

Midlothian Cares Practical Support Measures Identified by the Cost of Living Task Force

Report by Chair of the Cost of Living Task Force (Councillor Parry)

Report for Decision

1 Recommendations

Midlothian Council is recommended to;

- i. Note the range of time limited crisis mitigation measures outlined in the report, and
- ii. Note the time limited review timescales for these measures due to rapidly changing landscape and pressures
- iii. Agree to take forward some immediate measures in advance of winter from utilisation of £118,013 (22/23) from earmarked Covid funding on the basis that it supports wellbeing.
- iv. Note the launch of Midlothian Cares Communication Plan including pledges from Local Businesses and Organisations
- v. Note and promote the Calendar of Activities for Challenge Poverty Week.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to explore the potential mitigating actions Midlothian Council could take to support local people experiencing additional challenges from the cost of living crisis. The report also sets out some immediate recommended actions and others for further exploration to enable a fuller assessment of cost, impact and deliverability.

The report also contains a communications plan of how we will ensure local people are made aware of the additional supports available through the Midlothian Carers Communication Plan, as well as a Calendar of Activity for Challenge Poverty Week.

Date: 23rd September 2022

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3 Background

- 3.1** Governments at UK and Scottish levels have announced a number of proposals to support those households most affected by the Cost of Living Crisis, for example doubling the Scottish Fuel Insecurity Fund. At the time of writing this report emergency budget reviews are underway and further information at UK and Scottish Government levels respectively is expected. In this context, the Cross Party Midlothian Cost of Living Task Force recognises the need to also act at a local level to identify and provide practical supports.

Due to the unprecedented nature of the cost of living crisis there is a need to provide additional support measures to ensure local people have dignity and choice over the actions they can take. In previous years there has always been a robust winter planning process coordinated by the Midlothian Health & Social Care Partnership, Place, and Children, Young People and Partnerships Directorates, but due to the increased pressures the task force expects a broader range of local people and staff will need to access a wider suite of supports with a specific focus on:

- Money/ Household Income
- Food
- Fuel and Energy
- Networks of Support
- Partnership Pledges
- Communications

The Midlothian Cares Action Plan includes a number of short and longer term interventions over 3, 6, 12 and 24 months with reviews and assessment of need built in. There are also developmental measures which will change and adapt over time. This is required as the landscape and pressures are changing rapidly and the interventions which are deemed appropriate now may not continue to be as the conditions we are living in change or take up is not as predicted. In addition the funds recommended to support these initiatives are only available in the short term.

In order to ensure local people in Midlothian can identify and access the supports available a Midlothian Cares communications plan has been developed as detailed at Appendix B. There are a number of key themes offered and under development as part of Midlothian Cares and Challenge Poverty Week. These include: housing supports, illegal money lending, employability, affordable food, bus pass supports, cost of the school day, career skills, HENRY programme, Citizen Advice support and information from Social Security Scotland.

4. Deployment of Council Resources to offer practical supports

4.1 Midlothian Cares Action Plan

- 4.2** Currently the Local Authority Covid Recovery Emergency Funds (LACER) is funding a number of immediate mitigating actions until March 23. These include, as listed:

Currently Funded LACER Actions	Theme	Cost	End Date
Income Maximisation Officers	Increased access to Money	122,000	31/03/2023
Eat & Heat Fund	Increased access to Money	279,000	31/03/2023
Trusted Partners Model	Increased access to Money	400,000	31/03/2023
Housing Officer - Low income household fund	Increased access to Money	40,219	31/03/2023
Woodburn Food Pantry	Increased access to Food	50,000	31/03/2023
Food Fund for Food Banks	Increased access to Food	50,000	31/03/2023
Commissioned Report	Increased access to Money	20,000	31/03/2023
TOTAL		£961,219	

4.3 Proposed New Temporary Mitigation Actions at 3, 6 or 12 months 22/23

Additional Temporary Actions 22/23	Theme	Cost	End Date	Source of Funding
Wash & Dry Fund for laundrette facilities - 3 month pilot based on: 200 people supported one wash per week for 3 months	Increased access to Money	33,800	31/03/2023	Covid Funding
Free meal reheatable taster - 3 venues (Jan-March) Based on 200 people supported 5 meals per week for 13 weeks and funding for storage if required	Increased access to food	66,140	31/03/2023	Covid Funding
Cost of Living Crisis Support Coordinator	Lived Experience informing directly influencing new support mechanisms	£18,073 (4 month cost)	31/03/2023 with extension for 2 years fixed term	Covid Funding

Total		£118,013		
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4.4 Temporary Mitigation Actions 23/24/24/25 proposed to be resourced from the Covid Fund

Temporary Mitigation Action 23/24	Theme	Cost	Duration	Funding Source
Income Maximisation Officers	Increased access to Money	61,000	6 months	Covid Funding
Eat & Heat Fund	Increased access to Money	139,500	6 months	Covid Funding
Trusted Partners Model	Increased access to Money	200,000	6 months	Covid Funding
Cyrenians Fair Share scheme membership for organisations up to 4 organisation annual membership	Increased access to Food	£12,648	12 months	Covid Funding
Cost of Living Crisis Support Coordinator	Lived Experience informing directly influencing new support mechanisms	£108,438 (for 2 years fixed term)	24 months	Covid Funding
Total		£521,586		

Total additional investment required from Covid Funds for 2022 to 2025 equates to £521,586

4.5 Further Potential Measures for 23/24

Mitigation Measure (No Fund Identified)	Theme	Cost	Duration	Funding Source Not Currently Available
Welfare Fund	Increased access to Money	Top up welfare fund if required 250,000	12 months	Assessment for top up 23/24 if required. new additional funding source

				would require to be identified
Increase Welfare Team 1 FTE temp 12 months	Increased access to Money	47,952	12 months	Assessment of need and new funding source would be required to be identified
Total		£297,952		

4.6 Longer Term Development Actions (No Funding Secured)

Development Actions	Theme	Cost	Action
Reduce cost of the school day	Increased access to Money	To be assessed as part of development work (TBA)	Consolidate - development already work underway
Additional hours of work/additional employment	Increased access to Money	TBA	Assessment of cost impact and deliverability to be undertaken
Embed free food offer into council targeted activities	Increased access to Food	TBA	Assessment of cost impact and deliverability to be undertaken
Create two warm & well hubs at Lasswade & Newbattle HS - subsidised Food & drink	Reduced Heating and fuel costs	TBA	Assessment of cost impact and deliverability to be undertaken

5. Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

5.1 Resource

The proposals in the report related to additional actions in 22/23 are estimated to cost **£118,013** to deliver over the coming winter months. With a further **£819,538** for 2023/24/25.

To allow early implementation of these specific measures in advance of Winter it is recommended that these costs be funded by utilising **£118,013** of earmarked funds set aside for the continued impact of Covid on the basis they will support those identified wellbeing initiatives. Noting that this is non-recurring funding.

5.2 Digital

None

5.3 Risk

Due to the unpredictable landscape there is a risk that demand will outstrip the resources identified, there will be added pressures in terms of staff capacity to deliver. In addition if other factors also feature at the same time for example upticks in Covid or extreme winter weather disruption then these measures may not be fully deliverable. With the current financial pressures on local authority funding there is a need to take a balanced approach to risk in terms of the levels of financial supports available and the potential increased demand for services.

5.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

The measures identified are aimed at supporting those most vulnerable in relation to the protected characteristic groups which includes Poverty. Proactive measures will be taken to promote the additional services put in place for those who may not be in local networks and therefore not be aware of the supports available to them in particular through the Midlothian Cares Communication Plan.

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Cost of Living Task Force

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- Holistic Working
- Hub and Spoke
- Modern
- Sustainable
- Transformational
- Preventative
- Asset-based
- Continuous Improvement
- One size fits one
- None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- One Council Working with you, for you
- Preventative and Sustainable
- Efficient and Modern
- Innovative and Ambitious
- None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

As short term funding has been identified for the majority of the mitigation measures, it is important to have robust reviews of what is effective and time limited measures to be able to adapt as the cost of living crisis evolves and changes.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The Cost of Living Crisis Task Force has been informed by contact via Elected Members with constituents and through information prepared for the cost of living information session with partners involved in support services.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The Single Midlothian Plan 22/23 outcomes are that:

- Individuals and communities have improved health and learning outcomes
- No child or household living in poverty
- Significant progress is made towards net zero carbon emissions by 2030

These mitigation measures directly contribute to the outcomes in the Single Midlothian Plan 22/23

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Prevention can be about supporting local people with issues so that they do not escalate further as the measures outlined in this report are mitigation measures they would fall under this preventative area of work. It is recognised that the measures do not prevent poverty but are crisis support measures.

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

Not applicable as crisis mitigation measures

Appendix B – Communications Plan



Midlothian Cares -
comms plan draft 1.p

(As at 16th September 2022)

Appendix C Challenge Poverty Week Activities

[Challenge Poverty Week 2022 | #MidlothianCares and Challenge Poverty Week 2022 | Midlothian Council](#)