

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 5th October 2023, 6.30 pm
and [You Tube](#)

Agenda

Apologies

1 **Declarations of Any Interests**

Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any pecuniary interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda.

If you have a pecuniary interest you must withdraw from the meeting. Normally you should leave the room before the business starts to be discussed. You do, however, have the same right to speak as a member of the public and may remain in the room to enable you to exercise that right and then leave immediately. In either case you must not seek to improperly influence a decision on the matter.

2 **Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 1 August 2023 of Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

(Pages 3 - 8)

Draft minutes of 1 August 2023 for approval and signing by the Chair (attached).

3 **Public Questions**

Members of the public who have requested the opportunity to ask a question(s) on an item on the agenda will be asked to put their question(s) to the Committee. Each member of the public will be allowed to ask one supplementary question within his/her allocated 3 minutes.

Scrutiny of the Executive Cabinet

4 **Executive Cabinet Minutes**

(Pages 9 - 14)

To consider the Executive Cabinet minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2023 (enclosed).

5 **Notice of Executive Decisions**

The latest [Notice of Decisions](#) is available on the Council's website.

6 **Health Scrutiny Update**

7 **Cost of Living Action Plan - Update**

(Pages 15 - 52)

Report of the Director of Communities attached.

8	First Monitoring Report - Select Move Overview and Scrutiny Task Group Oct 2023	(Pages 53 - 66)
	Report of the Director of Communities attached.	
9	Wheelchair Accessibility	(Pages 67 - 72)
	Report of the Interim Deputy Chief Executive.	
10	Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme	(Pages 73 - 74)
	To review the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2023/24 (attached).	
11	Reports from the Task and Finish Groups	
	Recruitment and Staff Retention Task and Finish Group	
	To receive a verbal update on from the Chair, Councillor Michelle Le Marinel.	
12	Any urgent business previously agreed with the Chair	

Chris Sinnott
Chief Executive

Electronic agendas sent to Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Councillor Aidy Riggott (Chair), Councillor Roy Lees (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Sarah Ainsworth, Kim Snape, Michelle Le Marinel, Dedrah Moss, Arjun Singh, Ryan Towers, Michelle Brown, Christine Heydon, Samantha Martin, Pauline McGovern (Clayton East, Brindle and Hoghton), Joan Williamson and Debra Platt.

If you need this information in a different format, such as larger print or translation, please get in touch on 515151 or chorley.gov.uk



Minutes of **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Meeting date **Tuesday, 1 August 2023**

Committee Members present: Councillor Aidy Riggott (Chair), Councillor Roy Lees (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Sarah Ainsworth, Kim Snape, Michelle Le Marinel, Dedrah Moss, Arjun Singh, Ryan Towers, Michelle Brown, Christine Heydon, Samantha Martin and Joan Williamson

Other Members Present Councillor Margaret France

Officers: Zoe Whiteside (Project Director – Local Plan), Matt Evans (Climate Change & Air Quality Officer) and Matthew Pawlyszyn (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

Apologies: Councillor Pauline McGovern

A video recording of the public session of this meeting is available to view on [YouTube](#)

1 Minutes of meeting Thursday, 16 March 2023 of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting Thursday, 16 March 2023 of Overview and Scrutiny Committee be approved as a correct record.

2 Declarations of Any Interests

No interests were declared.

3 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

4 Executive Cabinet Minutes

Resolved: That the Executive Cabinet minutes were noted.

5 Notice of Executive Decisions

The purpose of the item was highlighted and **resolved: that the notice of Executive Decisions be noted.**

6 Health Scrutiny Update

Councillor Margaret France presented the Health Scrutiny Update.

In addition to the written update provided, the most recent Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee took place 12 July 2023. There were three substantive items on the agenda.

Lancashire and South Cumbria New Hospital Programme

- Two new hospitals on two new sites, Royal Preston, and Royal Lancaster Hospital. Unfortunately, the start date had been pushed back to 2030 at the earliest. There were also concerns with construction materials, and the requirement to use iron props to reinforce the existing structure.
- The cost to maintain Royal Preston was considerable. It was noted that it was uncertain if there would be additional funding to provide ongoing upkeep and maintenance.
- No decision had been made in relation to the location of the sites, but must be within 10 miles of the existing sites. The required sites would need to be 30 to 60 acres in size.
- Expectation for 100% single rooms with modern technology to allow safety and monitoring. Buildings set to be carbon net zero.
- Plans to improve services and outcomes for Chorley Hospital were discussed, it was agreed for it to be a specialist elective centre. This would aim to ease delays and protect routine planned operations.
- The procurement process was underway with encouragement for local companies to bid.
- Life expectancy of each new hospital was believed to be 50 to 60 years.

Virtual Wards

- 393 virtual beds across Lancashire, and were used to manage and monitor patients at home, and allowing additional space at hospitals.

Integrated Neighbourhood Teams

- Results and outcomes were better when services were closer to the community, it was the goal for residents to be able to take control of their health and wellbeing.
- It was believed that there was a push to reduce hospital beds and there were concerns raised that a replication could be observed of the issues that developed with the closure of psychiatric hospitals in favour of care in the community.

It was confirmed that the Integrated Care Board was told by NHS England to reduce their budget by 30%, which was considered to be difficult given the demands on the costs and required building maintenance.

It was clarified that agency costs were significant due to the difficulty in filling the vacant roles. There was a knowledge gap, and more staff were leaving than were

being replaced. It was however noted, that the Lancashire Teaching trust had doctors and nurses available on bank to take extra shifts and were prioritised over agency staff.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

7 Cycling Project Update

Matt Evans, Air Quality and Climate Change Officer presented the report. The work grew from the Overview and Scrutiny Sustainable Public Transport Task Group. Following the unsuccessful formation of a cycling task group, it was agreed that the work would be picked up and continued by the Climate Change Working Group.

Social media was a key tool in communicating and directing people to information and promoting active travel in the borough.

Consultations took place for internal staff and the general public. The public responded constructively, and reported higher likelihood of visiting the town if there were improved cycling facilities and infrastructure.

Internally, it was resolved to understand the failure to improve cycling uptake following requested facilities and measures. It was indicated that the distance from the facilities at Bengal Street and the Town Hall was too great, and there was concern about damage to new ICT equipment.

The bike pods were to be moved from Bengal Street to Portland Street Car Park. The new location should benefit commuters, workers and visitors to the town centre.

There were aims to repurpose the Town Hall basement and provide separate shower and changing facilities for staff.

The council had continued to work with the County Council to ensure that Chorley was well represented within the Lancashire Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Partnership. The next draft had been delayed but expected to be published in August. A consultation was currently underway.

The process and progress would be reported to the Climate Change Working Group.

Work completed for the new Local Plan aimed to encourage developers to work with the active travel team to promote active travel. Work was to be completed with the Planning department to ensure that an emphasis was placed on walking, wheeling and cycling while considering planning applications.

It was raised by members that on the 'Check Out Chorley' website there was information lacking related to Charnock Richard, Eccleston and Heskin, despite being popular with cyclists. It was confirmed that additional work could be done, and a meeting could be arranged outside of the Committee to seek further details.

Resolved: that the report be noted.

8 Scrutiny Reporting Back - Chorley Council's Annual Report on Overview and Scrutiny 2022/23

The Chair presented the Report to the Committee and sought comment.

It was raised about a concern with the levels of staffing, vacancies, and a lack of succession planning.

Resolved: that the report be noted.

9 Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Empty Properties Final Report

Chair of the Empty Properties Task Group, Councillor Sarah Ainsworth presented the final report to the Committee.

The background to the task group and the key takeaways were presented, which included consideration for the position of empty properties within the organisational structure, and if there was a need for an existing staff member to take on the responsibilities, or if the post should be filled, on either a part time basis, or shared with South Ribble. A recommendation was also made to update the Empty Homes Policy which was last updated in 2015, and a Member Learning Session to raise awareness and spread knowledge.

Members requested an update or an amendment to the report, and wished for the table showing the number of empty properties to be broken down by Ward rather than by parished areas, as this did not provide the full picture and missed figures for empty properties in non parished areas, such as the town centre.

It was also noted that there appeared to be potential for further information sharing on properties that were long term empty due to legal disputes, with ownership in question. During the time they were not being charged council tax, but were a burden and were in poor state of repair

Resolved: that the report be noted, and the recommendation updated.

10 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

Members discussed the proposed Work Programme for the forthcoming year and reached agreement on the following topics;

- Antisocial Behaviour in the Town Centre
- Cost of Living
- Water Safety
- Wheelchair Accessibility
- Youth Services Outreach

Following the meeting the report authors would be sought and their placement on the forthcoming calendar of meetings would be decided and agreed by the Chair.

It was agreed that two Task Groups would be set up and completed within the municipal year, the first would explore internal staff retention and recruitment. Following its completion, the second would explore mental health support following suicide bereavement.

Resolved: that the Work Programme for 2023/24 be agreed and noted.

Chair

Date

This page is intentionally left blank



Minutes of Executive Cabinet

Meeting date Wednesday, 13 September 2023

Members present: Councillor Alistair Bradley (Chair) and Councillors Beverley Murray, Terry Howarth, Alistair Morwood, Margaret France and Adrian Lowe

Members present Virtually (non-voting): Councillor Peter Wilson

Officers: Chris Moister (Director (Governance)), Asim Khan (Director (Customer and Digital)), Adam Nickson (Head of Property and Development), Hollie Walmsley (Head of HR), Sally Green (Climate Change Programme Officer), Laura Barton-Williams (Communications Manager), Nina Neisser-Burke (Democratic and Member Services Officer) and Matthew Pawlyszyn (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

Apologies: Councillor Craige Southern

Other Members: Councillor Alan Platt

23.EC.17 Minutes of meeting Thursday, 13 July 2023 of Executive Cabinet

Decision: That the minutes of the Executive Cabinet meeting held on 13 July 2023 be confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Executive Leader.

23.EC.18 Declarations of Any Interests

There were no declarations of any interests.

23.EC.19 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

23.EC.20 Revenue Budget Monitoring Q1

Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources presented the report of the Director of Finance which sets out the revenue and reserves forecast for 2023/24 for the Council, based on the position as at 31 July 2023.

In summary, there is a forecast overspend of £0.542m however based on the current position of the 2023/24 pay award negotiations, an unfunded budget pressure is anticipated of £0.146m; this has been built into the figures presented in the report and

as such the revised forecast outturn is for an overspend of £0.688m. The Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy reported that the minimum level of general fund reserves should be maintained at £4.0m to cushion against any potential, future financial risks that may face the Council. Based on the above forecast overspend, the level of general fund balances as at 31 March 2024 will be £3.583m.

Members noted the challenges the council faces in relation to the 50% increase in utility costs and the overall implications of the pay award for 2023/24. Members queried the impact the additional support for Leisure Services could have on the general fund reserve if agreed at Council. It was agreed that this information would be provided to Members.

Decision:

- 1. To note the 2023/24 forecast outturn for revenue and the level of reserves, based on the position as at 31st July 2023.**
- 2. To note the virements made to and from the revenue budget during the period, as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report.**

Reasons for recommendations:

To ensure the Council's budgetary targets are achieved.

Other options considered and rejected:

None.

23.EC.21 Capital and Balance Sheet Monitoring Report Q1

Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources presented the report of the Director of Finance which outlines the outturn financial position of the Council in respect of the capital programme at 31 July 2023, highlighting key issues and explaining key variances, and to provide an overview of various elements of the Council's Balance Sheet at 31 July 2023.

The capital budget for 2023/24 was set at £21.103m at Council in February 2023. This was increased following approval of the 2022/23 outturn to £22.998m. Members noted the total cost of the Council's capital investment programme for 2023/24 has decreased since the 2022/23 outturn report approved by Executive Cabinet, from £22.998m to £18.191m as at 31st July 2023. Budgets variations approved since the last monitoring report have resulted in a total increase of £5.580m to the capital programme.

Decision:

- 1. To approve the revised capital programme as attached at Appendix A, which includes an amendment to the programme of £5.684m, as detailed at point 11 of this report.**
- 2. To note the variations to the programme (which are detailed by scheme at Appendix B and referenced within the body of the report);**
- 3. To note the position in the Balance Sheet monitoring section of the report, in respect of cash, investment and loan balances and debtors, at 31st July 2023.**

Reasons for recommendations:

To ensure the Council's Capital Programme is monitored effectively.

Other options considered and rejected:

None.

23.EC.22 Chorley Quarter One Performance Monitoring Report 2023-24

Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources presented the report of the Chief Executive which sets out the performance against the delivery of the Corporate Strategy and key performance indicators during the first quarter of 2023/24, covering 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023.

The overall performance of the Corporate Strategy projects is excellent with 95% (18) classified as complete or green, meaning they are progressing according to schedule. One project (5%) has been rated amber, which provides an early warning sign of potential delays. An action plan for this project is contained within this report. Performance of the Corporate Strategy indicators and key service delivery measures continues to be closely monitored with 75% of Corporate Strategy measures and 100% of key service delivery measure performing on or above target within the 5% threshold.

With regards to the Leisure Centres, the Executive Cabinet recognised the work achieved by the council so far and were advised that the five-year plan was being reviewed given the significant challenges faced. Members welcomed proposals for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the Leisure Centres to ensure they are accessible and affordable for residents.

The Executive Cabinet also recognised the need to address issues with the number of young people not in education, employment, or training, which included working with partners.

Decision:

That the report be noted.

Reasons for recommendations:

To ensure the effective performance monitoring of the Corporate Strategy and safeguard its delivery across 2023/24.

Other options considered and rejected:

No other options have been considered or rejected. This is because the report does not present any items for decision.

23.EC.23 Queens Road Car Park Enhancement Scheme - Procurement Strategy

Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources presented the report of the Interim Deputy Chief Executive which seeks approval for the procurement strategy and delegate contract award for the Queens Road car park enhancement scheme.

Members noted that the procurement of the contract is being undertaken in accordance with Chorley Councils procurement regulations for high value contracts. The procurement and evaluation criteria proposed comprise a single stage open tender with suitability questionnaire 60% cost, 25% quality and 15% Social Value split.

Members welcomed the proposals and recognised the need for the improvement works to the car park, as well as protecting the local environment and enhancing the green space.

Decision:

- 1. To approve the procurement strategy and evaluation criteria for the enhancement works.**
- 2. To delegate the award of the contract for the Queens Road car park scheme to the Executive Member for Resources.**

Reasons for recommendations:

To provide a modern car parking facility for members of the public which maximises the use of space whilst providing an improved experience for visitors.

Other options considered and rejected:

To carry out no enhancement works and undertake essential maintenance such as patch repairing. This option was rejected due to the requirement for improved parking facilities, wider parking bays and current on-site hazards.

23.EC.24 Climate Change Business Accreditation

Councillor Adrian Lowe, Executive Member for Customer, Streetscene and Environment presented the report of the Interim Deputy Chief Executive which provides an overview of the proposed climate change business accreditation scheme, including information on the financial costs and the feedback provided by the Climate Change Working Group. The report also seeks approval of the climate change business and accreditation scheme for publication and execution.

Members noted that the formation of a Climate Change Business Accreditation Scheme was an original action from Overview and Scrutiny Task Group. The accreditation scheme, to be titled 'Chorley Business Pathway to Net-Zero Accreditation' has been devised to allow all businesses to enter without focus on specific sectors or business size.

To ensure the scheme remains competitive and meaningful, only ten accreditations will be awarded per year. These will be awarded by an independent panel of five judges from different sectors and locations of employment. The current proposal for the scheme will allow for annual release and is currently estimated to have a low expenditure cost of ~£2000 per scheme run. The Executive Cabinet welcomed the proposals.

Decision:

To approve the scheme for public release, associated spend and supported documentation.

Reasons for recommendations:

As an additional method for the Council to support and raise awareness of businesses in the borough who are working above the expectation of their field to support in the mitigation of climate change and thus the council's overall ambitious goal to be net zero by 2030.

Other options considered or rejected:

To reject the scheme as it stands for review and changes.

23.EC.25 Exclusion of the Public and Press

Decision: To exclude the press and public for the following items of business on the grounds they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

23.EC.26 Bengal St Depot Relocation - Procurement Strategy

Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for resources presented the confidential report of the Interim Deputy Chief Executive which provides an overview on the procurement requirements for enabling the progression of the Bengal Street Depot Relocation Project. The report also seeks approval of the procurement strategy and evaluation criteria and delegates the contract awards to the Executive Member for approval.

Decision:

- 1. To note and approve the procurement of the professional design team and contractor to deliver the new depot facility works at Common Bank (Ackhurst).**
- 2. To note and approve the procurement of demolition and remediation contractor for the Bengal Street Depot site.**
- 3. To delegate the approval of the procurement strategies to the Director of Governance for recommendation 2 & 3.**
- 4. To delegate the contract award decision for both the design team and contractors on both sites to the Executive Member for approval.**

Reasons for recommendations:

1. To ensure that the milestones and outputs on which the Brownfield Land Release Fund (BRLF) grant is secured are met.
2. To mitigate any risk to funding clawback on the Brownfield Land Release Fund.
3. To maintain progress with the development of the Bengal Street depot as a key gateway development site.
4. To future proof and provide an appropriate location for the Council's Streetscene depot.

Other options considered and rejected:

1. Do nothing – rejected as this will not deliver the Council's corporate objectives and put the BRLF funding to remediate the Bengal Street site for residential development at risk.
2. Several sites have been considered to re-locate the Bengal Street Depot site, but these have been dismissed on grounds that the sites are not suitable to facilitate all the requirements of a new facility.

Chair

Date

This page is intentionally left blank



Report of	Meeting	Date
Director (Communities)	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Thursday, 5 October 2023

Cost of Living Action Plan - Update

Is this report confidential?	No
------------------------------	----

Is this decision key?	No
-----------------------	----

Savings or expenditure amounting to greater than £100,000	Significant impact on 2 or more council wards
---	---

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides members with an update on the delivery of the Cost of Living Action Plan.

Corporate priorities

2. The report relates to the following corporate priorities: (Please bold one)

Housing where residents can live well	A green and sustainable borough
An enterprising economy with vibrant local centres in urban and rural areas	Healthy, safe and engaged communities

Recommendations

3. The committee notes the contents of the report.

Background to the report

4. Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, and subsequent financial pressures impacting upon an increasingly wide proportion of the population, the Communities team recognised the necessity to provide cost of living support to residents, and work was done to formalise this approach by creating a comprehensive Cost of Living Action Plan 2022 (Appendix 1). Delivery of the Cost of Living Action Plan was then added as a Corporate Priority for 2023/24.
5. The report that follows details work that has been carried out within the Communities service to contribute to the delivery of the Cost of Living Action Plan.

Partnerships and Communication

6. The Chorley Together and Chorley Together Food Sub-Groups have been reinvigorated, with a meeting taking place in June to communicate key council priorities including the Household Support Fund. The next meeting will take place as an event, held at the Town Hall, and will invite members of the network to communicate cost of living support updates, information about current and upcoming funding streams, and initiate dialogue around common themes, needs and experiences CT partners are seeing amongst residents, Discussion will encompass future requirement to enable organisations to continue to provide services to support our communities – which can inform our future approach.
7. The Household Support Fund (3) has been fully distributed to a total of £426000. A comprehensive plan to deliver the Household Support Fund (4) to a value of £640000 has been agreed by Executive Cabinet (Appendix 2) and delivery has commenced in earnest with the fund allocated to eight partners, including the expansion of the Warm Spaces Programme throughout the summer months as the Welcome Spaces Programme, supporting residents to access cost of living support alongside social inclusion activity.
8. We continue to collaborate with Lancashire County Council and other Lancashire district authorities through the various schemes of work. We are a key partner in shaping and contributing Lancashire wide models of delivery which include HSF, cost of living, weight management, health and wellbeing and energy related forums. We are involved in all new schemes and developments, including supporting the rollout of Lancashire Hubs in Chorley, and can benefit from any partnership models or approaches to increase efficiencies and achieve better outcomes for our residents.
9. The Affordable Warmth Grant has been distributed to 53 households to deliver 103 improvements, at a cost of £113,889.63, supporting vulnerable or at risk households to face the winter months by making enhancements such as boiler repairs, glazing repairs and loft insulation installations. Of the remaining £17,435.52, £17,325.05 has been committed for an additional 9 households. Households supported include those experiencing financial hardship, living with long term medical conditions, families with children under 5, and older adults. The success of the programme within the first 4 months saw an additional award of 50% granted by Lancashire County Council, to the great benefit of Chorley residents. Additional Affordable Warmth funding for 2024-25 has not yet been confirmed.
10. A review of existing funding streams has been conducted, with eligibility and delivery criteria updated to encourage applying organisations and groups to include a cost of living focus. The Small Community Grants and Large Community Grants funding streams have been fully allocated for 2023-24, and of the 32 organisations allocated Large Community grants, 11 reported to support individuals experiencing financial hardship, food poverty or furniture poverty. Furthermore, the Adult Health and Wellbeing grant has been developed to support adults experiencing financial barriers to access free or very low cost opportunities across the borough, with 13 delivery partners allocated a grant of up to £650 to deliver a 6 week programme promoting good health and wellbeing outcomes, with clearly defined pathways into sustainable activity.

Communications

11. A comprehensive communications plan has been developed with support from the communications team to inform residents and partners about the cost of living support available to them. This includes social media posts targeting key months of financial hardship and the development of physical resources including a cost of living postcard to distribute to households and via projects such as Warm Spaces, Household Support Fund projects and events hosted or supported within the service. The postcards have been designed to consolidate the broad range of support available to residents through the Communities service, and are able to target residents who are not digitally active.
12. Additionally, webpages have been developed and continue to be updated to allow residents and professionals to navigate these various support pathways and keep abreast of the changing landscape (www.chorley.gov.uk/costofliving). These webpage resources are shared via social media posts via network and partnership meetings and through interactions with residents through the customer services team and social prescribing. Additional resource has been allocated within the service to ensure these webpages are able to be kept as up to date as possible.
13. Briefings have been conducted with our customer services team to ensure they have current information, and are able to identify opportunities to signpost residents effectively.
14. Monthly cost of living member updates are produced by the Communities team, with input from all officers contributing to cost of living action plan delivery, providing an insight into the status of projects included within the cost of living corporate priority delivery. This update is emailed directly to all elected members.

Data, Evaluation and Monitoring

15. The Affordable Warmth Programme has made use of the NHS Winter Avoidance datasets initially, and worked alongside the Social Prescribing team throughout the programme to identify eligible residents to receive support. The Affordable Warmth grant has been promoted widely amongst relevant support networks.
16. The monitoring data gathered across various workstreams, and specifically those pertaining to cost of living support, have been redesigned to gather a wide variety of measures, including case studies and recorded conversations, to provide a clearer picture of how services currently support residents, and how these can be adapted and improved upon. This will be captured in a report in Quarter 3.
17. A Communities team training review has identified a need for Communities officers to receive additional development to enable the effective implementation of appropriate research methodologies in community settings, to include appreciative enquiry, community asset-based enquiry, and participatory practice. Work is currently underway with UCLan to develop a bespoke CPD course for the team. Additionally, the team are due to undertake intermediate Excel training in October to ensure they have the skills and understanding available to them to record, interrogate and present monitoring information across various workstreams.

On the Ground Activity

18. HAF 2023-24 summer delivery has been successfully completed. The total HAF funded attendees engaged over the summer holiday period is 1,409 (this total does not take into account how many sessions these individuals accessed each). There were 10,896 places secured for this delivery period, of which 10,728 spaces were booked and 8,819 places were filled (i.e. the booking was attended). This is an attendance rate of 82% and underscores a very successful delivery period. This year's HAF programme is fully costed, with Christmas delivery planned and all available spaces allocated to delivery partners. A procurement exercise seeks approval at Executive Cabinet in October for a successful provider to undertake all responsibilities associated with delivering the HAF programme for 2024-25, with a commitment to developing the programme to work towards Council priorities.
19. The Food Club network in Chorley expanded in April, with 5 clubs delivered by Chorley Buddies now servicing some of Chorley's most vulnerable residents in Clayton Brook, Chorley Town East, Buttermere, Adlington and Coppull. Since January, the Food Clubs have supported 7,262 shoppers. Support services regularly visit the Food Clubs to engage residents with additional support offers. These include; Citizen's Advice Bureau, Tippy Toes, Jigsaw, Places for People, Homestart, Key Unlocking Futures, Children and Family Wellbeing Service, Quit Squad Christians Against Charity and the Social Prescribing Team. The Food Clubs are also working with Tempo and Chorley Council to improve their time credits offer for volunteers and residents alike.
20. The Council also commission and grant fund services through Chorley Help the Homeless. This provides an open and accessible service offering support and information which meets the diverse needs of all users and offers a range of support groups, courses, and activities. This includes emergency support by means of foodbank, clothing Bank for clean dry clothes, sleeping bags, tents for street homeless and Household Bank. Provision of meals on several days per week to include breakfast, lunch, hot meals in winter months plus hot drink provision. Provide benefit advice and help with appeals, a general housing advice and signpost to Council Housing Team when applicable.
21. The Council also commission and grant fund food support services through Living Waters. This provides a food provision service to support residents who need support with food related assistance, and to provide opportunities for improving life skills. It aims to support residents to avoid/step down from crisis situations, tackle financial hardship, and provide skills/education to support building resilience and self-help. By providing this service and access to early help and support, this would reduce the need for more costly interventions by statutory services. The intent is to reduce the dependency of the need for food parcels, by creating opportunities for the most vulnerable in our community to increase knowledge and skills. This will include sessions to be able to prepare healthy, nutritious meals for themselves and their families, and to manage food on a limited budget, as well as other basic skills training offered such as numeracy and literacy skills, which will include access to related qualifications to support employment opportunities.
22. A resource pathway has been developed as shareable graphics (Appendix 3) that demonstrate the interconnected relationships between the Communities service and the partners, stakeholders and networks the service works alongside, as well as the interconnected relationships between teams within the Communities service (and wider

council). These graphics can be utilized at a partnership level to provide insights and demonstrate pathways into, within, and out of the service.

23. A report has been produced scoping the need, opportunity, and resource required to effectively address furniture and white goods poverty in the borough and provide a responsive, high quality and sustainable pathway of support (Appendix 4). Next steps from this report will be explored as the cost of living action plan progresses to 2024-25.

24. Since the start of the 23/24 financial year, the stats for the Handyperson service are as follows (figures correct up to 31st August 2023)

	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	
Number of Handyperson jobs completed	39	24	52	44	57	
Handyperson - Types of jobs:						TOTAL
Accident Prevention/Trip Hazards	15	7	17	12	21	72
Security	13	9	1	1	14	38
Joinery/small repairs	11	6	31	31	14	93
Energy Efficiency – Affordable Warmth	0	2	3	0	8	13
% accessing Handyperson service free of charge	93%	73%	41%	59%	83%	

25. There has been a total of 216 handyperson jobs undertaken in the first 5 months of the year, the highest proportion being joinery/small repairs (93) followed by accident prevention/trip hazards (72). It is expected that the energy efficiency referrals will increase as the energy efficiency corporate priority project is more widely promoted to residents, and household assessments begin.

26. Following on from the Uniform Swap scheme offered by the Communities Team during the Covid lockdown periods, all schools in Chorley received an invitation to set up their own Uniform Swap Scheme. Many schools were able to report that they already managed their own scheme. The remaining schools have received a continued offer of support which includes a guidance resource, offer of physical resources and offer of uniform stock. There has been some response from schools who have now implemented their own uniform swap scheme using the offered support. Over the summer holiday period there were 2 school uniform pop ups coordinated in Clayton Brook and Chorley Town Centre alongside Chorley Buddies and Clayton Brook Residents Group.

27. The Debt Aware Foundation have historically delivered Money Management programmes in schools, helping children to understand key terms and discern between ‘wants’ and ‘needs’. These sessions have been adapted for an adult audience and delivered as a ‘train the trainer’ model initially to Homestart staff and volunteers to enable them to deliver this programme to the families they engage with. Following this,

the session will be offered to the wider VCFS community to reach a wider range of residents.

28. Following the digital support corporate priority 2022-23, a clear digital support pathway has been identified alongside a local directory of support which is available online for organisations and support services to refer individuals into, including free training sessions and access to digital devices - [Digital Chorley - Chorley Council](#).
29. Following the levels of engagement with the Warm Spaces programme, and the wide range of benefits attendees were experiencing beyond accessing warmth, the programme was extended across the summer months as 'Welcome Spaces' which focused on enhancing existing community activity with an offer of device charging, access to wifi, signposting into support services and access to either a free meal or household essential items.

Psychological and Wellbeing Support

30. A 6-week confidence course has been developed alongside UDevelop, taking referrals from the Social Prescribing Team and Adult Weight Management Programme amongst other external groups. Delivered at Chorley Sheds, the programme which is currently on its 5th cohort has been achieving outcomes such as improved mental health, pathways into continued membership at Chorley Sheds, pathways into training, volunteering and education opportunities, referrals into other support services and pathways into employment.
31. The Communities service are currently delivering a corporate priority to deliver an adult health and wellbeing programme. As part of the delivery of this programme a grant fund is being managed for the local VCFS sector and local businesses to apply for grants of upto £650 to deliver a low-cost or free programme of activity aimed at individuals experiencing financial barriers to continuing health and wellbeing activity, or beginning health and wellbeing activity. The grant fund is providing safe and sustainable routes for the VCFS sector and small businesses to trial new activity targeting a new audience with a route into longer-term sustainable activity.
32. 5 'Healthy Lives' webpages have been designed around the 5 ways to wellbeing, and are currently being implemented using the Chorley Leisure website platform. These pages utilise national health sector strategies, guidance and interventions through the lens of local data and priorities, providing a first point of contact for residents looking to understand more about their own health, and working towards better health and wellbeing.

Climate change and air quality

33. The work noted in this report has an overall positive impact on the Councils Carbon emissions, the wider Climate Emergency and sustainability targets of the Council. The projects delivered within the cost of living action plan actively work to reduce emissions, improve energy efficiency in homes, and reduce waste.

Equality and diversity

- 34. The projects and funding streams noted within the cost of living action plan are subject to their own impact assessments and equality and diversity protocols.
- 35. All commissioned services require the successful provider’s compliance with the council’s policies and statutory requirements including Equality and Diversity.

Risk

- 36. Risks have been identified and mitigated using the corporate priority mandate.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

- 37. The report is for noting – there are no financial implications arising.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

- 38. The report is for noting – there are no legal implications arising.

Background documents

Household Support Fund 2023-24 Delivery – Executive Cabinet Report (included under Appendix 2)

Appendices

List the appendices in the order that they are attached to the report with titles as appropriate. Any spreadsheets/diagrams should be in pdf format and be headed up.

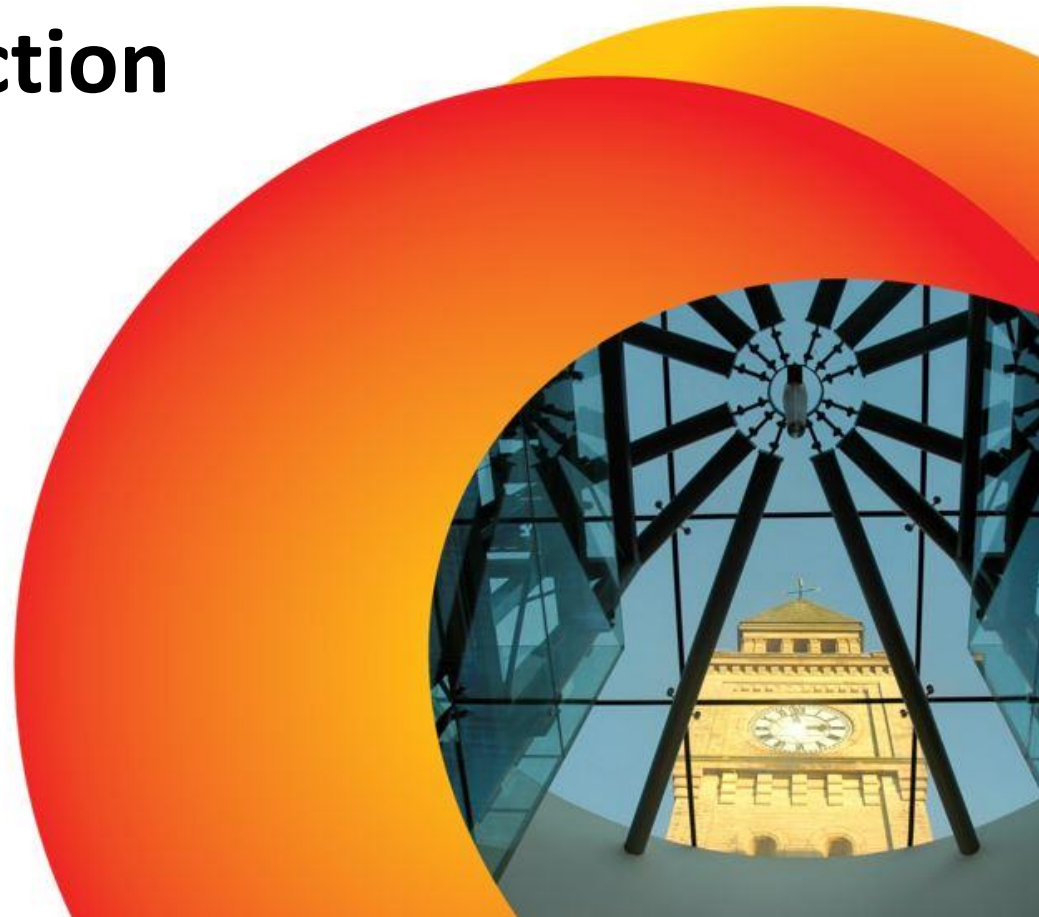
- Appendix 1 – Cost of Living Community Action Plan 2022
- Appendix 2 – Household Support Fund 2023-24 Delivery – Executive Cabinet Report
- Appendix 3 – Resource Pathway Road Maps
- Appendix 4 - Furniture Poverty White Goods and Furniture Recycling Scheme Report

Report Author:	Email:	Telephone:	Date:
Bernie Heggarty, Laura Hendi (Neighbourhood Priorities Officer, Senior Community Engagement Officer)	bernie.heggarty@chorley.gov.uk, Laura.Hendi@chorley.gov.uk		

This decision will come into force and may be implemented five working days after its publication date, subject to being called in in accordance with the Council’s Constitution.

This page is intentionally left blank

Cost of Living Community Action



Theme – Partnerships and Communications	Lead / Partnership	Timescale
<p>Continue the coordination and development of Chorley Together and the Chorley Together Food Sub-group as mechanisms for information exchange, feedback from partners working directly with residents, sharing of resources and support, and identifying gaps and challenges.</p>	<p>Chorley Council Communities team and Chorley Together and Food Sub-Group</p>	<p>In place and ongoing</p>
<p>Continue the partnership approach to the design and delivery of the Household Support Fund to ensure funding meets demands the gaps and demands being felt by our communities and communicated through direct resident feedback, internal and partner-led intelligence.</p>	<p>Chorley Council Communities team and Chorley HSF Delivery steering group</p>	<p>In place and ongoing</p>
<p>Collaborate with local government partners through the Lancashire wide HSF forum and other energy related forums to ensure we are aware of all new schemes and developments and can benefit from any partnership models or approaches to increase efficiencies and achieve better outcomes for our residents.</p>	<p>Chorley Council Communities team and Lancashire HSF Steering group</p>	<p>In place and ongoing</p>
<p>Develop an integrated health and local authority approach to delivering grants such as Affordable Warmth to ensure the grants reach those most in needs and specifically targets those most at risk and those at risk of hospitalisation.</p>	<p>Chorley Council Social Prescribing team, PCN and PHM teams</p>	<p>In place and ongoing</p>
<p>Provide updates to key health and public service boards to ensure progress and issues can be communicated across key partners.</p>	<p>Chorley Council Communities Team and Performance and Partnership team</p>	<p>In place and ongoing</p>

<p>Support partners in the VCFS sector to manage increase costs due to increased demands and overheads through various support options including accessing grants and funding and assess how we can work together to meet forth-coming increased challenges.</p>	<p>Chorley Council Communities team</p>	<p>In place and ongoing</p>
<p>Communication</p>		
<p>Utilise communication pathways through partners, the Council’s communication platforms and other resident-led networks to circulate and promote key messages, advice, and signposting to resources to help mitigate impacts and ensure funding and support is widely communicated.</p>	<p>Chorley Council Communities team, Democratic Services and Communications teams</p>	<p>In place and ongoing</p>
<p>Update and provide opportunities for Elected Members to inform and shape plans by continuing to provide updates and member learning sessions.</p>	<p>Chorley Council Communities team</p>	<p>MLS to be scheduled. Updates to continue through internal channels</p>
<p>Continue to update the Councils website with a dedicated Cost of Living section containing links to all the support available and linking to wider Council services and support.</p>	<p>Chorley Council Communities team</p>	<p>In place and ongoing</p> <p>In place and ongoing</p>
<p>Agree and develop a communication plan to ensure there is greater awareness across the borough of the support and resources available and residents can activate support for themselves and for others.</p> <p>Agree resource to support the delivery of the plan</p>	<p>Chorley Council Communities team and Communications teams</p>	<p>Proposed</p>

Theme – Data, Evaluation, and monitoring	Lead / Partnership	Timescale
<p>Utilise data and information from other Council teams and services to inform approaches and join up workstreams so that residents pass smoothly through support options available.</p>	<p>Communities and Customer Services</p>	<p>Proposed</p>
<p>Continuously gather monitoring information as part of all workstreams to provide intelligence on wider factors affecting residents financial situation to help inform the direction if future funding and highlight other social and wellbeing factors that need to be addressed to provide resilience and stability to residents to enable them to cope through the challenges ahead.</p>	<p>HSF delivery partners Chorley Council Social Prescribing and Communities team</p>	<p>In place and ongoing</p>
<p>Hold ‘Chorley Conversations’ through a variety of settings with residents and partners to have long-form conversations to enhance our knowledge on how we can adapt and improve how services and support are improved for residents so that they have greater impact and address wider inequalities and improve health outcomes for future generations. These conversations also support current delivery of support and services and how funding available locally is allocated.</p>	<p>Chorley Council Social Prescribing and Communities team</p>	<p>In place and ongoing</p>
Theme – On the ground activity	Lead / Partnership	Timescale
<p>To continue with the delivery of the HAF Programme which provides free meals and activities to identified cohorts of children and utilise the reach available through this route to offer the wider support available to their families. Use these links to provide wider wrap around support to these families and link them to other existing support schemes automatically.</p>	<p>Chorley Council and HAF Delivery Partners</p>	<p>In place and ongoing</p>
<p>To continue to support the development of choice-based food clubs across the borough and develop a framework to support growth of such provision to increase ease of access in areas of demand across the borough.</p> <p>Through the framework ensure these groups continue to offer information and direction to wider support and can react to shortages in supplies by being agile in adjusting the offer to broader wider essentials to reduce other household costs.</p>	<p>Chorley Council Communities team and Chorley Together Food Sub-Group Chorley Council Communities team and Chorley Together Food Sub-group</p>	<p>In place and ongoing In place and ongoing</p>

Provide resource and a supportive pathway available to residents and partners so that residents can access holistic, person centered advice and guidance for complex cases and those accessing support for the first time.	Chorley Council Communities team	In place and ongoing
Use links via the Councils Home Adaptations Team within the Communities service to direct customer to energy reduction schemes to assess if improvements can be made to reduce consumption and costs	Chorley Council Home Adaptations team	In place and ongoing
Continue to deliver the Handyperson scheme to reduce financial burdens on those who qualify and offer wider support through this route via the commissioned delivery partner.	Chorley Council Home Adaptations team	In place and ongoing
Continue the established School Uniform Swap scheme and take the offer directly into communities through existing events and community activities and work with schools, including in villages and rural areas, to develop a long-term sustainable solution which is easy and comfortable to access for parents or children.	Chorley Council Communities team	In place and ongoing
Using Neighbourhood Priority funding, to deliver money management sessions in targeted local schools by working with external providers who have the skill and capacity to deliver sessions in an engaging way for children.	Chorley Council Elected Members and Communities team	Sep 22- Mar 23
Ensure local grants and funding opportunities are maximised by aligning funding criteria towards measured that will directly support cost of living impacts and provide capacity for bespoke levels of support to be available, including where intensive practical support is needed.	Chorley Council Communities team	In place and ongoing
Continue to support increasing capacity to reduce isolation by working closely with partners and aligning funding opportunities to support delivery and raise awareness through digital and non-digital routes.	Chorley Council Communities team	In place and ongoing
Launch a digital support programme that is targeted to supporting those who are suffering financially due to being digitally excluded.	Chorley Council Communities team	Sep 22 – Mar 23

Identify resources required to extend community provision to create Warm Banks to ensure residents know where to access warm places free of charge and can access wider support and access to charging points.	Chorley Council Communities team	Sep 22 to Oct 22
Conduct feasibility study of creating a local white goods access scheme based on evidence of the severity of this issue and the impact on residents to make cost effective and healthier food choices which will also support them to cope better financially.	Chorley Council Communities team	Nov 22
Assess the forthcoming increased pressures of the Cost of Living on the wider community , including our own staff, and identify additional support or workstreams to be established whilst assessing any additional resources required to deliver this support.	Chorley Council Communities Team and Leads from other Council service areas	Proposed
Psychological and wellbeing support	Lead / Partnership	Timescale
Complete pilot phase of Confidence Building courses and assess the long-term outcomes to better understand how this approach is supporting access to employment for specific cohorts who have greater emotional challenges to manage.	Chorley Council Communities team	Nov – Dec 22
Continue to deliver an effective and demonstrable health and public sector integrated Social Prescribing model which benefits from being aligned to the work of the Communities team and wider Council services and support options and ensure those identified through cost of living programmes can access this service.	Chorley Council Social Prescribing team	In place and ongoing
Continue to work with health partners on Population Health Management approaches to evidence the impacts at population level of integrated working through a focus on the wider determinants of health that lead to health inequalities and align evidence from this work to support cost of living impacts	Chorley Council Social Prescribing and Wellbeing team	In place and ongoing
Promote Active lifestyles and continue to increase participation in being active as a key tool in maintaining and improving mental and physical health.	Chorley Council Social Prescribing and Communities team	In place and ongoing



Report of	Meeting	Date
Director (Communities) (Introduced by Executive Member (Early Intervention), Executive Member (Resources))	Executive Cabinet	Thursday, 15 June 2023

Household Support Fund - 2023/24 delivery

Is this report confidential?	No
------------------------------	----

Is this decision key?	Yes
-----------------------	-----

Savings or expenditure amounting to greater than £100,000	Significant impact on 2 or more council wards
--	---

Purpose of the Report

1. To agree how the district element of the government's Household Support Fund (HSF4), allocated to Chorley Council by Lancashire County Council, should be allocated to enable it to be issued to those recipients most in need through to 31st March 2024.

Recommendations

2. To allocate the grant amount of £640,000 as per the details within this report.
3. To use the criteria set out in the government guidance published to allocate and administer the grant.
4. To allow any adjustments to the proposed funding allocation to be agreed subsequently via delegated responsibility to the Executive Member of Resources and Executive Member of Early Intervention.

Reasons for recommendations

5. To ensure the funding is allocated to residents who are facing financial pressures throughout winter months until 31st March 2024.

Other options considered and rejected

6. To not allocate the grant funding would mean that those residents that need the support would not receive it.

- 7. To aim to deliver this funding in isolation of the voluntary sector and other partners would not maximise the support that residents are able to access from this sector.

Executive summary

- 8. In the Autumn Statement the Chancellor announced, as part of a number of measures to provide help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living, that the Household Support Fund (HSF) would be extended from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 with a further £842m of funding.
- 9. Upper tier authorities are required to work with districts and Third Parties Organisations (TPO), including the VCSE sector to ensure the funds reach those in most need. Provision will focus on working in partnership with community organisations and develop a plan that responds to current issues but also encourages those who are in difficulty to access wider and more impactful support.
- 10. Lancashire has been awarded £19,356,470 of which Chorley Council have been allocated £640,000. The span for the fund is a full calendar year, where previously funds released have had a scope for spending over 6 months.
- 11. Guidance for Phase 4 has been sent to Local Authorities with details of type of support and expectations on what local delivery should look to achieve

Corporate priorities

- 12. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

Housing where residents can live well	A green and sustainable borough
An enterprising economy with vibrant local centres in urban and rural areas	Healthy, safe, and engaged communities

Background to the report

- 13. In the Autumn Statement the Chancellor announced, as part of a number of measures to provide help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living, that the Household Support Fund (HSF) would be extended from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 with a further £842m of funding.
- 14. As has been done for previous schemes, the fund will be made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need due to rising cost of living until March 2024.
- 15. Upper tier authorities are required to work with districts and Third Parties Organisations (TPO), including the VCSE sector to ensure the funds reach those in most need.
- 16. Lancashire has been awarded £19,356,470 of which Chorley Council have been allocated £640,000. The span for the fund is a full calendar year, where previously funds released have had a scope for spending over 6 months.

17. Lancashire County Council have retained funding to allocate Free School Meal vouchers during Easter, Summer, October, Christmas, and February holiday periods and provide support to other relevant services via this fund such as Senet Under one Roof Scheme.
18. New guidance for Phase 4 has been sent to Local Authorities and in terms of type of support, the expectation is that the HSF extension should be used in a similar way as the previous HSF scheme.
19. The main areas that the guidance would like delivery to focus include,
 - Focus on groups who have not benefitted from any recent cost of living support payments
 - There is no ringfence of any proportion of the funding for any cohort of people/households (within HSF 2 there was targets on families and pensioners)
 - Must operate an element of the scheme on an application process
 - Emphasis on supporting low-income households with cost of energy
 - Provide support with food and wider essentials
 - Support with housing costs in exceptional cases of genuine emergency and where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need
 - The scheme is clearly advertised and is available throughout the majority of the fund period, either continuously or in regular intervals over the course of the scheme
 - There is no requirement to apply means testing as a way of determining eligibility
 - A resident does not need to be on benefits or unemployed to receive this funding if they can demonstrate need.
 - A resident can access the fund on more than one occasion if necessary
 - This fund is open to people with no recourse to public funds
20. One of the significant changes is that funding can be used for supplementary advice services, including debt and benefit advice. This is now considered eligible spend within the HSF scheme. As the primary focus of this grant is on practical support, expenditure on such services is expected to be limited and linked to the provision of practical support. A recommended maximum is 10% of overall allocation.
21. The fund should look to ensure that unpaid carers and care leavers are aware of support and can easily access the fund this time around.
22. Consideration to be given on how households with non-school aged children (under 4) can be supported

Initial Scoping

23. The Councils Communities team have been working in partnership with community partners to develop a delivery plan that responds to current issues but also encourages those who are in difficulty to access wider and more impactful support.
24. This approach is achieved by directing applicants through community organisations, social prescribing and other health pathways to provide a more holistic approach to resolving issues and encourage the development of skills and social contacts that will increase resilience and wellbeing as well as providing financial support.
25. The Communities team has worked through the Chorley Together network to gain insight and collaboration in how to approach the distribution of the funding.

26. Feedback from delivery partners and those who access the fund confirmed that the delivery partner approach provides greater opportunities for residents in difficulties to receive wider support, alongside the financial support both in the immediate and long term.

Proposed approach

27. This report sets out recommendations for how the funding could be allocated with the objectives of directing the funding towards those in most need and meeting the guidance provided.
28. The fund will help with short-term living costs such as food, energy and essential items. The scheme will also signpost to other sources of advice and assistance.
29. Types of requests which will not be covered by the Household Support Fund are:
- any requests for items that are not essential
 - applications from those with sufficient income or savings
 - requests for support where this is the responsibility of the landlord
 - priority will be given to those who have not been eligible for income related benefits and who have not had any other government cost of living support
30. It is recommended to increase the number of partners delivering the funding to widen the reach and create additional processing and support capacity. As per the initial phase, delivery partners will be able to make direct contact with residents known to their service and known to be in difficulty as well as receiving referrals from other delivery partners, those involved in other support networks such as PIVOT and Social Prescribing and will be able to receive direct referrals from members of the public not known to other services.
31. Data gathered from the previous phases will be used to highlight those who were assessed and in need as well as reaching new applicants who need support.
32. Details of the funding and how to access it will be widely shared with partners and community stakeholders and made available on the Councils website. Officers will work through the school's networks to raise awareness of this funding with families who may not be receiving benefit or support already but are suffering financially.
33. All referrals will go via the most suitable delivery partner and transfer of referral to a more appropriate delivery partner will be conducted if needed utilising an existing platform (Refernet) and associated data sharing agreement of which all delivery partners will have access.
34. The summary of the methods to allocate and distribute the funding is as below. An outline of the full proposed plan for allocation of funding and partners can be viewed in Appendix A.

Energy

35. Citizens Advice will deliver energy support and provide residents with vouchers towards cover cost of energy bills. An initial rate of £200 to £300 will be set as a guide

which residents can apply. In line with the funding criteria, it will prioritise those who have not received other cost of living payments.

36. A staggered approach to distribution of this element of funding will be implemented to ensure we can sufficiently support households over the challenging winter months.
37. A direct payment to identified cohort of households who have non-school aged children and who are in receipt of Council Tax Support. This will provide support towards energy cost.
38. A direct payment to identified cohort of households with pensioners who are in receipt of Council Tax Support or Housing Benefit and guaranteed pension credit. This will provide support towards energy costs.

Food

39. Funding will be provided to our emergency food network partners to sustain delivery of Chorley food clubs/banks to address food poverty within communities and ensure they have sufficient food supplies to support residents for the next 12 months.
40. Communities team will hold a supply of supermarket vouchers supplied through LCC Edenred system which will enable quick support to residents who contact the council in an emergency and provide support within the mobilisation period. These vouchers have been selected as they do not allow the purchase of alcohol, tobacco, or lottery products.
41. Warm welcoming spaces initiative to be sustained where there is a provision of food which vulnerable residents can access along with wider advice on support.

Housing

42. Work closely with our Affordable Warmth Scheme to ensure we can continue to support vulnerable residents with interventions which has a sustainable impact on energy costs, for example, boiler repairs/replacements, fitting draft excluders, glazing improvements.
43. To support those residents that present via the councils discretionary housing payment scheme and ensure that the required needs can be met where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need.

Essentials linked to energy

44. Selected partner agencies will provide white goods such as fridges to support households alongside provision of smaller electrical essentials such as kettles, toasters.

Other essential items

45. Partners will also be able to utilise the fund to support residents to other living essentials such as clothing, footwear, school uniform, bedding, curtains, carpets.

Advice

46. To utilise HSF monies for our Advice Services core community commission. This would then create a funding resource which can be used on wider cost of living support that is not eligible under HSF criteria and be much more flexible to allocate to changing demands that are being identified throughout the borough
47. All partners are made aware of essential support available across the borough and work closely together to provide signposting to residents which ensures a wider range of support can be given.

Targeted Approach

48. Through our council benefit systems, we can identify those households with non-school aged children who are on low income. Using this data, we can directly target this cohort and make direct payments where required to support with energy costs. This supports these families as school aged children households have access to free school meals and Holiday and Food programme.
49. Through our council benefit systems, we identified a cohort of pensioners in need of support who was receiving guaranteed credit. Utilising this data, it is recommended again to make direct payments. Pensioners have access to all forms of partner delivery, but there is lower take up by pensioners that seek this support. Using the direct payment, it ensures we provide a proportion of funding that targets this cohort.
50. A grant award to Central Lancashire Homestart will be allocated to provide targeted support to families. This will be used to support with food, essential items, clothing, and wider essentials which are identified to help the family.
51. There is a small contingency fund remaining which will be held until mid-way through deliver and then allocated to areas with greatest demand.
52. Consideration will be given how we best ensure that those with disabilities are aware of the fund and help that can be accessed. Utilising our knowledge and existing services such as HIA team and Handyperson scheme we will reach a proportion of disabled people to make aware of the fund and support to access.
53. Work to identify how we should consider providing support to people with caring responsibilities. The fund should look to ensure that unpaid carers and care leavers are aware of support and can easily access.

Grant agreements

54. Of the list of delivery partners grant agreements are already in place for most partners, agreement will be amended to include this additional funding and agreements will be created for those who do not currently have one in place.

Funding control

55. Funding is proposed to be allocated to delivery partners in the form of direct payments and voucher codes which are redeemable by the recipients at major local supermarkets.

56. Delivery partners will record funding issued in line with the management information template provided by DWP. Chorley Council will collate this information and submit this to LCC at prescribed intervals during delivery and final submission at the end of the scheme.
57. Whilst the fund is available to be accessed on more than one occasion, applicants will be asked to declare if they are accessing the scheme through a different delivery partner and sense checks with other delivery partners will be conducted where a delivery partner feels it is appropriate.
58. A maximum value payment of £400 per applicant has been set as an initial guide. Payments above this limit will be assessed via our delivery partner steering group before being approved by Chorley Council.
59. Delivery partners will receive a fee for delivery/administration costs which is available through this fund. The fee received has been agreed in discussion with delivery partners but based on a suggested target of 10% of the overall fund.

Eligibility and evidence

60. As the intention of the fund is intended to reach a wider cohort of vulnerability and is not exclusive to those on benefits, the evidence of need will be controlled by the delivery partner and in line with the guidance, will be appropriate based on a case by case scenario. The risk of applying too many controls in determining eligibility and evidence could result in those in most need not having the ability to access the support.
61. Delivery partners will be required to determine that the resident is a Chorley resident.
62. Guidance material used to deliver the scheme will be provided to delivery partners to help guide them through assessment and checking processes.

Data control

63. Delivery partners will use their own in-house policies and procedures to control data and will be required to maintain the requirements as set out in grant agreement documentation regarding applicable policies.

Information and support in delivering the scheme

64. Communities Team will oversee coordination of funding, support delivery partners and liaise with LCC. They will be the point of contact for complex cases, internal communication, and external enquiries.
65. Guidance documentation outlining the delivery approach and any specific details will be provided to delivery partners.
66. Delivery partners will have access to regular steering group TEAMS sessions to review demands and discuss feedback from casework. Any additional pathways or processes needed will be devised jointly with the Council and the delivery partner group.

Monitoring

67. Delivery partners will be expected to record data in accordance with the requirement of the funding and provide this to the Council to collate and report to the DWP via LCC.
68. Delivery partners will also record wider data to help gather insight on the root causes of the resident's difficulties.
69. We also aim to conduct follow up contact on a sample of the recipients to understand the impact of the funding.

Linking to other workstreams

70. This delivery proposal will link the support provided by the delivery partners to several other existing and emerging workstreams and existing early intervention and support pathways within the Council and other external partners.
71. This will ensure support options are maximised in an efficient way and demonstrates the ambition to co-deliver community impact projects directly with community partners.

Climate change and air quality

72. The work noted in this report does not impact on the Councils Carbon emissions and the wider Climate Emergency and sustainability targets of the Council.

Equality and diversity

73. The programme will be open to all Chorley residents who are eligible using the criteria provided by central government with a targeted approach to ensure all household make up can access support such as families, adult only, pensioners.
74. An Impact Assessment will be completed prior to starting delivery.

Risk

75. Risk associated with this funding is the ability to ensure the funding is allocated prior to the 31st March 2024 to ensure all the funding is used to support those in need.
76. However, if there is significant demand there is the risk that not all applicants will be supported. Therefore, it will be communicated that the scheme will operate on a first come, first served basis until no more fund remain. This would be only be for energy support payments, most food related support will still be able to be accessed due to working with sustainable organisations.
77. Risk that external partners may have capacity issues and struggle to cope with demand/levels of outputs. Risk will be minimised as all partners for delivery have been scoped accordingly through previous working relationships and risks identified through appropriate policies and procedures. Regular contact will be maintained to manage issues and performance

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

78. There are no direct financial implications of this report. The Household Support Fund Phase 4 (HSF4) allocation to Chorley Council of £640,000 will be used to administer the grant based on the specific criteria set out in the government guidance. The funding must be spent by 31st March 2024 or returned to Lancashire County Council and ultimately the government.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

79. Any amendment to existing grant agreements with partner organisations will need to be agreed by both parties in writing. The funds should be distributed in accordance with the best value duty.

80. Use of personal data must accord with the Data Protection Act 2018. Regard should be had to privacy notices and the stated purposes of processing relevant to the personal data used.

Background documents

There are no background papers to this report

Appendices

Appendix A: Household Support Fund 2023/24 Delivery - Breakdown of Funding

Report Author:	Email:	Telephone:	Date:
Bernie Heggarty (Neighbourhood Priorities Officer)	bernie.heggarty@chorley.gov.uk	5818	31/05/20223

This decision will come into force and may be implemented five working days after its publication date, subject to being called in in accordance with the Council’s Constitution.

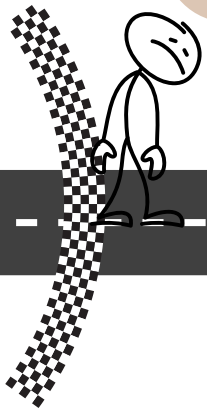
This page is intentionally left blank

John is at Customer Services saying he wants to help but doesn't know where to start?



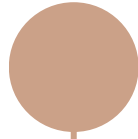
Stage 1

John is contacted by the volunteering officer and asked to complete the information form



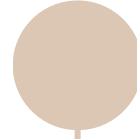
Stage 3

The form shows John is out of work. Finding a volunteer role that may help him gain confidence in a work environment is preferred



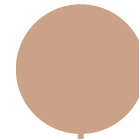
Stage 5

John is referred to employment support partners and confidence courses running in Chorley



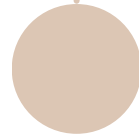
Stage 6

John enrolls on the "positive minds" course run at Chorley Sheds and signs up with Job Centre +



Stage 4

John starts working in an volunteer admin role. Identify John is out of work due to low confidence



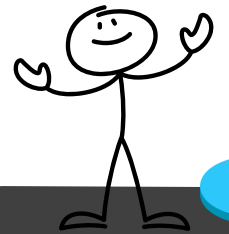
Stage 7

John is referred further with employment support and invited to job fayres . He works in volunteering and is working with DWP for interview and CV support

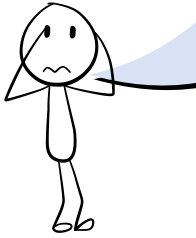


Stage 8

Since stage 7 John now has a stable job, is still volunteering and has several new skills from previous courses

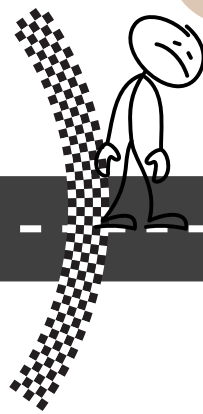


John has presented at Customer Services with Homelessness



Stage 1

Housing solution request proof of homelessness e.g. section 21

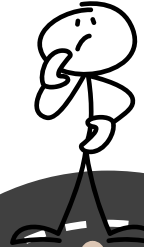


Stage 3

Either support them with Select Move or refer to Calico Housing

Stage 5

John is referred to the household support fund, social prescribing & food support



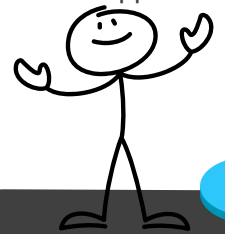
Stage 6

SP complete initial assessment with John. John needs benefit support, finance support and employment support

Stage 4
Identify John is in financial hardship and has mental health struggles

Stage 8

Since stage 7 John now has a stable address, regular food support, benefit support and is working towards employment with volunteering and DWP support.



Stage 7

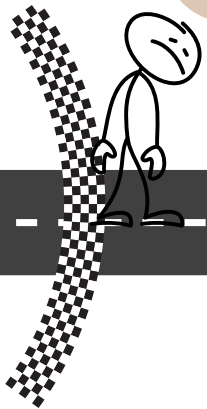
John is referred to the local food bank, CAB benefit support, and council employability officers

John has presented at Customer Services asking support around social isolation



Stage 1

John is referred to the social prescribers by his GP/Council Staff after visiting them with some low level issues.

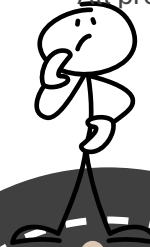


Stage 3

John and the Social Prescriber complete the Initial Assessment which sets out a plan of action

Stage 5

John also expresses interest in the outdoors, so they also go along to the Out Door's 4 All project at Brinscall Hall



Stage 6

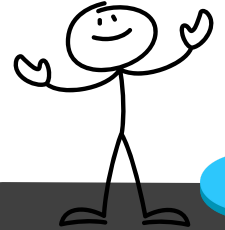
Along the way, John mentions some issues with his finances so a referral is done to CAB and also to Mindsmatter to help with his emotional wellbeing

Stage 4

John's main concern is loneliness and so the Social Prescriber and John attend a Talking Table to chat to others who may be feeling the same

Stage 8

John and the Social Prescriber complete a Closing Assessment to reflect back on the progress John has made and he is happy to continue going to the groups alone.



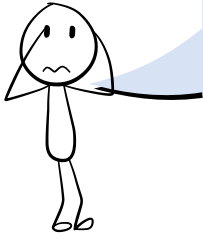
Stage 7

After going to Talking Tables and Out Door's 4 All alone a few times, John is feeling less isolated and has taken steps to improve his finances

Stage 2

John receives a welcome call to discuss his goals and what support the Social Prescribing Team can offer.

John has presented at Customer Services saying he can't afford food



Stage 5

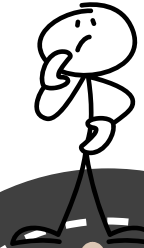
John is referred to CAB by CB for finance support and employment support.

Stage 8

John has now retrained into a new higher paid job which allows him to afford necessities and enjoy life more now.

Stage 3

John is referred to Living Waters Food Bank for a monthly food parcel

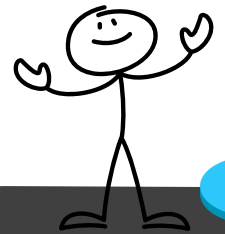


Stage 1

John is directed to the HSF webpages for information on financial support

Stage 6

John is referred to LAL & DWP for employment support. Helping to improve his CV and interview skills and help him look for suitable work



Stage 4

John is introduced to Chorley Buddies GFC's and directed to his nearest club to join and use weekly. John tells the volunteers he doesn't like his current job and feels he has the skills for better roles.

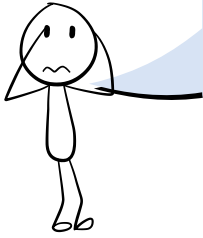
Stage 2

John is asked to provide bank statements in order to claim food vouchers

Stage 7

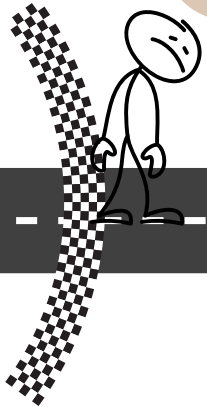
John begins volunteering whilst looking for work in an office environment to boost his CV and help him understand and feel comfortable in an office culture.

John has presented at Customer Services saying he has low self esteem



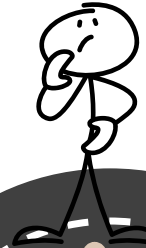
Stage 1

John was referred to Social Prescribing by his GP with low confidence/self esteem



Stage 3

John was enrolled onto the "Positive Minds" course hosted by UDevelop at Chorley Sheds. This is a 6 week course that increases a participant's mindset through various activities like woodwork, art and gardening.

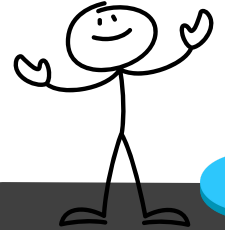


Stage 5

John has a catch up with his social prescriber. Through the meeting and discussions it is clear that John has now found a place he feels comfortable and confident in. They sign him off as a complete case.

Stage 8

John is now a well established member of Chorley Sheds and sits on the committee. He is also working full time again and dealing with customers comfortably within his job



Stage 6

John begins to spend more time outside and involved in further Sheds projects. He is volunteering with UDevelop and now a key holder at the Sheds.

Stage 4

John completed the Positive Minds course and was invited to join Chorley Sheds as a member, he accepts and begins volunteering and using Chorley Sheds regularly.

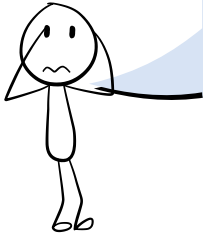
Stage 2

Working with John, the social prescriber invite john to several communy groups based on his hobbies and interest

Stage 7

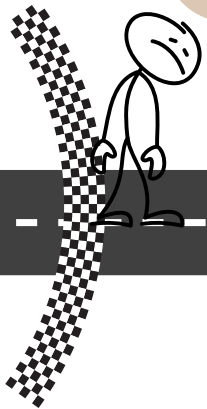
Since John completed the Positive Minds course he has continued to engage in other confidence courses run throughout the borough, gaining certificates and his self confidence score has doubled.

John has presented at Customer Services saying he is new to the country



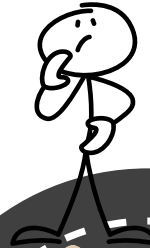
Stage 1

John has recently resettled in the UK. He has come to CC to find what support is available for Refugees.



Stage 3

John requires some financial support and immigration advice regarding his status. BRC support John with essential shopping and a sim card with data. John contacts a solicitor with BRC and confirms his immigration details and support.



Stage 5

John continues to attend the meeting place. He mentions that he has to walk quite a long distance to get there. He is informed that they have free bikes they can provide him with.

Stage 6

Later John receives his letter stating he is granted Refugee status in the UK, but he must now leave his Serco accommodation in 28 days. John returns to CC for help. He speaks to the resettlement team again and they refer him to housing solutions for accommodation support.

Stage 4

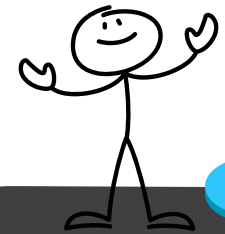
John visits the meeting place. He meets other Asylum Seekers there and makes friends. He also manages to practice his English while speaking to the volunteers and can get a free lunch. The resettlement team visit the meeting place and support John to apply for the household support fund ease his financial difficulties.

Stage 2

John's English is limited. The team refer John into ESOL provision, make him aware of the British Red Cross support drop in at the Hollinshead centre and the meeting place. John is invited to complete an ESOL assessment and is given details for a class with LAL. He also visits the BRC drop in and completes a "needs assessment".

Stage 8

John has now matched to a social housing property. CC support John with furnishings and refer him into "under one roof". He is now ready to start his new life in the UK and continues to job search. The Resettlement Team speak to the BRC and support John to complete the family reunification forms that the BRC submit on his behalf. It's a long process but the reunification is accepted, and John is reunited with his wife and children in the UK.



Stage 7

After 28 days John is unsuccessful in finding a social housing property and is moved into Cotswold house where he gets support to apply for the benefits he is now entitled to. He continues to improve his English and starts looking for jobs while waiting for a social housing property.

Furniture Poverty
New / Recycling White Goods and Furniture Scheme
Proposal Report

1.0. Introduction and Purpose.

- 1.1. The purpose of this summary report is to explore the plausibility of creating a Local Welfare Assistance (LWA) furniture and white goods provision scheme in Chorley. This would benefit residents that are experiencing Financial Hardship and Furniture Poverty through the current cost of living challenges. More comprehensive information about this can be found in **(Appendix 1)**.
- 1.2. The above issues first came to light in Chorley throughout the COVID Lockdowns, whereby numerous residents were requesting assistance to get new furniture and white goods and to date, no real adequate help has been available to properly address this issue.
- 1.3. In early 2021, Chorley Council's Emergency Assistance Grant, offered a very limited short-term solution, but it greatly helped the majority of the 70+ applicants who were able to buy new white goods and some new furniture with it. Furthermore, it also improved their quality of life at the time, which can be seen in points 8.0 - 11.4 (Emergency Assistance Grant Section) of the Financial Hardship Report 2021 – 2022 and Appendix 1 of the report. [Financial Hardship Report 2021 - 2022](#)

2.0. What Is Furniture Poverty?

- 2.1. On a national level, extensive research has been carried out by a third sector organisation called 'End Furniture Poverty' <https://endfurniturepoverty.org/> which is the campaigning and social research arm of FRC Group <https://frcgroup.co.uk/>; who for the last 30 years, have been providing furniture, both new and preloved, to people in other parts of the country that are living in Furniture Poverty.
- 2.2. End of Furniture Poverty Group defines 'Furniture Poverty' (including white goods), as the inability to access, or afford to buy or maintain, any household furniture or appliance item, that is essential to achieve a socially acceptable standard of living. They state that the impact of having no furniture and white goods can be devastating and detrimental in terms of social isolation, normal life function and finances.
- 2.3. Furthermore, they claim that additional funding provided by Government over the past 3 years, while welcomed, was redirected by the vast majority of local authorities to third party and community sector organisations, such as foodbanks; and a sizeable proportion appears to have been used to fund Free School Meals – leaving furniture provision severely neglected.
- 2.4. As the numbers claiming Universal Credit have doubled in some parts of the country, many more people struggle to replace broken appliances or buy a bed for their child. For those people escaping homelessness, or fleeing domestic violence and care leavers, who often have nothing, welfare schemes are a vital lifeline to prevent severe hardship and destitution.

- 2.5. End Furniture Poverty asked the Government to provide guidance to local authorities to ensure that at least 65% of LWA is used to provide furniture and white goods and to ensure that local authorities properly advertise the schemes, making them easily accessible on their websites. End Furniture Poverty believe that a long-term ring-fenced funding commitment will provide local authorities with the certainty they need to expand on existing schemes or, in those areas without a scheme, create one – and ensure the funding is not diverted to prop up other frontline services.

3.0. Local Welfare Assistance (LWA) Furniture and White Goods Services in Chorley,

- 3.1. Although there are no LWA's currently operating in Chorley, there are a couple of services that are worthy of note, operating in nearby authorities. They are Lancashire County Council (LCC) commissioned Social Enterprise Network (SELNET based in Preston) to deliver a Essential Household Goods Support Scheme and The Brick from Wigan, a multi-faceted third sector charity, who would like to expand their business / service into Chorley.
- 3.2. SELNET operate under the brand 'Under One Roof', which provides support for residents who need help to maintain or establish a home. The overall aim of this service is to support people to meet their immediate needs and to help them feel more secure and live more independently in the community. <https://selnet-uk.com/selnet-under-one-roof/>
- 3.3. The Brick Project offers numerous services to people who are homeless, in poverty or facing debt crisis; such as, an intervention service, debt advice support, food poverty, homelessness and housing support to name but a few. All other services will be highlighted in **(Appendix 1)**. <https://www.thebrick.org.uk/>
- 3.4. The recently launched 'Brick by Brick Project' deals with the cost of living crisis and will be a community donations hub, whereby Amazon and other companies can donate a wide range of surplus products and reach people directly through a network of charity groups and care professionals in the community including teachers, midwives and social workers.
- 3.5. The project will bring together the knowledge and network of The Brick, other local charities, and the logistics expertise and donations from Amazon. Further to this, they will receive product donations from other national and local retailers, to provide the right products at the right time. The project will provide an offer that meets the needs of families in the area, which includes essential items like bedding, toiletries, nappies, wipes, clothing, backpacks, home furnishings, lightings, and electrical products.
- 3.6. Furthermore, Amazon helped set-up the warehouse operations at the Brick-by-Brick Project site in Wigan with a contribution of pro-bono staffing, operations advice, and an initial cash grant of £100,000 to support the recruitment, salaries, and training of the team.
- 3.7. The Brick want to expand their service to Chorley and would use volunteers from Chorley in the process. To make this happen, they need a suitable sized storage facility (free of charge if possible), to store furniture and other household items; and further to this, they would like to partner with an established organisation from Chorley, that provides a similar type of service to their own. Chorley Buddies and Living Waters have recently expressed an interest in partnering with the Brick concerning the Brick by Brick Project.

3.8. More detailed information about SELNET and the Brick is captured in **(Appendix 1)**.

4.0. Findings / Conclusions

- 4.1. It is clear from the research carried out by the charity 'End Furniture Poverty', that there is an ongoing long-term national problem concerning Furniture Poverty. The regular ongoing Furniture Poverty enquiries to Chorley Council would support this assertion and this problem could be dealt with via targeted partnership intervention work via public, private and third sector services.
- 4.2. In terms of SELNET, it is quite difficult to access the scheme and it has a restricted budget and a small team to deliver it. The scheme mainly focuses on 12 Lancashire districts which makes it more diluted and reduces the opportunities for Chorley residents to access it.
- 4.3. With regards to the Brick, they have an excellent track record in this area of work and are keen to work in Chorley. They would offer an excellent and more expansive alternative, that could compliment the work of SELNET and fill any gaps of their more limited Furniture Poverty provision. This would create an increased local offer of support for Chorley residents.

5.0. Recommendations / Way Forward.

- 5.1. It is proposed that Chorley Council via its Communities Team, should play a key role in facilitating / coordinating any future partnership work between the Brick Project and Chorley Buddies and or Living Waters. This would bring much needed support to the borough and is something that would be of great benefit to Chorley residents. This could be in the form of a 12-month pilot scheme.
- 5.2. The above could include Chorley Council finding or providing a suitable building / base, free of charge for 12 months; such as an appropriately sized vacant shop in Chorley Town Centre, or a vacant warehouse close to the town centre.
- 5.3. The project could be monitored and evaluated qualitatively and quantitatively over its' 12 month duration and this could be done by recording the numbers of residents that have accessed the scheme and also via case studies from residents; recording how the scheme has improved their quality of life.
- 5.4. If Chorley Council were to support the above, there would be some financial implications, such as the loss of income and revenue for shop and warehouse letting. Furthermore, there will also be cost implications concerning council officers time, facilitating the partnership work between The Brick and Chorley Buddies and or Living Waters; and also for collating information, for monitoring and evaluation and for producing reports associated with the proposed project.

John Hill
April 2023

Appendix 1

Additional Information Concerning Furniture Poverty

1.0. 'End of Furniture Poverty Charity'

- 1.1. In October 2021, Charity Campaign End Furniture Poverty carried out extensive research into Local Welfare Assistance (LWA) – local authority-run schemes to support people in a time of crisis with grants and providing essential furniture and appliances. It is estimated that over 5 million people in the UK are living without at least one essential household appliance such as a cooker or a fridge freezer. <https://endfurniturepoverty.org/research/understanding-furniture-poverty/>
- 1.2. Research also revealed that someone needing to use a launderette can add approximately £1000 to the annual cost of washing your clothes.
- 1.3. End Furniture Poverty also published The Postcode Lottery of Crisis Support recently and it revealed since 2010, there had been an 86% decline in the amount spent on crisis support and 25 local authorities in England had closed their LWA schemes, leaving one in five people unable to access crisis support.
- 1.4. The picture is very different in the devolved nations where everyone can access a scheme. End Furniture Poverty found that in 2019/20, in England the per capita spend on LWA was just 64p, compared to £4.19 in Wales, £6.79 in Northern Ireland, and £6.88 in Scotland. The summary and full report can be found here <https://endfurniturepoverty.org/research/the-postcode-lottery-of-crisis-support/>
- 1.5. End Furniture Poverty examined the state of LWA provision and the additional support offered during the pandemic. Initial findings suggested that there are now more than 27 local authorities without an LWA scheme in England.
- 1.6. Claire Donovan, Head of Policy at End Furniture Poverty, said: *“Investing in local welfare schemes is not only the right thing to do, it can also create significant savings across the public purse. “Living in furniture poverty has a terrible impact on people’s mental and physical health, leading to increased NHS costs, and it can drive people into unmanageable debt as they try to access high-cost credit, leading to evictions and homelessness.* <https://endfurniturepoverty.org/2021/10/22/press-release-autumn-budget-must-provide-adequate-crisis-support/>
- 1.7. End Furniture Poverty report that The Government provided significant levels of emergency funding for LWA in response to the pandemic, therefore admitting that crisis support was underfunded and inadequate in many parts of the country. But spending deadlines and the lack of infrastructure in areas with a closed local welfare scheme, meant that in too many cases the funding did not reach those who most needed it.

- 1.8. Claire Donavon further explained that *“With the £20 cut to Universal Credit, the end of furlough, rising energy costs and the upcoming increase to National Insurance contributions, millions of people are struggling and while there is widespread support for food and utilities costs, there is little other support for furniture and white goods. “The grant-giving sector do a fantastic job, providing furniture and white goods to applicants, but they cannot shoulder the burden alone – people need properly funded Local Welfare Assistance schemes and we urge the Government do the right thing and make this crucial investment.”*

2.0. SELNET - Further Information

- 2.1. Lancashire County Councils Essential Household Goods Support Scheme is a non-statutory service that provides support for the people of Lancashire. The scheme is now contracted to SELNET for 3 years fixed term and is operating under the brand ‘Under One Roof’, which provides support for residents who need help to maintain or establish a home. The overall aim of this service is to support people to meet their immediate needs and to help them feel more secure and live more independently in the community. <https://selnet-uk.com/selnet-under-one-roof/>
- 2.2. Furthermore, SELNET / Under One Roof has 50 registered partners consisting of private, public and 3rd sector organisations and it is available to people that live in the administrative boundary of Lancashire County Council and operates across the 12 districts of the local authority. Residents from any unitary councils in Lancashire, are not eligible for support in this scheme.
- 2.3. The scheme is managed by a small team of 2 full time staff (including manager) and 2 part time staff and is accessible Monday to Friday 9.00am - 5.00pm (excluding Bank Holidays) and they give advanced warning of any disruption to service delivery. Under One Roof scheme aims to process applicants within 2 working days and aims to get furniture and white goods to applicants, within 10 working days.
- 2.4. SELNET admit that funding for this scheme is small / limited and that they need to apply for additional funding, to help improve the service. They would not disclose the amount of funding they have been allocated and neither would they disclose how much funding would be allocated to Chorley. The scheme is currently dealing with 30 applicants per week and struggles with capacity. As a result, Under One Roof must be used as a last resort only and to access it, an applicant must:
- Be aged 16 years or over
 - Live within the administrative boundary of Lancashire
 - Have no income or be on a low income, such as tested benefits
 - Be a priority group
 - Not have access to sufficient funds to meet their immediate needs or those of their dependents
 - Need to access essential household items to help maintain and establish a home
 - Be referred into the scheme by partner organisations

- 2.5. SELNET / Under One Roof work with re-use / upcycling organisations in Preston for access to good quality second-hand furniture (including beds) and they can also access brand new white goods when required. The scheme, however, cannot be used to purchase new carpets.
- 2.6. If residents are experienced other issues outside of the remit of the scheme, they will be directed to appropriate services to meet their needs.

3.0. The Brick Project - Further Information

- 3.1. The Brick Project in Wigan is a growing charity that offers services to people who are homeless, in poverty or facing debt crisis. As its name suggests, it provides a safe, solid building block for people in crisis to begin to construct a new life and become valuable members of society. The services run by the Brick Project includes a Crisis Intervention Service and Wigan's largest Food Bank. Both are managed by a small staff team but the main support to its service users is delivered by volunteers. <https://www.thebrick.org.uk/>
- 3.2. The Brick also operates statutory tendered projects offering support to people in their tenancies; ensuring people newly homeless, to move quickly into accommodation and ensuring that homeless people receive good health care and support if in hospital. Staff and volunteers at the Brick Project help people tackle the root causes of homelessness such as, debt, poverty and hunger.
- 3.3. Furthermore, it offers a huge range of services to people who are homeless, in poverty or facing debt crisis. This includes Crisis Intervention, Hospital to Home and Asset Coaching <https://www.thebrick.org.uk/project/asset-coaching-and-mentoring>
- 3.4. Other services within the project include the following:
 - [The Brick Shop](#) - is a charity shop selling donated goods, often to people on low incomes. The shop gives clothes free of charge to people referred by Wigan Council. The shop is one of the main hubs within its community
 - [The Brick Works](#) - offers training to increase the employment opportunities for people who are unemployed for a variety of reasons. This may include homelessness or recently housed people referred
 - [The Brick Giving](#) - aims to put an end to poverty and homelessness in Wigan and Leigh. Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, The Brick has faced a reduction in donations and increased demand on its services from people in need. The Brick aim to continue supporting the community to ensure no one gets left behind
 - [The Brick Re-Use](#) - has been set up to help educate people in the Wigan Borough about recycling and re-use. They also turn unwanted goods into lovingly restored furniture for families in need

- 3.5. The Brick are currently in partnership with Wigan Council to provide welfare packages. They are contracted by Wigan Council to provide furniture and furnishings (second hand, except beds / cutlery / pots, pans, duvets and bedding which are all bought in new). The Brick sources stores and delivers all the items to families/individuals who are referred to the scheme. The scheme provides around 10 -15 furniture packages a month to people in need for a range of reasons, such as from fleeing Domestic Violence, to leaving care and moving into their first home, to people who might have lost everything in a fire.
- 3.6. In the above agreement, Wigan Council pay per item, plus a contribution to storage costs and also administration wages. There are no white goods supplied on this contract, but if people need them, they are put on a waiting list and the Brick gets the appliances for the individual who might pay between £30-40 for a cooker.
- 3.7. All the Brick's second-hand furniture and white goods are sourced from public donations and the electrical items are PAT Tested and checked before they are distributed, but they don't do any significant repairs. Any items that aren't reusable are scrapped. The Brick currently have around 30-40 people on a waiting list, as the demand is ever increasing.
- 3.8. The Brick are also contracted by Wigan Council to deliver a project called 'Final Finish' in which they refurbish void properties ready for their next tenancy. They paint, provide and put up blinds / curtains and re-carpet (ranging from flats to 4-bedroom houses) and are currently finishing 200 properties per year. The Brick also provide painting packs for tenants who want to do the work themselves and instructions.
- 3.9. Internal Welfare Packages are delivered by the Brick for people who might not be eligible for council support, for example someone who is moving out of emergency accommodation into supported accommodation. This includes the provision of second-hand stock, free of charge to these residents going through this process. The Brick have successfully procured funding previously from the Homeless Charity 'Crisis', to enable the purchase of brand-new white goods for people at risk of homelessness. Furthermore, they provide up to 5 Internal Welfare Packages per month.
- 3.10. With regards to the 3 retail shops run by the Brick in Wigan and Leigh, they describe them as community hubs which are stocked with pre-loved donated items and is a place where people can access affordable furniture and white goods. Depending on circumstances the Brick will also provide items heavily discounted or free of charge. The Brick are currently providing free books for all children, at all their shops and they are considering running similar schemes for clothes. One of the shops in Wigan specialises in electrical items and white goods.
- 3.11. The Brick provides affordable new white goods and they partner with 'Whirlpool' and can access very cheap white goods, that they store for people who want to pay in instalments. They market this process as a way of encouraging people to avoid payday loans and catalogue shops etc.
- 3.12. All of the above is also providing jobs, training and work experience placements for the 70+ people that the Brick currently support in Wigan and Leigh homeless emergency accommodation.

- 3.13. They have recently opened a new warehouse in Wigan which will enable them to offer more skills and accredited courses in logistics, stock control, fork lift truck driving etc so that they are more equipped to move away from homelessness and into a job and home of their own.
- 3.14. As part of that journey, once they have their property, they can continue to volunteer with the Brick and they can access the furniture welfare too, if they need it. The Brick has 140 volunteers and recently won the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.
- 3.15. The Brick are also a part of the Reuse Network and have just been accredited to be an 'Approved Reuse Centre' (ARC) member which gives them access to returned stocks too from retailers such as Ikea, John Lewis etc, which will then feed back into the above areas.

John Hill
April 2023



Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Communities	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Thursday, 5 October 2023

First Monitoring Report - Select Move Overview and Scrutiny Task Group Oct 2023

Is this report confidential?	No
Is this decision key?	No
Savings or expenditure amounting to greater than £100,000	Significant impact on 2 or more council wards

Purpose of the Report

- To provide the first update of the work undertaken to deliver the 18 recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group for Select Move.

Recommendations

- That the updates provided on this report are noted.

Reasons for recommendations

- To ensure the actions set out in the February Executive Cabinet report have been completed, in progress and track to be implemented.

Other options considered and rejected

- Not applicable

Executive summary

- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned a report on Select Move to be delivered by the Director of Communities and was presented at the meeting on the 30th September 2021. Following the delivery of the report, it was agreed for the matter to be the subject of a Task Group which commenced in December 2021.
- The objectives of the Task Group were:
 - To ensure that recommendations made in 2014 are being adhered to, if applicable.

- To investigate and evidence whether Select Move is meeting the needs, satisfaction and benefits of customers and Members.
- To investigate the current methods and models of communication between Select Move and customers, and explore what actions, if any can be taken to improve the process, accessibility and increase transparency.
- The actions in response to the 18 recommendations where presents to the Executive Cabinet on the 23rd February 2023 and these where approved.

Corporate priorities

7. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

Housing where residents can live well	A green and sustainable borough
An enterprising economy with vibrant local centres in urban and rural areas	Healthy, safe and engaged communities

Background to the report

8. In 2021, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee asked the Task Group to undertake a scrutiny inquiry to look at the Select Move Choice Based Lettings scheme, of which the Council is a member, alongside 11 Registered Providers of social housing.
9. Objectives were agreed to investigate and evidence whether Select Move is meeting the needs to the satisfaction of the applicants and ensuring that the service is efficient, easy to use and is meeting the needs of users while identifying and considering what the Council can influence.

Recommendations and Progress to Date

10. The 18 recommendations made by the task group were presented to Executive Cabinet on 23rd February 2023 and these were endorsed for action.
11. The table below sets out the 18 recommendations, with the second column providing actions and responses to the recommendations and the third column providing the latest update on progress.

Recommendations and Update

No	Recommendation	Action / Responses February Report	Latest Update
1	Review the role Chorley Council’s Customer Service has in relation to Select Move and housing applications and queries.	Housing officers have provided training to both existing and new staff to ensure all staff are equipped with the knowledge and tools to assist customers with general Select Move enquiries. The training includes tasks such as log in issues, shortlisting, and bids etc.	Training has been provided to existing and new staff on the Select move process. Meeting have been held with customer services to inform them of any changes to the processes.

		<p>The team will continue to offer training to customer services along with any additional support, and guidance required.</p>	<p>The team are in the process of recruiting new staff and each will have their own training and development programme.</p>
2	<p>An annual Member Learning Session to be conducted with Members of Chorley Borough Council, specifically in relation to Select Move. Members are to be updated and kept informed on any substantial changes made to Select Move.</p>	<p>The first of the annual member learning sessions has been arranged for the 23rd January 2023, this will be delivered by the Select Move Co-ordinator.</p>	<p>This member Learning session was delivered by the Select Move Co-ordinator on the 23rd January 2023.</p>
3	<p>Simplify the banding system and influence the partnership to reduce the number of bands to ensure they are simple to understand and user friendly. Ensure that any consideration for changing a user's banding is communicated and clear.</p>	<p>Simplifying the banding has been addressed in the Select Move Policy Review.</p> <p>Recommendations in the new policy is to reduce bands to A-C with a light touch band D (No Housing need and Sheltered approved regardless of tenure).</p> <p>All changes to bands are communicated by letter/email to customers.</p>	<p>The new policy is on track to be implemented in February 2024, all the proposals requested on the three consultation exercises have been agreed and no further changes to the original proposal have been made.</p> <p>Report detailing the response to the policy is attached.</p>
4	<p>Chorley Council to maintain the position that the Select Move Partnership keeps an open housing register</p>	<p>It was agreed across the partnership to maintain an open register.</p>	<p>The new policy is on track to be implemented in February 2024.</p>

	<p>to prevent disqualifying those with no evidenced housing need</p>	<p>Recommendations for the new policy is to have a band D no housing need and to also accept people who are sheltered approved regardless of tenure.</p>	<p>The partnership agreed to maintain the open register and the new proposed policy does not change this.</p> <p>The recommendation to have a band D no housing need was supported by consultees and the partnership.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>The Select Move partnership to tighten the qualification criteria for local connection, and for Members of Chorley Borough Council to be frequently informed of migration figures, e.g. Member Learning Session, In the Know, or upon Member request.</p>	<p>Strengthening the Local Connection has been addressed in the Select Move Policy Review.</p> <p>It was identified that the current policy is less effective than neighbouring local authorities in relation to local connection.</p> <p>In the current policy a local connection is established after 6 months of residing in the Borough.</p> <p>Increasing the local connection to 2 years will require people to demonstrate they have an established connection to the Borough and have invested in our communities.</p> <p>There will be exceptions under homelessness legislation to fulfil statutory duties. Safeguards will be applied for applicants who have fled domestic abuse or extreme threats of violence from another area.</p>	<p>The consultation results on the proposals to strengthen the local connection rules showed a 76% support from Chorley residents and 84% support from the partnership area. Of the 24 % who disagreed with the proposal most commented that the move from 6 months to two years is too high.</p> <p>Due to the overall support all the proposals requested on the three consultation exercises have been agreed and no further changes to the proposed policy have been made.</p> <p>Members have been informed of migration figures at the Select Move learning session and the latest results reported to members on 26th</p>

			<p>September show in the months from April -June there were 7 migrations into the borough through Select Move and 12 migrations to outside of the borough.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>The Select Move Partnership to retain the practice of being able to refuse three reasonable offers withing the common allocations policy (though one offer refusal will still allow the council to discharge its statutory homelessness duty it would not disqualify a customer from the register).</p>	<p>To keep three refusals was recommended to the Partnership but it was agreed to amend the policy to consult on the reduction to two reasonable offers.</p> <p>Select Move is a choice based letting system and people have the choice to bid on properties themselves. The onus is on them to ensure that the area and property is suitable for them prior to placing the bid (this is one of the reasons why the bidding cycle is for 5 days).</p> <p>This reduction was recommended due to the delay caused to the process by refusals which can result in weeks delay and possible re-advertisement of the property.</p> <p>As part of this change, the Partnership will ensure there is clear communication via adverts and letters, advising on best practice when expressing interest in properties.</p> <p>The definition of a reasonable offer is set out in the proposed new policy. For example, refusal of a property that does not meet an applicant's needs for disability adaptations would</p>	<p>There was 68% support from Chorley residents for the proposal of reducing three reasonable offers down to two. Comments from residents were that adverts need to be more informative including photos and clearer advice needs to be given on what would be classed as a reasonable refusal.</p> <p>These comments will be taken on board when the policy goes live and the Select Move on-line system is amended.</p>

		be classed as a reasonable reason to refuse a property.	
7	Encourage the partnership to increase the threshold of individual savings and income within the policy review, maintaining the position that exemptions will be assessed on housing need.	<p>This was put forward to the partnership. The policy is currently £30,000 savings and £60,000 household income.</p> <p>Individual circumstances would always be considered if an applicant's needs can only be met by Social Housing.</p> <p>It is recognised in the proposed changes to band D would now allow applicants to register if they can demonstrate a need for sheltered accommodation regardless of tenure.</p>	<p>The new policy is on track to be implemented in February 2024, all the proposals requested on the three consultations where agreed and no further changes to this have been made.</p> <p>Individual circumstance would always be considered especially if applicant's needs can only be met with social Housing.</p>
8	Ensure and exercise oversight of the Select Move Partnerships' adherence to the Common Allocations Policy, to ensure transparency, clarity, and accountability.	<p>The Select Move Co-ordinator will monitor and oversee how the partners are operating to ensure a fair and fit for purpose policy and partnership is in place.</p> <p>The Co-ordinator will ensure policies and procedures are regularly reviewed. The new proposed Select Move policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it continues to reflect the partnership's and Council's priorities.</p> <p>The Co-ordinator attends both operational and steering group meetings and is currently building relationships across the partnership, which is paramount to this role in helping improve the delivery of social housing across the three LA's.</p>	<p>Ongoing - the Co-ordinator continues to chair the monthly meetings and continues to oversee the implementation of the new proposed policy.</p> <p>Workshops are being arranged to tackle inconsistency in processing, these will be arranged alongside the policy implementation.</p>

		<p>Along with reviewing operational processes/procedures across the partnership the coordinator will be delivering training and workshops to help improve consistency and efficiency in how the service is delivered.</p>	
9	<p>Annual satisfaction survey to be completed with all users of Select Move, with action plans in place to resolve reported issues.</p>	<p>It has been agreed to undertake an annual survey.</p> <p>The next survey will be arranged for July 2023.</p>	<p>Due to the recent Select Move consultation exercise which finished in August it was felt more appropriate to undertake the satisfaction survey once the consultation exercise was completed. The survey will now take place in October.</p>
10	<p>Ensure and exercise oversight of the Select Move Partnership monitoring consistency in the application process, policies in relation to valid documentation, e.g. GP evidence letters.</p>	<p>The Select Move Co-ordinator will monitor consistency in the application process and polices in relation to valid documentation.</p> <p>Guidance on assessing medical applications is proposed in the new draft allocations policy as an appendix.</p>	<p>Ongoing - the coordinator continues to chair the monthly meetings and continues to oversee the implementation of the new proposed policy.</p> <p>Workshops are being arranged to tackle inconsistency in processing, these will be arranged alongside the policy implementation.</p> <p>Guidance specifically on assessing medical applications has been produced and will be adopted alongside the policy in Feb 2024.</p>

<p>11</p>	<p>Ensure that face to face access remains available to all users alongside the technological improvements. If required, users are to be signposted to services available such as Citizens Advice Bureau and Chorley Help the Homeless.</p>	<p>Face to Face support via our Housing team is available weekdays in the Council's Union Street Office and two officers are on call every day to support this service.</p> <p>Currently, the housing officers are signposting customers to Chorley Help the Homeless and the digital sessions delivered by the Communities Teams. Chorley Help the Homeless have limited scope to support customers but the team are looking to deliver training to all volunteers on how best to support customers.</p>	<p>Housing Officers continue to have a presence daily in the Union Street offices.</p> <p>The Housing team have a case load of 238 cases and respond to over 117 enquires a day via e-mails, calls, web messages and visits. Face to face assessments are offered to our residents.</p> <p>Signposting is undertaken with consent of the customer to CAB, Help the Homeless and to our own Social Prescribing Service.</p> <p>Training has been provided to volunteers at Help the Homeless on how to support our residents going through the assessment process.</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>Chorley Council to explore further opportunities to support customers in rural areas to access the Select Move register, e.g. commission library services.</p>	<p>Contact will be made with the RP's to discuss access in rural areas.</p>	<p>Discussions have taken place with RP's to address to explore opportunities to support customers in rural areas.</p> <p>This has tied in with the Council's Digital Skills project which was delivered successfully. A</p>

			<p>programme of learning opportunities was launched and delivered across many community venues both in central and rural Chorley.</p> <p>The council commissioned programme was a short, intensive offer to promote the benefits of building digital literacy whilst developing fundamental skills. This also included support for people accessing Select Move.</p> <p>Particular success has been achieved when an arrangement has been made with existing groups of residents, to bring the programme to their members as part of their regular meetings; friendship groups, social events, religious congregations.</p> <p>Through delivery of this programme, it has become apparent that the existing support available at local libraries, charities and voluntary groups is sufficient to meet the demand, with a</p>
--	--	--	---

			referral pathway created and circulated within customer facing council teams and local networks.
13	Monitor the progress and roll out of the upgraded system provided by Civica which should allow the Select Move website to be functional, and easy to use on all devices. Chorley Council to be actively involved in any future procurement exercise in relation to the Choice Base Letting platform.	<p>The upgrade was implemented on the 3rd November 2022 and training has been provided to the team and customers on the new system. The website is more mobile friendly, reducing those barriers for those customers with only mobile devices. The new element to allow customers to upload documents themselves from their Select Move account is proving to be positive, making the process more efficient.</p> <p>Any future procurement will involve Chorley Council.</p>	Completed
14	Provide clear and open lines of communication and information to allow applicants of Select Move to manage and set their expectations. This is to include photographs of listed properties, average waiting times for responses, average waiting times for different sized properties and average waiting times per geographic location.	<p>As part of the upgrade customers are now able to view visual maps showing average waiting times across the borough, this also provides information on how many properties have been advertised and let per area, this is a real positive tool to help manage expectations on lengths of time it takes to be housed and the demand on Social housing.</p> <p>Search properties - SelectMove</p> <p>Jigsaw have agreed to ensure photographs are available for their properties.</p>	Ongoing business as usual - The visual hex maps are used daily by customers and officers and make a real difference in managing expectations.
15	Develop a greater understanding and	This will be requested; however, as the 25% sits	This information has not been received

	insight into the Housing Associations makeup, and demographics of the people moving into the area through the 25% allowance not through Select Move.	outside the Select Move Policy this will be discretionary.	from the Housing Associations and will be requested again.
16	That the partnership recognise the importance of treating social housing customers with the dignity and respect, and that the customer service standards are of utmost priority.	<p>This is paramount to our staff and customer service standards are our utmost priority.</p> <p>The team is now fully staffed, and development training has been scheduled which will support the team in responding effectively to customers providing a quality service.</p>	<p>Ongoing – this remains our utmost priority, training will continue to be provided to ensure officers are up to date on legislation.</p> <p>New job roles with the housing have been advertised, which will improve capacity.</p> <p>Two temporary roles have been externally funded including supporting people at risk of homelessness experiencing Domestic violence and improving the hospital discharge where housing needs have been identified.</p>
17	A further Select Move Task Group, or a Scrutiny Investigation to be conducted following the final Monitoring Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee if the recommendations failed to be adhered to or if significant issues arise.	Agreed by Executive Cabinet 10 th November 2022.	No further update from the previous action.

18	Chorley Council to explore the advantages and disadvantages of remaining within the partnership and the impact of increasing its own housing stock.	Agreed by Executive Cabinet 10 th November 2022 and adopted as a central theme in the Council’s Corporate Strategy “Housing where residents can live well” .	No further update from the previous action.

Climate change and air quality

- 12. The work noted in this report has an overall negative/positive impact on the Councils Carbon emissions and the wider Climate Emergency and sustainability targets of the Council.

Equality and diversity

- 13. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken and no direct implications have been identified.

Risk

- 14. A risk register is available for the Select Move Partnership and is available on the Council’s risk management system.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

- 15. There are no direct financial implications of this report.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

- 16. The report is for noting – there are no direct legal implications arising.

Background documents

Background Papers		
Document	Date	File
Overview and task Group Final report	10/11/2022	Overview and Scrutiny Task Group Final Report - Select Move.pdf
Select Move Policy 2018	2018	Allocation Policy 2018.docx (live.com)

Select Move Policy Review 2022	Exec Cabinet meeting 19/01/2023	Select Move Policy Review 2022 Executive Cabinet Report Template.pdf
Recommendation response - Select Move – Overview and Scrutiny	Exec Cabinet Meeting 23/02/2023	Select Move - Overview and Scrutiny Executive Cabinet Report Template.pdf (moderngov.co.uk)

Report Author:	Email:	Telephone:	Date:
Lisa McCormick (Select Move Coordinator)	lisa.mccormick@chorley.gov.uk		06/09/2023

This page is intentionally left blank



Report of	Meeting	Date
Interim Deputy Chief Executive	Overview and Scrutiny	Thursday, 5 October 2023

Wheelchair Accessibility

Is this report confidential?	No
------------------------------	----

Is this decision key?	N/A
-----------------------	-----

Purpose of the Report

1. To update the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding wheelchair accessibility across Council buildings and externally in Chorley.

Recommendations

2. No recommendations but for this report to be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

3. The report is for information only.

Corporate priorities

3. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

Housing where residents can live well	A green and sustainable borough
An enterprising economy with vibrant local centres in urban and rural areas	Healthy, safe and engaged communities

Background to the report

4. The report provides an overview of the Council’s responsibilities regarding the provision of wheelchair access to buildings for both employees and members of the public.
5. The report covers the Council’s equality framework, legal framework, planning responsibilities, recruitment and employment, Council buildings and coordination with external bodies.

Equality Framework

6. The Council has an Equality Framework which establishes our responsibilities where it comes to equality, diversity, and inclusion and sets out how we meet these duties. It is a policy that is shared by Chorley Council and South Ribble Borough Council and includes the different mechanisms and processes that we have for embedding equality. These ensure that with every decision, service, and policy, equality is robustly considered.
7. Equality considerations must be included at every part of the decision-making process. Some of the ways we do this include Impact Assessments.
8. An Impact Assessment must be completed whenever designing, procuring, or changing a service or policy to ensure their impact on equality is fully addressed. The Assessment considers a number of factors including impact for those with protected characteristics, stage of life, environment and reputation. An action plan should be developed to address any negative impacts.
9. Committee and Council reports include a comment on equality implications of proposed recommendations so that elected Members are aware of concerns and mitigating actions when taking decisions.
10. Every year Business Plans are produced across the Councils, which outline the delivery for each service over a twelve-month period. These detail potential equality implications, ensuring equality is considered at every part of the service design and delivery process.
11. During the business planning process, staff are invited to discuss and therefore influence the business plans for the year ahead, ensuring an inclusive approach to the design and delivery of our services and projects.

Legal Requirements

The Equality Act

12. The Public Sector Equality Duty is imposed on all UK public bodies by section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, to take equalities considerations into account when exercising any of their functions and taking decisions.
13. The duty imposed by section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010 on public authorities is one requiring them, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
14. The relevant protected characteristics that section 149 of the Equality Act covers are age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.
15. As set out above Section 149 of the Equality Act provides that public authorities, when exercising their functions, must have due regard to the need to eliminate

discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons with protected characteristics and those that do not share them. Disability is one of the protected characteristics referred to in the Act.

16. As set out in the Councils equality framework an Impact Assessment is undertaken when a Council is designing, procuring, or changing a service or policy to ensure their impact on equality is fully addressed. Wheelchair users form part of the assessment, if negative impacts are identified these are addressed.

Building Regulations

17. The Building Regulations establish standards that must be achieved in the construction of buildings.
18. Part M sets out minimum standards for the design and construction of buildings to ensure that they are safe and accessible for everyone, regardless of a persons' physical abilities.
19. Part M is an important aspect of building design that relates to accessibility and aims to ensure that buildings are designed and constructed in a way that provides equal access for all, regardless of their physical abilities. The importance of Part M lies in its ability to ensure that buildings are accessible, safe, and convenient for everyone to use.
20. One of the main reasons why Part M is so important is that it helps to ensure that buildings comply with legal requirements, including the Equality Act 2010. By meeting these legal requirements, building designers help to prevent discrimination against disabled people and ensure that everyone has equal access to public spaces.
21. The Council is committed to designing buildings that are accessible, creating spaces that are safer and more convenient for everyone, including older people, parents with young children and people with temporary injuries or impairments. This will help to improve the overall usability of the building and create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone.

Planning

22. The process of determining planning applications can do much to ensure that accessibility is addressed within new developments.
23. Accessibility is addressed in planning policy guidance documents at the national and local levels. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in England, for example, emphasises the importance of creating inclusive and accessible environments.
24. The concept of "inclusive design" is promoted, which means that new developments and buildings should be designed from the outset to be accessible and usable by everyone. This includes considerations for those with mobility impairments, sensory impairments, and other disabilities.
25. Developers and applicants are typically required to submit access statements as part of their planning applications. These statements outline how accessibility has been considered in the design and how the development will meet the needs of all users.

26. The planning process involves public consultation, where residents and stakeholders can provide input on proposed developments. This includes feedback on accessibility concerns, ensuring that the community's needs are considered.
27. Accessibility extends to transportation and infrastructure planning. Ensuring that public transport, roads, and pedestrian routes are accessible is crucial. This includes the provision of accessible public transportation and the consideration of walking and cycling routes for people with disabilities.

Council Buildings

28. Previous accessibility works have been undertaken to Council Buildings to allow wheelchair access across the operational estate.
29. No further works are currently planned regarding wheelchair accessibility however once the next project has been identified accessibility will be a consideration of the design process.
30. Councils passenger lifts are maintained and inspected quarterly to ensure their safe operation.
31. Council platform lifts are maintained and inspected every 12 months to ensure their safe operation.

HR - Recruitment and employment

32. We are committed to equality of opportunity at all stages of employment. This includes from the advertisement of jobs, the recruitment and selection process, and the professional development of our employees. Additionally, the Councils support the rights of all people to be treated with dignity and respect at work.
33. Some of the things we do as an employer to ensure equality is considered include:
 - a. Code of conduct: This establishes our expected standards of behaviour for all staff as well as for Councillors. This includes the right of both customers and employees to be treated with fairness and equality, in accordance with the equality strands as defined under the Equality Act 2010.
 - b. Complaints procedure: It is important to us that both our staff and customers feel safe. We have a robust grievance and disciplinary procedure, which ensures that all complaints or allegations are taken seriously and acted upon.
 - c. Equality training: We regularly review and update our equality training to ensure that our staff have the skills necessary to deliver our equality objectives and support improved outcomes. Equality training also forms a key part of our e-learning induction package and is mandatory for all staff members, with bespoke training provided when required.
 - d. Reasonable adjustments: We make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the diverse needs and circumstances of our staff and customers, such as in relation to parental responsibilities or a disability, in order to eliminate disadvantage. This can include from making information available in an accessible format, changing the physical environment of our office spaces, or flexible working arrangements.
34. The Council is Disability Confident and meets all of the requirements of the scheme including guaranteed interviews, proactive identification and implementation of reasonable adjustments, and a flexible approach to recruitment. Individuals with physical disabilities, including wheelchair users, are provided with equal opportunities

to access the recruitment process. This may include in-person interviews held in accessible spaces, or a remote selection process.

- 35. The Council’s Workforce Strategy supports a flexible approach to work location, enabling hybrid and homeworking as appropriate. The organisation has long had a pioneering approach to flexible working and provides opportunities for flexible working to be discussed throughout the employment lifecycle, including during recruitment. A personalised approach incorporates adjustments for employees with disabilities to access a working pattern and location to support their individual needs.

External Bodies

- 36. Chorley Council have provided funding to the charity ‘Shop Mobility’ for the last 17 years. This provision has allowed Shop Mobility to continue to operate. They offer a valuable service to members of the community who have difficulty with mobility, helping them to be more independent by offering an assortment of mobility vehicles within the town centre. Shop Mobility have recently expanded this service to one of Chorley’s extra care facilities, Tatton Gardens.

Climate change and air quality

- 37. There are no climate change implications arising from this report, which is for information.

Equality and diversity

- 38. The equality and diversity implications are detailed within the report.

Risk

- 39. There are no risk implications arising from this report.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

- 40. There are no direct financial implications of this report.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

- 41. The implications of the Equality Act 2010 are referred to in the body of the report.

Report Author:	Email:	Telephone:	Date:
Adam Nickson (Head of Property and Development)	adam.nickson@chorley.gov.uk		27 September 2023

This page is intentionally left blank

This page is intentionally left blank