

Briefing Note Cost of Living Update October 2022

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Background

As a council we are acutely aware of the pressures many people are already facing due to the increased cost of living, and the potential for these to grow over the autumn and winter period. Key information for residents can be found on the [cost of living](#) page on the Wiltshire Council website.

At [Cabinet on Tuesday 27 September](#), Wiltshire Council Leader, Cllr Richard Clewer set out how the authority is prepared for the significant challenges we and our communities expect to face over the autumn and winter. The Area Boards were highlighted as critical to our coordinated response given their local influence, extensive partnership networks and mobilising powers – as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The role of Area Boards

Each of the Area Boards represent unique communities and their approach to supporting the cost of living should reflect their in-depth understanding of the key local partners, volunteers and residents. There are a number of ways in which the boards may choose to support communities and we would encourage local ideas, initiatives and projects. Below are some examples of the ways in which all boards can support the cost of living in Wiltshire.

- **Data and intelligence gathering**

Each board is requested to undertake conversations with their key local stakeholders and residents to gain a detailed understanding of the impact of the cost of living. Area Boards can facilitate conversations or utilise existing meetings, networks and engagements to gather data and intelligence. The Strategic Engagement and Partnerships Manager will collate and report back the key local findings.

- **Warm spaces and community food provision**

Wiltshire Council is developing an interactive map that will enable residents to easily identify local warm spaces, food banks, community fridges and other low or no cost food provision. Wiltshire warm spaces can be existing, new, adapted or extended community provision that follows these principles:

- Welcoming, inclusive and open to the general public with no criteria for entry.
- Safe with appropriate safeguarding, insurance and all appropriate policies in place.
- Non-judgemental, where everyone is treated equally, with dignity and respect.

- No cost or low cost to attendees.

Wiltshire's libraries will be offering access to warm spaces and signposting to both financial and practical support imminently and we are aware of a significant number of faith and community based organisations which are also making their buildings and activities welcoming and accessible warm spaces. Area Boards can encourage local organisations to complete the [warm spaces survey](#) to ensure their offer is on our interactive map. It would also be prudent to review the local offer within each community area to consider if further warm spaces could be developed.

There is also a Wiltshire Community Food Network in development, that aims to bring together leads from Wiltshire based food banks, community fridges and other low or no cost food providers. The ambition of this network is to strengthen the resilience of the community food offer and ultimately ensure that residents in need have access to low or no cost food in their community. A further survey is being imminently developed to capture this information.

We would encourage Area Boards to ensure all of their local warm spaces and local community food providers are registered on our interactive map, which will be live on the [cost of living](#) webpage soon. The Area Board may wish to review the local community food and warm spaces offer and discuss with local partners if any further provision is required.

- **Funding**

Area Boards are encouraged to prioritise the use of the older and vulnerable adult funding to cost of living projects and initiatives.

Wiltshire Council is also holding conversations with the community/voluntary sector and other partners, to look at enhancing and strengthening an already established local funding appeal. This funding aims to raise support directly for individuals in need as well as providing additional funding to charities and groups who provide a vital lifeline to communities in Wiltshire. More will be known on this shortly and we will update Area Boards in due course.

The above are examples of the ways in which Area Boards can support the cost of living for Wiltshire residents, however, we would strongly encourage Area Boards to review and consider further local projects and initiatives. The Strategic Engagement and Partnerships Manager will collate and report back the key findings and actions undertaken by the Area Boards.

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