

OFFICER DECISION FORM

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY: DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

KEY DECISION: YES

DIRECTORATE: ADULTS CARE AND HEALTH

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

**SUBJECT: COST OF LIVING – COMMUNITY, VOLUNTARY AND FAITH SECTOR
GRANT PROGRAMME**

1.0 DECISION:

In order to increase support to local communities affected by the cost-of-living crises, the Director of Public Health has approved the use of £1.2 million of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund to establish a Community, Voluntary and Faith Sector Grants Programme.

Following consultation with the Chief Executive, it has been agreed that the decision be excluded from removal of delegation and reconsideration by Policy and Resources Committee.

2.0 REASONS FOR THE DECISION

- 2.1 The economic backdrop has changed considerably over the past few months with higher oil, gas and commodity prices and fears of rising and persistent inflation. There is significant concern regarding the damaging impacts this will have on local communities through rising living costs. May 2022 data showed Consumer Prices Index (CPI) edging higher to 9.1% while the core CPI rate, which removes energy, fuel and food was 5.9%. While the Retail Price Index (RPI), which measure the change in costs of a representative sample of goods and services, rose to 11.7%. The Bank of England's latest projection sees inflation climbing to 13%, largely influenced by the continuing rise in energy prices.
- 2.2 This is having a significant detrimental impact on funding and income available for a large number of residents and their ability to afford their day-to-day bills and essential expenditure. There are increasing reports of residents making choices between heating or eating, being isolated in their homes due to no available money to pay for fuel or electricity and having to prioritise food over other basic but important needs.
- 2.3 The rising cost of living means residents may fall into poverty, face eviction from their homes and suffer significant mental and physical detrimental health outcomes. This will not only affect the most vulnerable and deprived in the Borough that the Council and its partners are aware of but also those ordinarily would have been able to manage and therefore would not usually have sought support but are likely to find themselves in more challenging circumstances.

2.4 The community, voluntary and faith (CVF) sector plays a hugely important role in Wirral, providing a wide range of activities and services to residents that improve health and wellbeing and contribute to the local economy. The sector has been critical to the response to the pandemic and will continue to have a pivotal role in supporting local communities through this emerging cost-of-living crisis. Organisations based within the heart of local communities are well trusted and respected by residents who may not want to access help elsewhere. These organisations understand the needs and issues affecting local residents and understand where the monies will be most effective in helping residents.

3.0 STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to legal advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been completed. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

4.0 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Nothing to declare.

Signed:

Officer: Julie Webster

Title: Director of Public Health

Date: 30/08/22

A list of background papers on this issue is held with:

Contact Officer: Dr Elspeth Anwar

Date: 26/08/2022

Date of Publication: 14/09/2022