

Supporting You – a proposal for a holistic support service for residents in the Chichester district

1. Contacts

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2. Recommendation

That Cabinet: -

- 2.1 Recommends to Council the proposal to create a help and support service for residents facing cumulative problems of financial, debt and other cost of living issues, run as a 2-year pilot with a review built in 6 months after going live and subject to on-going and final evaluation.**
- 2.2 Recommends to Council that £300,000 to come from the General Fund Reserves for staffing and operational costs for up to 2 years.**
- 2.3 Recommends to Council that the further detail including allocation of funding to the various elements of the proposal is delegated to the Divisional Manager Housing, Revenues and Benefits in consultation with the Director of Housing and Communities and Cabinet Members set out in section 1 above.**

3. Background

- 3.1 At present residents are required to contact several organisations and Council service teams when they need help, advice or support. Many of the current services can only offer signposting to further services and it becomes apparent that many customers fall out of the system between agencies and services, often not following up on signposting advice. This frequently leads to significant consequences such as deterioration of mental health, homelessness and unmanageable debts.

- 3.2 Given the often-numerous challenges the districts residents are now facing due to the spiralling cost of living the number of households needing help and support will only grow and the consequences of not providing help and support will inevitably place additional demands on public services.
- 3.3 The social prescribing team maintain data and statistics on the approaches they receive for help and support. During 2021/22 a total of 991 client referrals were received and 303 clients approached the team for help with financial or debt issues. The team have signposted these individuals for benefits, money and/or debt advice.
- 3.4 The Revenues and Benefits service introduced an app called 'Telljo' on 1 February 2022 which is used to engage residents who may be experiencing debt issues. So far in 2022 a total of 2,886 questionnaires have been sent, via Telljo, to residents who have missed a payment of council tax. 11% (315) of these were returned and this led to referrals for debt advice, payment arrangements and referrals to utility companies.

4. Proposal

- 4.1 To provide a holistic in house "Supporting You" team for residents in the Chichester district facing cumulative problems of financial, debt and other cost of living issues, run initially as a 6-month pilot project subject to review and evaluation with the intention of running the project for up to 2 years. The team will also be able to advise and signpost residents on energy tariffs and grants available to make their home more fuel efficient.
- 4.2 This will include working closely with Choose Work as employment can often be part of the solution for some individuals. Where intense debt management support is required individuals will be signposted to relevant organisations. This will also include proactive outreach work at areas identified throughout the district where we feel we can reach out to residents who may be facing problems of financial, debt and other cost of living issues.
- 4.3 The new team will sit within the Housing, Revenues and Benefits Division and will directly report into the Benefits and Systems Support Manager. The new team will work closely with the Communities and Customer Services Division to ensure the overall success of the pilot and to ensure residents who use the service get a seamless customer journey (as much as is reasonably practical). There will be clear links to the Social Prescribing and Wellbeing teams.
- 4.4 A Steering Group is proposed to be set up which includes both internal and external stakeholders to assist with partnership working and will monitor the overall success of the team and customer outcomes.
- 4.5 It is proposed that the new team will commence from October 2022 to enable recruitment to take place and all actions required to set the team up successfully.

5. Resource and Legal Implications

- 5.1 Some additional resource is required to form this new team and all costs form part of the request for £300k funding. Whilst the bulk of the funding will be for staffing the team part of this funding may be utilised for direct support to residents via Discretionary Housing Payments, or the Homelessness Prevention Fund.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 There are plans to engage with key voluntary sector organisations including but not limited to the Selsey Community Help, Voluntary Action for Arun And Chichester, The Department for Works and Pensions, Registered Providers and Citizens Advice in early July.

7. Community Impact and Corporate Risks

- 7.1 The primary aim of the proposal is to have a positive community impact and to make a difference to Chichester district residents. However, it should be noted that this proposal is brought to members now in order to get ahead of the anticipated curve and therefore figures for demand are not readily available. This project looks ahead to the demand and needs officers and partners anticipate are coming over the future months based on the economic projections available at the current time.
- 7.2 An important aspect of the scheme is the regular monitoring of outcomes and impacts so that the service can be amended as we learn whilst delivering the service.
- 7.3 There will be an Issues, Decisions and Risks Log which will be reviewed and monitored by the Team Leader.
- 7.4 One of the challenges and potential risks will be to make sure we can recruit an experienced team leader.

8. Other Implications

	Yes	No
Crime and Disorder		√
Biodiversity and Climate Change Mitigation		√
Human Rights and Equality Impact This proposal is designed to help those with less life chances and who are experiencing more hardship and have less equality in life than others.	√	
Safeguarding and Early Help It is likely that as the new service will be helping residents with high levels of need and hardship, it is inevitable that the team will need to understand and recognise safeguarding, self-neglect and early help issues. They will need to make appropriate referrals under the West Sussex safeguarding and self- neglect policies.	√	
General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) This proposal will necessitate officers accessing and handing sensitive and personal data about customers and their finances. Strict protocols and information sharing arrangements will need to be considered and in place to protect all those running and engaging with the service.	√	
Health and Wellbeing This proposal is designed to improve residents' health and wellbeing by assisting them to tackle difficult and challenging financial and other issues.	√	
Other (please specify)		

9. Appendices

9.1 None