

This report is public	
Cost of Living 23/24 review and 24/25 activities	
Committee	Overview and Scrutiny
Date of Committee	10 September 2024
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities, Councillor Rob Pattenden
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	21 August 2024
Report of	Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing, Nicola Riley

Purpose of report

To provide an update on the additional activity described in the 2023/24 Cost of Living action plan and to note proposed future approaches and activity.

1. Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolves:

- 1.1 To request the Executive to note the review of the 2023/24 cost of living plan and proposed range of activities planned for 2024/25

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides a review (Appendix 1) of the activities Cherwell District Council facilitated and delivered as part of the Cost-of-Living plan for 2023/24 to support residents experiencing difficulties due to rising cost of living.
- 2.2 Attached to the report are PowerPoint slides (Appendix 2) for the Executive to note the proposed range of activities planned for 2024/25

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
Finance	The 2023/24 Cost of Living programme was delivered within the proposed budget and within Appendix 1 the review details the cost allocation for each project. Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 28 August 2024
Legal	There are no legal implications arising as the programme is within the council's remit to deliver and all grant aid will be subject to a robust process with appropriate monitoring and this report is just

	for information. Alison Coles Legal Services Operations Manager, 28 August 2024			
Risk Management	Risks related to the Cost of Living programme are managed through the service operational risk register. The Review and appendix 1 highlights there were no areas of non-delivery against funding, which could be one of the main risks. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 28 August 2024			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact				The 2023/24 Cost of Living plan was delivered in line with our Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion framework, seeking to ensure that all residents who are experiencing difficulties because of cost-of-living pressures will be enabled to take action to minimise that impact.
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
Climate & Environmental Impact				N/A
ICT & Digital Impact				N/A N/A
Data Impact				N/A
Procurement & subsidy				N/A
Council Priorities	Healthy, resilient and engaged communities The Cost of Living plan 2023/24 supported our most vulnerable residents while working with partners to address the causes of health inequality and deprivation.			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			

Consultation & Engagement	Will engage with local community to continue to review impact of the cost of living programme and adapt services for the future
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Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 Following Covid and the subsequent Cost of Living crisis Cherwell District Council has provided additional support to low-income households, initially in 22/23 with additional payments or food vouchers to those in receipt of housing benefit and last winter 23/24 ran a programme of support and grant schemes to offer support to grass roots community groups and individuals.
- 3.2 Appended to this report is Appendix 1 that demonstrates the range of activities undertaken and where possible the impact that they had on residents who accessed them in 2023/24.
- 3.3 A succession of Household Support Grants have been available to Cherwell DC to support this work, with HSF 5 being the last of those. The government has not made any additional funding available from central government for this purpose.

4. Details

- 4.1 To review the 2023/24 Cost of Living programme and impact that this has had on residents.
- 4.2 To discuss proposed 2024/25 cost of living activity plan (attached slides Appendix 2) for autumn / winter 24/25. Consultation across different services at Cherwell has been undertaken to provide the activity plan to ensure that this encompasses a range of activities that suit the needs of the local community.
- 4.3 The 2023/24 Cost of Living plan was hugely successful and provided additional support for local communities and residents delivered by Cherwell DC and facilitated through voluntary / community organisations.
- 4.4 Appendix 1 details what the different activities and projects delivered were along with the impact that these projects had, key delivery partners and cost allocation of projects.

An example of some of these projects are listed below and detailed in Appendix 1

- Electric Blanket Testing and Safety: Conducted electric blanket testing across Kidlington, Bicester, and Banbury, where 298 people attended, leading to the safe disposal of faulty blankets, with failure rates ranging from 28% to 34%.

- Food Insecurity Support: Distributed £3,000 in food grants to 25 community groups, supporting an estimated 4,234 households. Additionally, expanded the winter warmers program, providing meals and warm spaces to 135 households.
- Fuel Poverty Relief: Relaunched the Cherwell Warm Welcome Network, increasing warm spaces from 48 across the district and supported 58 households with discounted oil prices through the Oil Co-op scheme.
- Household Support Grants: Awarded up to £5,000 grants for energy-efficient equipment, benefiting 720 households, including families with children and pensioners. The Sunrise Multicultural Centre wrote in their evaluation report that *'This grant was amazing! and made a big difference to the people who received the larger electrical items.*
- Money Maximisation and Debt Advice: Provided debt and money advice to 327 households (1,299 individuals) through collaborations with Citizens Advice, Trading Standards, and internal council teams.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

This report reviews the progress and impact delivered as part of the Cost of Living programme 2023 / 24 therefore there are no options to consider.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 To note the Cost-of-Living 2023/24 Programme and note proposed future approaches and activity for 2024/25
- 6.3 Going forward the Wellbeing service wants to continue to work in partnership across the district with statutory and voluntary sector organisations, both strategically and on a hyperlocal basis, to ensure that Cherwell residents can access support through additional targeted interventions and secure help when needed.
- 6.4 The council recognises that the response to the cost of living crisis is changing and will need to continue to be flexible and adapt to best meet the changing needs of residents and the proposed activities will seek to continue to address this.

Decision Information

Key Decision	N/A
Subject to Call in	N/A

If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All wards but with a greater impact in areas with higher levels of deprivation

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Appendix 1 Cost of Living Review 2023/24
Appendix 2	Appendix 2 Cost of Living Plan Power point Slides 2024/25 to go through
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None
Report Author	Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing, Nicola Riley
Report Author contact details	Nicola.Riley@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk