replace the professional service that is already provided but can help to signpost to further help where required.</p> <p>Sept 2023 update, Mental Health Champions to be in place from late October, Mental Health Awareness and Mental Health First Aid training booked for start of October for all Advice Teams. Staff briefing sessions are in place ready for Champions to start, however Managers will continue to carry out regular one to one meetings with individual staff, whilst utilising internal services.</p> <p>Nov 2023 Update: This action has now been completed. Mop-up Mental Health First Aid training will continue for new members of staff. Staff wellbeing will be a regular item on every team meeting.</p>
R4.	Introduce a target to monitor residents' waiting times in hubs for cost-of-living related support. The target should set a	Partially Accepted	We are committed to reducing waiting times in our Hubs. Pre

APPENDIX B

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
	<p>feasible waiting time and will help monitor levels of demand and evidence if additional resource is required. To ensure the target is achieved and lengthy wait times do not occur, or are reduced, alternative service provisions could be offered such as virtual or in-person appointments at set times.</p> <p>KF7,8,11,14,16,23,25</p>		<p>covid, we set targets and monitored waiting times for the money advice team in some of our Hubs. This was not possible in all Hubs at the time due to system restrictions.</p> <p>We can provide general information and advice over the phone, though our Adviceline and can also provide lower-level advice, referrals and signposting though our webchat. We have also provided appointments on Teams and facetime, where appropriate. Finally, appointments can be made in people's homes where a phone call is not sufficient or clients are not able to access Hubs, due to a disability perhaps.</p> <p>In our experience appointments are not the best effective use of officers' times. This has been trialled previously and there was a large number of no shows. This resulted in officers waiting for 10 minutes with no customer before calling someone else from the drop in queue. This caused</p>

APPENDIX B

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			<p>further delays and was far from effective. However, if someone specifically asks for an appointment, where possible we do try and accommodate this.</p> <p>Action 5 – To reintroduce a target for waiting times for the Money Advice Team. This could be completed for Central and Ely Hubs (as there is calling in system in place that records wait times) by May 2023 and could be reported on and monitored in core data. Further exploration of IT systems will be required to understand how and if this can be implemented in other Hubs and locations. This investigation and viability will be completed by February 2024.</p> <p>Sept 2023 Update, this action has been put in place for Central Library Hub and outreach Hubs during Summer 2023, awaiting further support from ICT for function on Advice Line to better monitor waiting times for calls. Wait times are collated daily and</p>

APPENDIX B

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			<p>monitored to inform changes in provision.</p> <p>Nov 2023 Update: A new telephone monitoring system has been implemented on the Advice Line and Housing Helpline; the new system now tracks waiting times and abandoned calls - the ability to have frequently asked question information played as part of the 'on hold' tone, to alleviate some customers needing to speak to a member of staff. Waiting time target now included in core data for both phone lines.</p>
Accessibility			
R5.	<p>To strengthen the local model and its offering undertake a review. In particular, the review should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing hub facilities, such as more Hubs offering 'free phones' to residents and phones can be used to access any freephone number. Ensure all hubs offer confidential areas for residents to receive support. 	Accepted	<p>All Hubs have freephone access. The public phones are pre-set with numbers for useful organisations such as the DWP and utility companies. We will review the pre-set numbers by June 2023 in our Hub phones to ensure the most relevant and up to date numbers are included.</p>

APPENDIX B

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widening the access for grass-root organisations to hold pop-up spaces in local hubs, offering cost-of-living related support, particularly those who specialise in representing population groups where engagement levels are low. • The internal information sharing within all council departments on the external support on offer; including how information detailing the days externals are present in local hubs is circulated. <p>KF3, KF7, KF8, KF11, KF12, KF13, KF14, KF18, KF20, KF21, KF25, KF27, KF32</p>		<p>If a customer needs to phone any other appropriate organisation or their landlord, then they can use Hub Officer's phones.</p> <p>All our Community Hubs have confidential areas and offices that customers can retreat to if a confidential conversation is required. Penylan does not have this space as it is a library and has not been transformed into a Community Hub.</p> <p>The teams work together to deliver cost of living event days and also attend other community events where pop-up spaces and stalls provide information advice and guidance.</p> <p>A significant amount of work has already been carried out to ensure that council staff are aware of the help on offer. This has included briefing sessions in Senior Managers, Cardiff Managers forum and the Equality Network Chairs meeting, adding Cost of Living information on staff</p>

APPENDIX B

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			<p>payslips, as well as adding information, leaflets and videos on the intranet. Advice staff hosted pop up events for council staff to receive help and support at their places of work, for example in Lamby Way and County Hall. Trade Union Reps and Councillors were also briefed and kept up to date with support available for Council Staff.</p> <p>Action 6 – District Hub Managers to actively engage with local communities in collaboration with the Advice and Into Work Advice managers to put on events across the year in their local communities. This information is to be shared with the Councils communications team, so internal staff are aware. Sept 2023 update; Hubs have fed into the Advice Service’s joint engagement plans across the summer including cost of living events, community engagement days, coffee mornings, young person events and GCSE/Alevel results day events. Council and</p>

APPENDIX B

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			<p>team social media accounts have been active in the promotion of events.</p> <p>Nov 2023 update: This action is now monitored via quarterly reporting measures; after the success of a joint engagement plan across Hubs and Advice Services, a timetable of coordinated events will be planned each quarter – with the next set of events themed around winter pressures and the new initiatives available (Emergency Fuel Vouchers, Health Snack Scheme and UC Migration).</p>
R6.	<p>Hold more pop-up events, in partnership with local organisations, both within council owned buildings and those outside of council control where footfall is high, such as local supermarkets. Areas where council hubs are not present must also be at the forefront when determining locations.</p> <p>KF3, KF7, KF8, KF11, KF12, KF13, KF20, KF 21, KF23, KF25, KF27, KF32</p>	Accepted	<p>Events are hosted jointly across the Advice Team and are held in high footfall areas across the city. Over the past 6 months, Cost of Living and Employment/Recruitment events have been held in city centre shopping centres, supermarkets, places of worship, primary and secondary schools, food banks, at community fun days, busy shopping streets and will</p>

APPENDIX B

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			<p>continue to work with community groups and third sector organisations to link in with existing engagement events.</p> <p>Action 7 – In partnership with organisations and as a follow on from Action 6, at least 4 pop up events to be held across the city throughout the year.</p> <p>Sept 2023 Update, this has already been achieved with events running throughout the summer months, however Cost of Living/Winter Pressure events will commence from October, teams hosting drop in events from Food Banks, local schools, temporary accommodation settings and RSL buildings.</p> <p>Nov 2023 Update: As above, Cost of Living events have been held in conjunction with other Advice events, such as the Talk Money Week, Get Online Week and Care Leavers week. Cost of Living support and awareness raising have been embedded into community events to reach as</p>

APPENDIX B

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			many residents as possible. Cost of Living information will continue to be made available at all future Advice Service and Hub events.
R7.	<p>Consider enhancing the flexibility of service delivery by offering home visits or virtual appointments (where appropriate).</p> <p>KF15, KF16, KF23, KF25</p>	Accepted	<p>Home visits are already available to those who cannot access our face-to-face provision and where a phone call may not suffice in dealing with the issue in hand. We will be increasing web chat availability over the year and already make use of Teams, facetime and Whats App video for clients who request this.</p> <p>The teams also work closely and refer seamlessly into the floating support service and Independent Living Service who can provide additional help and support for people in their own home where appropriate.</p>
R8.	<p>As a way of addressing public perception and stigma, continue to ensure within all cost-of-living related publication, words such as benefits, and claim are avoided – instead using words such as access and entitlement.</p> <p>KF18, KF19</p>	Accepted	<p>Action 8 - In conjunction with Action 1, a full review of terminology will also be carried out when reviewing our publication. This will be completed by September 2023.</p>

APPENDIX B

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			<p>Sept 2023 update, this action has been completed in line with the refresh of publicity materials, website content and advice given by frontline staff. Audits are continually carried out to ensure sound customer service.</p> <p>Nov 2023 Update: this action has been completed. All Cost of Living and Money Advice publicity materials have been updated and will now be monitored to ensure up to date information is included on all publications going forward.</p> <p>Materials are reviewed by a council tenant 'reading group' to ensure information is clear and simple to understand.</p> <p>A Virtual Youth Hub is being created to bring together advice for young people, including money, housing and homeless prevention advice, and a dedicated section for young</p>

APPENDIX B

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			people leaving care – launching in January 2024.
R9.	<p>To stimulate a feeling of trust between the council and individuals from minority backgrounds, and to strengthen the outreach and engagement with all cohorts of Cardiff communities, ensure workforce diversity within Cardiff's Advice Teams.</p> <p>KF17, KF18, KF24</p>	Accepted	<p>We have always been proud that our face-to-face services, including our advice services are representative of the communities that we serve. A significant amount of work has been undertaken with the introduction of the Cardiff Works Ready scheme, which is a recent development, designed to support those with no or little work experience from under-represented communities, secure temporary roles within the Local Authority, with the hope of them progressing into permanent employment. The Into Work Advice Service have recently employed a Community Engagement Coordinator to work as part of the Cardiff Works team, to engage with communities who have historically not used Council Services or looked to work for the Local Authority; this has already proven to be successful with a number of young people from</p>

APPENDIX B

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			<p>Southern Arc communities secure Trainee positions within the Advice Services, and has encouraged additional community engagement through association.</p> <p>Action 9 - As part of the overall Directorate Equality action plan we will continue to ensure the Advice Service area recruits from within our communities. Including where new funding opportunities arise the introduction of new trainee posts. This will be monitored as part of the in the EAP</p> <p>Sept 2023 Update, this continues to be the case with 30% of Advice staff being employed from BME backgrounds, and a significant increase (from 7% to 37%) of BME applicants entering the Cardiff Works pool following on from intensive work by the service's Community Engagement Officer.</p> <p>Nov 2023 Update: The new Cardiff Works For You initiative</p>

APPENDIX B

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			has now launched, supporting people from under-represented communities in to temporary employment opportunities with the Council. The 3-month subsidised placement, will support people who have little or no work experience; teams across the council will be invited to apply for the fully funded placements to support their workforce development.
Partnership Working			
R 10.	<p>To strengthen the city-wide offer to residents, explore the possibility of establishing a Neighbourhood Partnership which allows partners to share information and knowledge of local support. Learning should be applied from the Cost-of-Living Taskforce but wider membership should be applied, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide ranging grass root and third sector organisations • Community leaders <p>KF26, KF27, KF28, KF29</p>	Partially Accepted	The Cost-of-Living Taskforce was set up in September 2022 as a direct result of the crisis, bringing together organisations in a multi-agency approach to ensure a joined-up way of supporting the communities we serve. There is a specific focus on collaborative working, funding opportunities, sharing of resources and local intelligence. The Taskforce continues to meet monthly despite press coverage dying down of the crisis, to ensure residents of Cardiff are fully supported.

APPENDIX B

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			<p>In addition to this there are regular 'Anchor Group' meetings with Community Leaders and grass root / third sector organisations. These meetings were set up during Covid and have continued as members found them useful. These are chaired by the Council and allow local knowledge to be shared and importantly disseminated to other groups.</p>