

**21 December 2022**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>COST OF LIVING – COMMUNITY, VOLUNTARY AND FAITH SECTOR GRANTS PROGRAMME</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: CONSULTANT IN PUBLIC HEALTH</b>

## **REPORT SUMMARY**

This report provides the outcome of the funding of the Community Voluntary and Faith sector grants programme. The programme is designed to increase capacity to support local communities affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

The grants programme will be funded through Contain Outbreak Management Funding.

Proposed actions affect all Wards within the borough and the decision is a key decision.

The activities outlined in this report support the vision of the Wirral Plan 2021-2026, to 'create equity for people and place' and will contribute directly or indirectly to delivering the five themes of the plan:

- Sustainable Environment
- Brighter Futures
- Inclusive Economy
- Safe and Pleasant Communities
- Active and Healthy Lives

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

The Director of Public Health is recommended to:

1. Approve the use of a further £151,492.02 Contain Outbreak Management Fund to fund the Community, Voluntary and Faith Sector grants programme.
2. Approve the award of the Community Voluntary Faith sector grants funding to the organisations listed in section of this report, to the total value of £1,351,492.02, to increase support to local communities affected by the cost-of-living crisis.
3. In consultation with the Chief Executive, agree that the decision be excluded from removal of delegation and reconsideration by Policy and Resources Committee.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 The economic backdrop has changed considerably over the past few months with higher oil, gas and commodity prices, 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.
- 1.2 This is having a significant detrimental impact on funding and income available for residents and their ability 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.
- 1.3 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 already aware of and supporting but also those who previously would have been able to manage and therefore would not usually have sought support but are likely to find themselves in more challenging circumstances.
- 1.4 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 the 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.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 The other option was to not fund any organisation who had applied for the funding, which leaves local people more vulnerable to adverse outcomes. Establishing this grants programme reflects the ongoing needs reported by local communities and is also evidenced by data therefore other options, although considered, are not recommended.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The cost-of-living crisis is beginning to have a significant impact on people in every part of our borough. Price rises driven by energy price inflation are having an impact on most households, with those on the lowest incomes likely to be hardest hit. The energy price cap is likely to rise again in the autumn, with the potential to precipitate a very real crisis for many people in Wirral during the winter period.
- 3.2 Wirral Council has established a 'Cost of Living Action Group' chaired by the Chief Executive to co-ordinate local action. The groups mission is to "mitigate the impact on people already experiencing financial hardship, to prevent others from becoming financially insecure and to prepare to support people when they need help". This group will ensure that the CVF grant funding will compliment and not duplicate national Government funding packages of support to date and in the future. COMF funding is also overseen by a member led working group, who have approved this proposal.
- 3.3 This funding to local community organisations will enable additional capacity to support them in response to the evolving cost-of-living crisis. This funding will allow trusted, third sector organisations to increase the capacity of their services and support those communities and vulnerable residents who are most in need. The public health team have worked closely with the CVF forum regarding the programme and following learning from the delivery of grants programmes to date a straightforward application form process will be developed and utilised. Submissions will be evaluated by council officers with all applications being asked to address at least one of the following themes- food poverty, fuel poverty, warm hubs, debt and vulnerable groups (the main issues people are presenting with who require assistance).
- 3.4 The grants scheme was launched on 23<sup>rd</sup> September and applications had a closing date of 12 noon on 14<sup>th</sup> October. In total 94 applications were received totalling £4,943,744.45. A process and marking criteria was designed with officers and the community, voluntary and faith sector forum. This process was ratified by internal audit within Wirral Council. A copy of the process can be found in Appendix A.
- 3.5 The applications were processed by a first panel consisting of public health officers and were marked against the set criteria. A second cross directorate panel then met to discuss the proposed applications to ensure there was no duplication across the organisation in provision and allowed for further scrutiny of decisions. The following organisations have been funded through the grants programme, pending due diligence checks:

<b>Lead Organisation</b>	<b>Allocation (£)</b>
CAP Wirral	9340.00
Christ Church Barnston and St Michaels & All Angels Pensby	7400.00
Christ Church Moreton	20410.00
Community Capacity Builders	66120.00
Crea8ing Community (formerly Crea8ing Careers)	200000.00
Eastham Community Centre Ltd	131870.00
Future Challenges	4500.00
Gateway Church Birkenhead – Registered Charity	84000.00

Heart of Egremont Community Centre	61000.00
Hoylake Holy Trinity School PTA	24500.00
Koala NW, on behalf of the Wirral Family Toolbox Alliance	191592.03
North Birkenhead Development Trust	41605.00
Onward Homes	72618.00
St Andrew's Church, Bebington	4450.00
St Luke's Methodist Church, Hoylake	3767.00
St Vincent de Paul Society	162294.00
Utopia Project CIC	37003.00
Wake up Wallasey CIC	22994.99
West Kirby Methodist Church	1778.00
Wirral Development Trust	50000.00
Wirral Mencap	94250.00
Woodchurch Methodist Church	60000.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,351,492.02</b>

- 3.6 The proposed successful applications were presented to the Contain Outbreak Management Working Group on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2022 for oversight and ratification. The total monies awarded through the grants process was £1,351,492.02.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The grants programme will be funded in 2022/23 through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) grant, provided to local authorities by national Government, to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate the impact of the pandemic on health outcomes. Wirral has received £14,784,032 in COMF grant to date and can be used to fund initiatives until the end of the 2022/23 financial year.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The COMF grant is ring-fenced, and the specific public health activities that can be funded are subject to the agreement of Director of Public Health and local authorities.

#### **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 No significant resource implication beyond Council Officers time to establish and administer the grants programme.

#### **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 There is no risk related to funding as the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) grant allocation for Wirral in 2022/ 2023 has been confirmed. There is a risk to the health and wellbeing of local residents and of an unsustainable increase in service demand if COMF is not utilised to mitigate the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis. There is a risk if COMF is not utilised fully by March 2023, it will have to be returned, hence the planned timeline for delivery of this programme to ensure

sufficient time for the full funding pot to be allocated and spent. We will ensure we minimise risk of fraud throughout the programme delivery to protect public money.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 The Services described within this report are designed based on and respond to findings from a range of insight, including research conducted with local communities throughout the pandemic and through working with the Humanitarian Cell and wider Community, Voluntary and Faith Sector.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 The Equality Impact Assessment for these decisions can be found here: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

Actions to mitigate the cost-of-living crisis will also contribute towards attainment of Wirral Cool 2 Strategy, and the Councils carbon net zero target by 2030. For example:

- Heating and powering buildings currently makes up 40% of the UK's total energy usage. Support provided to reduce risks of fuel poverty may include improving the energy efficiency of homes, which will have a beneficial impact on reducing carbon emissions. The grant scheme may also reduce home energy use via the provision of warm hubs if established.
- Initiatives related to supporting people in food poverty may also support the reduction of food waste.

## **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The additional money that this funding provides will improve the health and social outcomes of some of the borough's most vulnerable residents impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. This funding will allow trusted, third sector organisations to increase the capacity of their services and support those communities most in need.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A- Cost of Living Grants Process

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Cost of Living Crisis, Wirral Intelligence Service JSNA, Wirral Council:

<https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/state-of-the-borough/cost-of-living-crisis-2022/>

Citizens Advice Bureau, Cost of Living Crisis dashboard:

<https://wearecitizensadvice.org.uk/our-new-cost-of-living-dashboard-the-crisis-were-seeing-unfold-aac74fb98713>

Local Government Association, Cost of Living Evidence Hub: <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/safer-and-more-sustainable-communities/cost-living-hub>

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Policy &amp; Resources Committee Cost of Living Action Group Update</b>	<b>09/11/2022</b>
<b>Officer Decision Notice Cost of Living CVF Grants</b>	<b>30/08/2022</b>