



ADUR & WORTHING
COUNCILS

Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee
24 November 2022
Agenda Item [10]

Key Decision [No]

Ward(s) Affected:N/A

What the Councils are doing to help with the cost of living crisis

Report by the Director for Digital, Sustainability and Resources

Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides some background information on what the Councils are doing to help with the cost of living crisis which the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JOSC) has asked to review as part of its Work Programme in 2022/23.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee review the actions which the Councils are taking to help with the cost of living crisis in Adur and Worthing and question the relevant Officers and Cabinet Members.

3. Context

- 3.1 At its meeting on 22 September 2022 the Committee received and agreed to a scrutiny request from the JOSC Chairmen which requested that the Committee should review the work which the Councils are undertaking to help and support the local communities with the Cost of living crisis.

4. Issues for consideration

- 4.1 The Councils cannot directly control the inflation increases and high energy costs but can help by taking a realistic approach to the services it provides to assist local residents and support the most vulnerable in the communities. Assistance from the Councils can assist residents in finding support with food poverty, housing debt, energy bills, unemployment and health and wellbeing. The Councils can work with partners to support and help to minimise the impact of the cost of living emergency.

- 4.2 In response to the ongoing pressures caused by the cost of living impacts, separate Adur and Worthing Cost of Living Roadmaps have been developed as a way to convene a range of partners to work together to support and enable as many people as possible to be able to cope over the next two years. The Roadmaps were approved by both Adur and Worthing Joint Strategic Sub-Committees in September and aim to respond to both immediate and urgent need, whilst building a longer and more sustainable approach by:

- supporting households to be as financially resilient as possible
- supporting communities to help each other and those in most need
- helping to reduce cost impacts on people
- developing sustainable approaches to address income inequalities

- 4.3 The reports presented to the Adur and Worthing Joint Strategic Sub-Committees, including the road maps, are attached as the Appendix to this report and JOSC is requested to consider these and question Officers and Cabinet Members on progress with the implementation of the proposals.

5. Engagement and Communication

- 5.1 The JOSC Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen have been consulted on the proposals contained in this report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications to consider within this report but there are financial implications contained within the reports presented to the Joint Strategic Sub-Committees.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Councils have the power to do anything to facilitate or which is conducive or incidental to the discharge of any of their functions.
- 7.2 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides a Local Authority to do anything that individuals generally may do (subject to any current restrictions or limitations prescribed in existing legislation).
- 7.3 Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 1999 (LGA 1999) contains a general duty on a Best Value Authority to make continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Background Papers

Reports to the Adur and Worthing Joint Strategic Sub-Committees - 6 September (Worthing) and 29 September (Adur)

Officer Contact Details:-

Mark Lowe

Scrutiny and Risk Officer

Tel: 01903 221009

mark.lowe@adur-worthing.gov.uk

Sustainability & Risk Assessment

1. Economic

Economic outcomes are a critical underpinning for any cost of living work. The economic fortunes of the town have an impact on employment rates and wages. Developing employment initiatives through the Council's Good Work scheme as well as identifying new opportunities with DWP and the Chamber of Commerce to enhance training and employment opportunities in the town are included in the Roadmaps and Action Plans .

2. Social

2.1 Social Value

The Cost of Living Roadmaps form a key part of Council's Thrive Mission: People are healthy and resourceful and can access the right help when they need it. It aims to respond to both immediate need and to build longer term resilience by: - supporting households to be as financially resilient as possible - supporting communities to help each other and those in most need - helping to reduce cost impacts on people - developing sustainable approaches to address income inequalities. The Cost of Living Roadmaps set out a series of initiatives that will deliver significant social value to Adur residents in both the immediate and longer term.

2.2 Equality Issues

An equalities impact assessment was carried out for the cost of living project at an early stage of its development. In summary it found that: ● Vulnerability to rises in the cost of living are closely associated with poverty and social exclusion. Issues around health, employment, education and wellbeing are all exacerbated by financial stress but can also be factors that lead to its creation. Therefore, those already most socially disadvantaged are likely to be those most at risk of not coping. This includes groups such as those protected through the Equality Act 2010, but also those living in Adur and Worthing most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and in relatively expensive private accommodation where rents are rising. ● Many residents will experience cumulative disadvantages as they are from a number of affected communities and are living in areas or have tenures characterised by most challenging circumstances. For example older people, lone parents, carers or those residents who have a known disability and are unable to work, struggling to find work and are on benefits are particularly vulnerable. Further work will be undertaken to ensure that equalities assessment is part of all of the initiatives captured in the Roadmap.

2.3 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

There are risks of growing social discontent as cost of living impacts escalate so intervening to try to support the community more effectively is a mitigating strategy.

2.4 Human Rights Issues

Matter considered and this proposal does not impact adversely on people's human rights.

3. Environmental

The energy efficiency components of the Cost of Living Roadmap also meet climate action goals.

4. Governance

The Cost of Living Roadmap aligns with Council's core objectives as set out in its Thrive Mission as well as with a number of Council policies such as the 'HealthyAWC' 2021-2024 Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Adur and Worthing, which identified that 'many of our residents are only just surviving. They lack sufficient money to live - to feed themselves and their families, to heat their homes'. This is an important strategy in reputational terms and Councils will need to ensure that it is responsive to partners and to the community in the delivery of the Roadmap. This programme of work requires extensive resourcing, both within existing work streams for Council teams, but also as a project in itself. It needs project management and communications support at a minimum to ensure that it can be delivered effectively.