



## Staffordshire Leaders Board

### Cost of Living

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022

#### Report from the Chair of the Staffordshire Leaders Board

##### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Local government across Staffordshire is providing much needed support and signposting for residents to help with the rising cost of living. Councils across Staffordshire are also working together and with partners, to co-ordinate efforts where possible.
- 1.2. There is also significant support being provided right across the county by our voluntary and community sector (VCSE), and by our residents supporting each other. It would be an impossible task to map out all of the activity and support that is available, so this paper highlights a selection of key initiatives and support. Local authorities are already working well together and with partners to address the cost of living. In order to maximise efficiencies and reduce duplication of this work, it is recommended that an Officer Group is established to continue to take this work forward.

##### 2. Summary of Support

###### 2.1. Cannock Chase District

The Council is providing support online for residents to help with the cost of living crisis, including information on energy costs, financial support, food costs, and water costs. It has also established an online directory of food banks, community tables, warm hubs, and community cafes across the district that residents can access.

Further information – <https://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/council/your-community/help-cost-living-crisis>

###### 2.2. East Staffordshire Borough

The Council is providing a variety of support for residents, including Council Energy Tax rebates, a Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund for VCSE groups, and support for





people at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping. The Council are also working with local community organisations to provide residents with warm spaces free of charge, including Uttoxeter Heath Community Centre, Winhill Neighbourhood Resource Centre, and the Burton Caribbean Association. An energy advice service has been set up with Beat the Cold, and a permanent food bank has been established at Meadowside as part of the 'Community Cans Can Help' project with Everyone Active and You1st. Work is also taking place with the County Council on the Staffordshire Warmer Homes programme and the Family Support Fund.

Further information – <http://eaststaffsbc.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support>

### **2.3. Lichfield District**

The Council have made the ground floor of District Council House a Warm Space for residents on weekdays from 8am to 5pm. This is part of a network of similar facilities being provided by organisations across the district, including Lichfield Cathedral. Financial support is available to residents via energy rebate payments for households, support with Discretionary Housing Payments, and a more generous Local Council Tax Support Scheme which is due to launch in April 2023. Members of the Council's Customer Services Team also attend Lichfield Foodbank on Fridays to assist with Council Tax Support, and Housing Benefit enquiries.

Further information – <https://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/community/cost-living-support>

### **2.4. Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough**

Winter Warm Packs are being given to residents that are struggling financially and can't afford to heat their homes. Funding has also been secured to purchase electric blankets, which will be given to the most vulnerable and those suffering from ill-health. The Council are working with partners on a range of initiatives, including working with the Fire & Rescue Service to purchase and distribute Carbon Monoxide Alarms, working with the County Council to distribute Slow Cookers for families in need, and working with the North Staffordshire Financial Inclusion Group to develop and support initiatives to tackle financial exclusion.

Further information – <https://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/housing/help-heating-home>

### **2.5. South Staffordshire District**

The Council has introduced a 'Cost of Living Checklist' that focuses on three areas; internal controls, community support, and business support. The latter two areas focus on signposting residents to information and guidance. It has also increased its





Welfare Support Team to help manage the increase in demand. The 'Communities are the Best Medicine' grant programme has been launched, offering funding for Parish Councils and local VCSE groups that are providing support for local communities over the winter months.

## **2.6. Stafford Borough**

The Council has established and funded a Food Distribution Hub to provide additional support to local foodbanks, working in partnership with the VCSE sector through a newly formed Community Interest Company. The Warmer Homes Stafford partnership has been established with Beat the Cold, helping residents to access funding and advice on keeping warm, reducing fuel bills, and improving energy efficiency. The Council is working with a number of different partners on various Warm Places initiatives.

## **2.7. Staffordshire Moorlands District**

The Council has established a targeted communications approach, including a cost of living hub on their website, targeted social media posts, and improved communication of Local Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit information. It is also facilitating access to emergency support, including payment of discretionary Council Tax Energy rebates, the creation of a Fuel Bank Scheme to support families, and work with the North Staffordshire Financial Inclusion Group. A Community Vulnerability Network has been established with Support Staffordshire to identify and address issues that face the most vulnerable, as well as requests for financial support from community groups.

Further information – <https://www.staffs Moorlands.gov.uk/CostOfLivingHub>

## **2.8. Tamworth Borough**

The Council has produced a winter leaflet, providing information on places to go locally for help and advice, including VCSE groups and libraries. This leaflet has been circulated to GP surgeries and shared with information about flu and Covid booster vaccines. The Council are working with the County Council to distribute 2,000-3,000 slow cookers. A funding bid has also been submitted for local VCSE organisation Community Together CIC to run a cooking project alongside the distribution of the slow cookers. The Council are also working with their housing repair contractor to provide 15 slow cookers for young mothers living in supported accommodation and Winter Warmer Packs for the Housing Team to distribute.

## **2.9. Staffordshire County**





The 'Here to Help' campaign and website is providing residents with information, advice, and signposting residents to local community support. A number of grant programmes are currently live which are supporting cost of living initiatives, including the Members Community Fund and the Community Recovery Grant scheme with the Community Foundation for Staffordshire. The County Council are also working with many District and Borough partners to distribute slow cookers to vulnerable households as part of the Household Support Fund. Staffordshire library services is offering a range of support over the winter months, from free hot drinks in some of its libraries, warm spaces, offering a place for charging phones and laptops, helping students to study in a warm place and supporting small start-up businesses with a place to work. The County Council's network of Community Help Points, which include libraries and children's centres, will also be signposting residents to support and help with the cost of living pressures.

Further information – <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Community/Cost-of-living-support/Here-to-help.aspx>

### 3. Conclusion

- 3.1. There is a substantial amount of positive work taking place to support residents with the cost of living pressures from across the public sector and within our communities. This report provides a high-level summary of key activities and support led by local authorities in Staffordshire. This paper recommends establishing an officer group to ensure partners continue to collaborate locally where appropriate, as well as ensuring residents are signposted to all relevant support and guidance.

