

This report is public	
Cost of Living 23/24 review and 24/25 activities	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	4 November 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 within the Household support grant aid.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To agree the proposed plan which was endorsed and recommended by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which noted the review of the 2023/24 cost of living plan and supported the proposed range of activities planned for 2024/25 were considered.

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 ongoing cost-of- living pressures.
- 2.2 Attached to the report at Appendix 2 slides 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				Draught Busters initiatives help mitigate climate change by cutting energy use, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and promoting a more sustainable approach to home energy management.
ICT & Digital Impact				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	<p>Will engage with local community to continue to review impact of the cost of living programme and adapt services for the future.</p> <p>This report was considered and endorsed at the at the 10 September 2024 Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) meeting. OSC agreed to continue the Food Insecurity working group in 2024/25.</p>

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 2022/23 with additional payments or food vouchers to those in receipt of housing benefit and last winter 2023/24 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 The 2023/24 Cost of Living programme and impact that this has had on residents is captured at Appendix 1. Cross team working across the council has also taken place through regular officer and Partner meetings. The Food Insecurity Working Group of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has helped guide the development of the delivery of elements of the programme related to food access.
- 4.2 The proposed 2024/25 cost of living activity plan is attached at Appendix 2. 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. This has also been shared with community and charitable organisations who have assisted in distributing grant aid in the last round of Household support funds.

- 4.3 The 2023/24 Cost of Living plan was 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.

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.

Option1

To not respond additionally to cost-of-living burdens felt by residents most impacted by economic pressures as there isn't a base budget for the additional spend. This has been rejected because of the availability of further allocations of Household support grant aid, which allow the Council to support residents without budgetary impact.

Option2

To concentrate on fewer activities than set out in the plan at Appendix 2 This has been rejected because the spread of grant allows a greater number of issues to be relieved.

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
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 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	Yes
Subject to Call in	Yes

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