

Appendix 2
CASSC Inquiry - Cardiff Council's Support to Residents with the Cost-of-Living
Recommendations

Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Not Accepted	Comments
Context		
<p>1. 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 	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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 required and link this with Action 1 below. - We regularly review the location of our Advice Services, looking at data in terms of footfall and where able,

		<p>add additional resources to areas in high demand. We have also recently expanded our services to include schools and supported accommodation venues 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 and up to date and available in community languages.</p> <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 processes to make any existing and planned processes simpler. This will be completed by December 2023.</p>
Demand		
<p>2. 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>Partially Accepted</p>	<p>There are a significant number of permanent members of staff with the service. However, unfortunately, funding has historically 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</p>

		<p>sector as grant funding is often relied on to provide resources.</p> <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>We will consider whether or not to increase the number of permanent posts to be funded temporarily but will continue to be mindful of the financial resilience risk in the event of grant funding being reduced to such a significant level that permanent posts may need to be deleted. Officers will work with finance colleagues to mitigate within the parameters of finite and increasingly constrained budgetary allocations.</p> <p>Action 3 – To work with finance colleagues identifying crucial posts that although may</p>
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		be funded temporarily could be made into permanent posts, being mindful of the financial resilience risk in the event of grant funding being reduced.
<p>3. 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>	Accepted	<p>Support to staff is provided by seniors and managers who are always on hand should officers require. Officers also have access to the CareFirst service and the Council's Employee Counselling Service. However, we are aware that our frontline staff 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 talk to. Training will be sourced for these champions but will not replace the professional service that is already provided, instead it will aim to help signpost to further help where required.</p>
<p>4. Introduce a target to monitor residents' waiting times in hubs for cost-of-living related support. The target should set a 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</p>	Accepted	<p>We are committed to reducing waiting times in our Hubs. Prior to the Covid pandemic, 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>occur, or are reduced, alternative service provisions could be offered such as virtual or in-person appointments at set times.</p>		<p>We can provide general information and advice over the phone, through our Adviceline and can also provide lower-level advice, referrals and signposting through our webchat. We have also provided appointments on Microsoft 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 most effective use of officers' times. This has been trialled previously and there were 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 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 by May 2023 (as there is a calling in system in place that records wait times) and could be reported on and monitored via Housing & Communities Core Data. Further</p>
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<p>Accessibility</p>		
<p>5. 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. • 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>Accepted</p>	<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> <p>If a customer needs to phone any other appropriate organisation or their landlord, then they can use Hub Officers’ phones.</p> <p>All our Community Hubs have confidential areas and offices that customers can use 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 for Managers and Senior Managers, via the Cardiff Managers forum and the Equality Network Chairs meeting. The team also added Cost of Living information on staff payslips and added 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 Representatives and Councillors were also briefed and kept up to date with the 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 Council’s Communications Team, so internal staff are aware.</p>
<p>6. 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</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<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</p>

<p>council hubs are not present must also be at the forefront when determining locations.</p>		<p>shopping centres, supermarkets, places of worship, primary and secondary schools, food banks, at community fun days and on busy shopping streets. The team will 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 are to be held across the city throughout the year.</p>
<p>7. Consider enhancing the flexibility of service delivery by offering home visits or virtual appointments (where appropriate).</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<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 Microsoft Teams, Facetime and WhatsApp 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>
<p>8. As a way of addressing public perception and stigma, continue to ensure within all cost-of-living related publication, words such as benefits, and</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p>Action 8 - In conjunction with Action 1, a full review of terminology will also be carried</p>

<p>claim are avoided – instead using words such as access and entitlement.</p>		<p>out when reviewing our publications. This will be completed by September 2023.</p>
<p>9. 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>Accepted</p>	<p>We have always been proud that our face-to-face services, including our advice services are representative of the communities that we serve.</p> <p>A significant amount of work has been undertaken with the introduction of the Cardiff Works Ready scheme, a recent development, designed to support those with no or little work experience from under-represented communities to 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 Southern Arc communities securing Trainee positions within 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</p>

		<p>within our communities, including where new funding opportunities arise and from the introduction of new trainee posts. This will be monitored as part of the Adults, Housing & Communities Equality Action Plan.</p>
<p>Partnership Working</p>		
<p>10. 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>Partially Accepted</p>	<p>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 a reduction in press coverage of the crisis, to ensure residents of Cardiff are fully supported.</p> <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 the Covid pandemic 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. The creation of a Neighbourhood Partnership would duplicate this work.</p>

