



# Committee report

Committee	<b>CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
Date	<b>8 NOVEMBER 2022</b>
Title	<b>COST OF LIVING CRISIS</b>
Report of	<b>STATUTORY SCRUTINY OFFICER</b>

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## BACKGROUND

1. The Committee requested an overview of the actions being taken by the Council to the Island Community in connection with the cost of living crisis. This paper sets out a summary of actions and this information has been supplied by the Director of Regeneration and the Assistant Director, Access, Resources and Business Development, Hampshire County Council and Isle of Wight Council, Children's Services Department

## OUTLINE OF ACTIONS

### General overview

2. Following so closely on from the COVID -19 pandemic the impacts of the war in Ukraine, notably inflation in day to day living costs and energy prices, provides major challenges for Island businesses and residents.
3. Recovery planning from the impacts of the pandemic has had to pivot toward how the council and partner organisations might support our community to mitigate the worst effects of the cost of living challenges people are facing.
4. Working together and providing co-ordination and effective communication of the various support measures available, in much the same way as took place during the pandemic, has been the councils biggest role to date.
5. This work has been led by an Internal officer anti-poverty group, reporting to the deputy leader and the Covid -19 recovery cell comprising key partner organisations, updating the Island Health and Well Being board. The actions taken to date include:
  - Management and distribution of the government "Household support fund" including the establishing of 3 community pantries

- Collation, publication and regular updating of a “compendium” of the wide range of support and advice available to islanders experiencing challenges dealing with debt, fuel poverty, food support, and promoting general well being at [Cost of living \(iow.gov.uk\)](http://iow.gov.uk)
  - Further information and support at Advice directory for the Isle of Wight - Islefinit
  - Warm spaces offer at our main libraries and co-ordination and promotion of local warm space initiatives offering heated spaces and wrap around advice and support
  - Mobile hub – as part of the “Living Well” service an outreach advice service travelling to more remote parts of the island , focusing on places without defined “warm spaces”
  - Funding of training for Energy Help mates – the council has provided grant funding to the Footprint trust to provide training for volunteers to help an advise people with fuel costs and accessing energy efficiency measures
  - Support for the “Winter is coming” event information event held on 14th October
  - Planning for “Food security and well being” event to be held on 18th November addressing mapping of food based initiatives across the island and consideration of need for, scope of, further support
  - Communications campaign throughout the winter highlighting areas of concern, potential advice and support available and signposting to that support
6. The need for any further action will be kept under review and the Council’s response will continue to be informed by the “Cost of Living hub” operated by the LGA

### Household Support Fund

7. On 26th May 2022, the government announced an extension to the Household Support Fund as targeted financial support for those in need over the Autumn and Winter period. Guidance and grant determinations were confirmed on 30th September 2022. Although this has been announced as an extension, unallocated funds from previous grant rounds are unable to be carried forward due to a change in the spend criteria, namely the removal of ringfenced proportions of the fund to certain household compositions.
8. The conditions of the Household Support Fund extension differ from the previous two rounds of funding in that there is no determination as to which household composition receives funding, although DWP have stated that assistance should be focussed on households that are not in receipt of other government financial assistance. This may include households not currently in receipt of DWP welfare benefits.

9. The Isle of Wight's share of the Household Support Fund is £1,131,576.08, to be spent between 1st October 2022 and 31st March 2023.
10. Subject to decision by Cabinet, and working closely with partners, the Council intends to allocate funding to a range of support that will ensure a variety of households benefit. This is likely to include:
- food vouchers for groups including foster carers, care leavers, gateway card holders, those in receipt of housing benefit and adults with learning difficulties
  - Working with Adult Social Care and Housing Needs alongside the Living Well and Early Help Service to establish a Mobile Food Hub that will cover the Island providing a hot meal and warm space for any resident in need.
  - Additional funding for Citizens Advice to continue to help families pay fuel bills, and the help through crisis line.
  - Funding to ensure community pantries have sufficient food, and to establish new community pantries on the Island.
  - Discretionary grants for schools such that they can support families in need.
  - A community grant fund to enable local projects and initiatives to be funded across the Island.
  - A fund to support residents with exceptional housing costs.
11. A summary of the support offered to IOW residents using the April – September 2022 Household Support Fund allocation is attached.

#### APPENDICES ATTACHED

Appendix 1 – Household Support Fund 21 April – 30 September 2022 key achievements

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