

Cabinet



Date of meeting:	11 September 2023
Title of Report:	Cost of Living Action Plan
Lead Member:	Councillor Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Sport, Leisure, HR and OD)
Lead Strategic Director:	Ruth Harrell (Director of Public Health)
Author:	Rachel Silcock (Community Empowerment and Operational Lead)
Contact Email:	Rachel.silcock@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	
Key Decision:	No
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

To present the Cost of Living Plan that Plymouth City Council and partners have developed, published on August 23rd 2023, in response to the cost of living crisis that is affecting the City's residents.

Recommendations and Reasons

That Cabinet note the Cost of Living Plan

Reasons: The impact of Covid-19 and the economic downturn, on top of more than a decade of austerity alongside historically high levels of deprivation, have led to a cost of living crisis in Plymouth.

As the cost of living increases, disposable income reduces and more households start to face serious choices around heating, eating and debt. Even when inflation falls, we are left with a gap between income and outgoings which will leave many people in the city with little or no disposable income potentially for years to come. The cost of financial exclusion is high, both to households affected and to society; poverty is such a strong determinant of future health and wellbeing, and reaches across into so many areas of lives. Even a relatively short term issue (such as over the winter) can have a lasting impact on finances; especially if debts are incurred with high interest rates.

The newly elected Labour City Council took action immediately following the May Election and pledged to develop a Cost of Living Plan within 100 days of coming to office.

The plan is a City Plan and not just a Council Plan and builds on all of the fantastic work that is being done in the city to ensure that we provide as much support to the people who need it over the next few months. The development of the Cost of Living Plan has been really closely informed by those organisations who are already supporting people in need. In addition to working with these groups, we also sought to get wider support across the city, and had more than 85 individuals from nearly 70 organisations join us for a Cost of Living Workshop to develop the plan, share ideas, and importantly offer support.

Even before the plan was in place, a new 'Free Things to do in Plymouth' page was promoted widely at the start of the summer holidays which has been very popular and is being added to all the time.

The Plan was launched on August 23rd 2023, less than 100 days from the new Labour Administration taking office, with a refreshed online Cost of Living Hub and a hard copy leaflet that has been distributed across the city in Council and Community venues.

During the autumn and winter we will regularly update the plan and will produce timely campaign materials to promote initiatives over the next 100 days and beyond including help for children going back to school, information on benefit entitlements, help with energy & food costs and promoting 'Welcoming and Warm Spaces' coming up to winter. There is a full campaign plan in place to support communication through the council and its partners as different themes are promoted.

Ultimately, the plan will develop into a wider anti-poverty plan to start reversing the inequalities that have risen under the last 13 years of austerity and the recent cost of living crisis.

Alternative options considered and rejected

To not have a cost of living plan. If the City Council was to fail to respond to the cost of living crisis, this would have a detrimental effect on both individual residents' personal circumstances and the City's economy. The cost of financial exclusion is high, both to households affected and to society. It impacts on general wellbeing and is closely related to poverty and social exclusion.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

The work described in this paper to develop a Cost of Living Plan supports the City's aim to be fair, by promoting a fairer society and better opportunities for all residents. The plan is also part of the Council's collaborative approach, working with partners to ensure we use our collective resources to address the issues facing residents

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

There is an allocation of £25,000 in the revenue budget to support the work of the Cost of Living Working Group, specifically to build on the existing Cost of Living Crisis webpage to ensure that all available financial support is clearly signposted and promoted.

There is an allocation of £25,000 in the revenue budget to support the work of the cross-party Cabinet Advisory Group on Child Poverty, to be used to allow Plymouth City Council to build on its existing active commitment to tackling child poverty.

Further funding may come from schemes such as the Government's Household Support Fund which is £4.5m in 2023/24. Otherwise the plan will use existing staff resources and budgets, for example, to ensure there is improved visibility of all the benefit entitlements and discounts available to residents of the City.

Financial Risks

There are no financial risks.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

One of the areas addressed by the plan is increased awareness of home energy efficiency measures which will improve the carbon footprint of the housing stock in the city. The plan also promotes low cost public transport options such as the current £2 cap on single bus fares and cycling.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.

The plan will be delivered in partnership with the Child Poverty Action Plan and supports the implementation of this Plan to reduce child poverty in the City.

Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 1 of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Cost of Living Plan - Tackling the Cost of Living in Plymouth							
B	Equalities Impact Assessment							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	DJN. 23.24. 36	Leg	LS/01 735/J P/020 623	Mon Off		HR		Assets		Strat Proc	
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Ruth Harrell (Director of Public Health)											

Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes

Date agreed: 23/08/2023

Cabinet Member approval: Councillor Sue Dann (Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Sport, Leisure, HR and OD)

Date approved: 31/08/2023

