



**Report to:** Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Performance & Finance  
Portfolio Holder for Housing

**Decision Date:** 15 April 2025

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Paul Peacock and Cllr Lee Brazier

**Director Lead:** Suzanne Shead, Director Housing, Health & Wellbeing

**Lead Officer:** Cara Clarkson, Business Manager Regeneration and Housing Strategy, x5923

Report Summary	
<b>Type of Report</b>	Open report, non-key decision
<b>Report Title</b>	Cost of Living Action Plan 2025-26
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To approve the activity under the Cost-of-Living Action Plan for 2025-26.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That an additional £30k is allocated to the Cost-of-Living budget from the Housing Revenue Account current year efficiency savings.</li> <li>• That the activity at Section 2 is approved for 2025-26</li> <li>• That any underspend during the year within a project can be distributed amongst the pre-agreed projects to enhance delivery.</li> </ul>
<b>Alternative Options Considered</b>	The activities proposed have been collated based on feedback from staff on the front line of service delivery, including those working with directly with residents and with community and voluntary groups e.g. food clubs.
<b>Reason for Recommendation</b>	To continue to support residents through the challenges presented by the Cost-of Living pressures.
<b>Decision Taken</b>	As per the recommendations.

## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 The council introduced a dedicated budget in December 2022 to support staff, residents, and businesses through the cost-of-living crisis.
- 1.2 The budget for 2025-26 was approved at Cabinet in February 2025 as £100k from General Fund Reserves. A further £30k can be spent from the Housing Revenue Account to total a budget for the year of £130k.
- 1.3 Section 2 below proposes the key activities to be delivered during 2025-26. Portfolio holders will note how the priorities have been set as food, hygiene and fuel which continue to be priority need for residents. In addition, it is proposed to extend the food coordinator role in response to the huge impact this role is having, and to extend support provided to Home Start Newark and Sherwood, Newark and Sherwood Community and Voluntary Service and Citizens Advice to maintain and expand their existing delivery under Service Level Agreements, which have demonstrable impact on the wellbeing of our residents.

## 2.0 Proposal

Action	Budget 2025/26
<p><b>Energy/ Fuel vouchers</b></p> <p>The proposal is to increase the total contribution to vouchers in 2025/26 reflecting the presenting need.</p> <p>Working with Sherwood &amp; Newark Citizens Advice we will continue to deliver fuel vouchers as part of their existing fuel bank scheme. This would be the cost of the vouchers and maximum of 10% admin fee.</p> <p>Vouchers will continue to be allocated through Citizens Advice following an assessment of need.</p>	£15,000
<p><b>Household and Hygiene Packs</b></p> <p>We will extend the offer of household and hygiene packs through the food clubs, noting that these provided immediate relief to households in 2023 and 2024.</p>	£15,000
<p><b>Provision of emergency food parcels</b></p> <p>In the first three weeks of 2025, the council received 75 calls to its customer services team from households requesting emergency support with food – this does not include referrals from agencies.</p> <p>Aligning with food banks across the district, our customer services team can directly refer into food banks providing a streamlined support for households in urgent need. Working with local food banks will ensure that the provision is on hand and accessible across the district when needed most.</p>	£15,000
<p><b>Social Eating Schemes</b></p>	£ funded from events budget

<p>During the last couple of years, more and more community and voluntary groups have started to provide social eating opportunities. These opportunities not only provide a hot meal to the community, but they support those at risk of social isolation and have become a magnet for residents, which has in turn allowed services to wrap around the resident through attendance from agencies at social eating events to promote e.g. health and wellbeing and benefit maximisation.</p> <p>It is proposed that this support will now be funded through the councils Community Events Budget.</p>	
<p><b>Food Coordinator Role Extension</b></p> <p>Based on the demonstrable impact of the role in the short time it has been in place, it is proposed that the food coordinator is extended for a further year to ensure the role has security and continuity of delivery.</p> <p>since Q1 2024/25 and has already started to make a huge impact including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing “Grow Balderton” – liaising with Grow Incredible CIC, the Salvation Army, Balderton Parish Council and the Balderton Medical Centre – he coordinator has secured access to the unused land adjacent to the medical centre to develop an area for community growing with a particular focus on supporting those with mental health needs and allowing community groups to grow fresh produce.</li> <li>• Supporting Food Hubs across the district including working with local food producers to reduce the volume of spare food that goes outside the district – securing this for our residents.</li> <li>• Developing the ‘Winter Wellness Leaflet’ including information on where people can help with food, where they can go for community coffee mornings or where they can attend social eats. The aim is that everyone knows where they can seek help, find a warm space or find a warm meal.</li> <li>• Delivering cookery lessons across the district including specific courses aimed at teenagers providing an alternative, creative and healthy activity that have had a life changing impact on some. The following feedback was received from one parent (name changed to protect identity)</li> </ul> <p><i>I cannot thank you, enough, Jane loved cooking with you all and it was the highlight of her Monday and looked forward to it every week. It was great to see her settle and overcome her social worries to talk to a friend and you both. To see her trying and enjoying things she would never normally entertain was incredible and towards the end she was even asking me to leave her for a bit so she could do it independently! Amazing and of course we will be on the next one! Such a shame it can't be a permanent fixture! Jane made us all dinner this week using one of your recipes!</i></p>	<p>Grade NS8 – forward commitment of £44,020</p>
<p><b>Contribution to Your CVS - Best Years Hubs</b></p> <p>The council has an existing Service Level Agreement with Your CVS (previously Newark and Sherwood CVS) to deliver a volunteer service including developing a volunteer passport during the last year.</p> <p>During 2024-25, Your CVS opened nine “Best Years Hubs” across Newark and Sherwood funding by the Integrated Care Board.</p>	<p>£14,000</p>

<p>The ICB has agreed to continue the funding this incredible work until March 2026 however, CVS is facing a shortfall of £14k – it is proposed that £14k of the COL budget is allocated to this project to ensure its continuity given the huge impact it is having across the district.</p>																									
<p><b>Contribution to HomeStart Newark and Sherwood</b></p> <p>New for 2025/26 is a request for an additional £15,000 for HomeStart Newark and Sherwood.</p> <p>The council has an existing Service Level Agreement with HomeStart Newark and Sherwood to provide one-to-one support to families for up to one year. Demand for their service has increased significantly since the cost-of-living crisis has hit and they are the only voluntary organisation known to provide this level of intensive (weekly) and long term (up to a year), consistent support to families. An additional £15,000 is requested to help cover the cost of expanding their existing offer across the district.</p>	<p>£15,000</p>																								
<p><b>Contribution to Citizens Advice Central Notts</b></p> <p>Citizens Advice have an existing SLA with the Council to deliver a range of benefits advice, fuel vouchers and work under the homeless prevention grant.</p> <p>This additional funding is to support the delivery of an outreach worker to delivery benefits advice in localities and out of hours, across the district, to those households who may otherwise struggle to access services at the following locations:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="204 1151 1177 1559"> <tr> <td>Blidworth Library</td> <td>09.30-12.30</td> <td>Every Monday</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bilthorpe Library</td> <td>09.30-12.30</td> <td>Every Wednesday</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Clipstone Village Hall</td> <td>09.15-13.00</td> <td>Every Thursday</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Collingham Rural Advice Centre (Funded by CRAC)</td> <td>09.30-12.30</td> <td>Every Tuesday</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hawton Children’s Centre</td> <td>13.00-1600</td> <td>Every Wednesday</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Blidworth Library</td> <td>09.30-12.30</td> <td>Every Monday</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Southwell Library</td> <td>09.30-12.30</td> <td>Every 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sutton on Trent</td> <td>1.30-4.30</td> <td>Every 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month</td> </tr> </table> <p>In the last 12 months – Citizens Advice has seen a further 510 clients through it outreach work, supporting residents to secure additional income worth in total £454,295. The project costs £36,668 per annum to deliver, of which £10,000 is requested through the COL budget to ensure its continuation.</p>	Blidworth Library	09.30-12.30	Every Monday	Bilthorpe Library	09.30-12.30	Every Wednesday	Clipstone Village Hall	09.15-13.00	Every Thursday	Collingham Rural Advice Centre (Funded by CRAC)	09.30-12.30	Every Tuesday	Hawton Children’s Centre	13.00-1600	Every Wednesday	Blidworth Library	09.30-12.30	Every Monday	Southwell Library	09.30-12.30	Every 4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month	Sutton on Trent	1.30-4.30	Every 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month	<p>£10,000</p>
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<p><b>Total</b></p>	<p>£128,020</p>																								

### 3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

### 3.1 Financial Implications - FIN25-26/6805

3.1.1 As stated in paragraph 1.2, a budget of £100k was approved at Full Council in February 2025 for 2025-26. A further £30k is now requested to create a total budget for the year of £130k, to be allocated as per the above in paragraph 2.0.

3.1.2 The additional £30k requested is suggested to be funded from the HRA's current year efficiency savings budget, as £30k of the works completed by the team will be specifically aimed at HRA tenants.

### 3.2 Equalities Implications

There are no adverse equalities implications identified resulting from this decision. The allocation of funding and the delivery of activity through the Cost-of-Living budget will be accessible to all members of the community irrespective of protected characteristics and should support some of the most vulnerable in our community with financial and associated pressures during the ongoing cost of living crisis.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Cost of Living report to Cabinet, 20/02/2024

Cost of Living report to Cabinet, 21/02/2023

Cost of Living report to Cabinet, 06/12/2022

Cost of Living report to Cabinet, 31/10/2022