

CABINET MEETING: 13 JULY 2023

**RESPONSE TO THE COMMUNITY AND ADULT SERVICES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT ENTITLED 'CARDIFF
COUNCIL'S SUPPORT TO RESIDENTS WITH THE COST-OF-
LIVING'**

**HOUSING & COMMUNITIES (COUNCILLOR LYNDA THORNE)
AND TACKLING POVERTY, EQUALITY & PUBLIC HEALTH
(COUNCILLOR PETER BRADBURY)**

AGENDA ITEM: 8

Reason for this Report

1. To approve the response to the report of the Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee entitled 'Cardiff Council's Support to Residents with the Cost-of-Living'.

Background

2. At the 2022 Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee Work Programme Forum, Members agreed to undertake an Inquiry exploring Cardiff Council's support for residents who have been affected by the cost-of-living crisis. Remaining mindful of the nature of the issue, Members concurred on the need for the Inquiry to provide timely, focused assistance to the Council in its review of services.
3. The task group reviewed a draft scope for the Inquiry at its first meeting and agreed they would:
 - Review issue-related Council services and propose actions, on the offer available to Cardiff residents.
 - Examine the scope, remit, demand, capacity and join up of services on offer.
 - Assess, in consultation with key stakeholders, community awareness and accessibility of services and schemes available.
4. To inform their considerations, Members agreed to hold several meetings which included talking to officers, third sector organisations, and clients of the services.

5. The Inquiry report was presented to cabinet in January 2023 and is attached at Appendix 1.

Findings and Response to the Recommendations

6. The report sets out 32 important key findings in relation to the current impacts of the cost-of-living crisis.
7. The findings of the report are welcomed, and it is pleasing to note that the report recognises and commends the work of the Council's Advice Services management and staff specifically, for leading and delivering vital services against a backdrop of continued uncertainty and ever-growing demand.
8. The report found evidence that there has been a significant and continued increase in demand for Advice Services. There has also been a notable increase in the number of older people presenting for help and, significantly, from those who have never experienced financial hardship before.
9. The importance of considering the methods of communication across the city was a key theme. The report identified the outcomes of the Cost of Living publicity campaign, which used a variety of methods to communicate to residents about the help on offer. These included drop-in sessions held at local Hubs and Community Centres and liaising with existing local groups to meet specific needs, for example for elderly or disabled residents.
10. The findings highlighted the importance of continuous training for staff, to ensure that all information and advice provided is accurate and up to date, an essential requirement in such a fast-moving environment.
11. The reliance on external short-term / grant-based funding streams to maintain and widen provision was clearly identified as both an opportunity and a risk.
12. It was found that the Council has strong relationships with external partners, which can be developed further with a focus on the integration of services to meet local needs.
13. The Inquiry made **10 recommendations**. A detailed response to the recommendations is set out at Appendix 2, with **8 being fully accepted** and **2 being partially accepted**.
14. Actions have been identified, where appropriate, to deliver against the recommendations and these are included alongside the specific responses to the recommendations. Deadlines for completion of these actions have also been set.

Reason for Recommendation

15. To respond to the report of the Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee entitled 'Cardiff Council's Support to Residents with the Cost-of-Living'.

Financial Implications

16. When reviewing actions required in response to recommendations, the financial implications on the Council of such actions should be considered with any alternative sources of funds to manage the Council's affordability for such actions alongside other competing priorities. Where activities or posts are to be supported by external grants, any expenditure and outcomes should be in accordance with the terms and conditions of such grant awards and the financial implications of continuity of service provision, should such grants cease, should be monitored as part of directorate financial planning, performance and monitoring at an early stage.

Legal Implications

17. In considering this report, Cabinet should have regard to:
 - (a) the Public Sector duties under the Equalities Act 2010 (including specific Welsh Public Sector duties). Pursuant to these legal duties, when making decisions, Councils must have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations on the basis of protected characteristics. Protected characteristics are a. Age; b. Gender reassignment; c. Sex; d. Race – including ethnic or national origin, colour, or nationality; e. Disability; f. Pregnancy and maternity; g. Marriage and civil partnership; h. Sexual orientation; i. Religion or belief – including lack of belief.
 - (b) The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ('the Act') is about improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act places a 'well-being duty' on public bodies aimed at achieving 7 national well-being goals for Wales - a Wales that is prosperous, resilient, healthier, more equal, has cohesive communities, a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language and is globally responsible. In discharging their respective duties under the Act, each public body listed in the Act must set and publish well-being objectives. These objectives will show how each public body will work to achieve the vision for Wales set out in the national well-being goals. When exercising its functions, Cabinet should consider how the proposed decision will contribute towards meeting the well-being objectives set by the Council, and in so doing achieve the national well-being goals. The well-being duty also requires the Council to act in accordance with a 'sustainable development principle'. This principle requires the Council to act in a way which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Put simply, this means that Cabinet must take account of the impact of their decisions on people living their lives in Wales in the future. In doing so, Cabinet must:
 - a) *look to the long term*
 - b) *focus on prevention by understanding the root causes of problems*

- c) *deliver an integrated approach to achieving the 7 national well-being goals*
- d) *work in collaboration with others to find shared sustainable solutions, and*
- e) *involve people from all sections of the community in the decisions which affect them.*

- c) Cabinet must also be mindful of the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards when making any policy decisions and consider the impact upon the Welsh language. The report deals with all these obligations.

HR Implications

18. The Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee (CASSC) recommendation 2 highlights the current and continued demand to invest in more long-term employment opportunities for advice staff members by increasing the number of permanent positions and, where possible, limiting the use of temporary or fixed term employment contracts.
19. Historically, grant funding has been allocated to the Advice Service on a year-by-year basis whereby some employees have been appointed on successive temporary or fixed term contracts.
20. The funding stream for the Shared Prosperity Fund is in place until 2025 and will enable the service to appoint prospective employees on longer term contracts. This will hopefully bring greater stability to the service and its employees and is likely to attract a higher number of applicants for advertised roles.
21. The service will need to closely monitor the ongoing renewal of fixed term/ temporary contracts. Under the provisions of the Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations, if a contract is successively renewed for more than four years the employee has the right to treat the contract as being that of a permanent employee, unless there is a specific business reason for it to remain on a fixed term/ temporary basis.
22. CASSC recommendation 3 highlights the need to appoint mental health champions across the service. It is recognised that frontline employees within the service will deal with many vulnerable service users. It is important that support mechanisms remain in place for employees, initially through line management and through access to the Council Employee Assistance Programme including Care First, Employee Counselling, and Occupational Health where further specialist support is required. Connect 5 Mental Health training has also been rolled out across the organisation both directly and through train the trainer sessions.
23. CASSC recommendation 9 highlights the need to ensure workforce diversity within the Advice teams. The service has undertaken some additional work with regards to the Cardiff Works Ready scheme to support underrepresented groups obtain temporary roles with the Council. Additionally, the role of Community Engagement Officer within the Into Work

Advice Service will engage with communities who historically have not sought to work for Cardiff Council. The Council recognises in its Workforce Strategy key priorities that it is vitally important that the makeup of the workforce is reflective of the communities and citizens that we serve.

Property Implications

24. There are no property implications in respect of this CASSC Cost of Living Inquiry Recommendations report. Where there are property transactions or valuations required to deliver any proposals, they should be done so in accordance with the Council's relevant Asset Management process and in consultation with appropriate service areas.

RECOMMENDATION

Cabinet is recommended to approve the response to the findings and recommendations of the Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee report entitled 'Cardiff Council's Support to Residents with the Cost-of-Living'.

SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Jane Thomas Director of Adults, Housing & Communities
	7 July 2023

The following appendices are attached:

- Appendix 1:** Cardiff Council's Support to Residents with the Cost-of-Living Inquiry Report
- Appendix 2:** Response to the Recommendations of Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee's report entitled 'Cardiff Council's Support to Residents with the Cost-of-Living'