

Runnymede Borough Council

CORPORATE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Thursday 22 September 2022 at 7.30 p.m.

in the Council Chamber, Runnymede Civic Centre, Addlestone.

URGENT SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

The Chairman has agreed that this item be admitted to the Agenda as an item of urgent business for the special circumstances and urgency as set out below:

Special Circumstances

The report was not able to be completed until after the despatch of the main agenda due to the need to review the current estimated costs involved in support these measures.

Urgency

To seek the Committee's approve of the proposed measures so that appropriate steps may be taken to ensure compliance with Financial Regulations regarding the proposed repurposing of existing budgets.

Synopsis of report:

- 1. This report highlights Runnymede Borough Council's response to support residents with the rising cost of living.**
- 2. The report also proposes new measures designed to provide additional relief for some of the most vulnerable households within the borough.**

Recommendation(s):

- I. Members recognise the support Runnymede Borough Council has been able to provide to residents with the rising cost of living and approve the new measures designed to provide additional relief for some of the most vulnerable households within the borough.**
- II. Members approve a supplementary budget estimate in the sum of £50,000 – to the effect of transferring £50,000 from the Council's Homelessness Support Grant, into staff salaries within Community Services previously approved in the 2022/23 budget to fund the following specific work streams set out in paragraph 3.2 below where costs are to be incurred during 2022/23.**

1. Context of report

- 1.1 The rising cost of living is impacting all residents, but particularly those who are in receipt of welfare benefits, or on a low income.**

- 1.2 Some of this squeeze has been mitigated by the cap on the rise in energy bills recently announced by Central Government. [Government announces Energy Price Guarantee for families and businesses while urgently taking action to reform broken energy market - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- 1.3 Despite this *“the rising costs of fuel, food and other essentials are combining with existing disadvantage and vulnerability within our communities to put many households at greater risk of both immediate hardship and reduced opportunity and wellbeing.”*
- 1.4 Quote from the Local Government Association - [Cost of living hub | Local Government Association](#)

2. Existing Measures and Actions to tackle the ‘Cost of Living Squeeze’

- 2.1 Runnymede Borough Council has in place a framework sets a strategic direction for the organisation when challenges such as the rising cost of living emerge.
- 2.2 Runnymede Borough Council’s Corporate Plan highlights the commitment of the authority to promoting the health of our residents and increasing the provision of well-paid jobs.
- 2.3 These commitments are elaborated in other strategic plans; specifically the organisation’s Economic Development and Health and Wellbeing Strategies.

2.4 Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Objective 1 of the strategy commits the organisation to supporting residents with Healthy Homes. Which ensure that residents of all ages can live in safe, secure, good quality homes, and are supported when necessary to be able to continue to live independently at home.

2.5 Economic Development

Priority 4: A dynamic workforce for a high-tech, creative economy (a) local employers have access to the skills required to grow their businesses, (b) residents have the appropriate qualifications and skills to access local employment opportunities.

- 2.6 The Local Government Association have provided a framework for supporting local authorities with responding to the rising cost of living.
- 2.7 The response of Runnymede Borough Council has been categorised according to the LGA framework – see below in appendix 1

Local Government Association – Cost of Living hub framework

1. Food insecurity and poverty
2. Fuel and energy
3. Health and wellbeing
4. Money and debt
5. Working in partnership

6. Skills and employment

3. **New ‘Cost of Living Squeeze’ measures**

- 3.1 Runnymede Borough Council has in place a series of measures to address the rising cost of living to mitigate its impact on residents – see appendix 1.
- 3.2 The following additional measures are already planned for 2022/23 or are being proposed; including the establishment of a public website offering residents practical support <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/cost-living>

Food insecurity and poverty
Additional grant aid to the Runnymede Food Bank. Funded by the Community First Grant £10,000
Fuel and Energy
RBC plan to apply to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund for £3.5m to ensure all RBC owned social homes have an energy performance rating of C by March 2026.
Support for residents living in privately rented or owner-occupied property to enhance the energy performance of their homes. Funding via ECO 4 & HUG £788,000 in 2022/23
Minor non-means tests grants (up to £5,000) to address property repairs impacting on fuel poverty. Funded by the Council’s Disabled Facilities Grant utilising the same qualification criteria as within the existing DFG process £100,000
Health and Wellbeing
The provision of warm spaces/entertainment (such as cinema tickets). Estimated cost £15,000. Funded by Community First Grant (the details around this measure will be put to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Community Services Committee).
Money and Debt
Recruitment of two additional staff members to be able to provide an outreach ‘social prescriber’ function to support residents with the rising cost of living and to ensure they are supported to limit the risk of them becoming homeless. Funded from the Council’s Homeless Support Grant. Value £50,000
The provision of Financial Hardship Grants – we are anticipating a central government announcement enabling Runnymede Borough Council to provide grants utilising a revised version of the Housing Support Fund Policy.
Continuing to support our most vulnerable residents – by ensuring access to prevention services (Meals at Home, Day Centres, Community Alarm etc.), with Corporate Head of service having discretion to provide service at reduced cost/free of charge, until April 2023. Cost to be funded by in budget

<p>efficiencies £10,000. A further report seeing delegated authority and setting out the criteria for writing off debt will come back to Corporate Management Committee on this issue as soon as is possible.</p>
<p>Working in Partnership</p>
<p>Mobilisation of befriending service as agreed through COMF (Contained Outbreak Management Funding) funding and previously approved by Community Services Committee. Grant to be awarded to Voluntary Support North Surrey, to extend their current befriending offer to Runnymede. Value: £80,000</p>
<p>Award of grant to Citizens Advice Runnymede and Spelthorne via COMF money approved by Corporate Management Committee. Funding to be released immediately to enable additional support to residents with cost-of-living related issues. Value: £40,000</p>
<p>Skills and Employment</p>
<p>Submit to Government for approval an investment plan for use of RBC's allocated Shared Prosperity Fund, which over the next few years will be used to further invest in our town centres as well as provide targeted training and employment support to help those residents and communities most in need.</p>

4. Policy Framework Implications

4.1 Support offered to residents with the rising cost of living reflects priorities set out within a number of corporate strategies: -

4.2 Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Objective 1 of the strategy commits the organisation to supporting residents with Healthy Homes. Which ensure that residents of all ages can live in safe, secure, good quality homes, and are supported when necessary to be able to continue to live independently at home.

4.3 Economic Development

Priority 4: A dynamic workforce for a high-tech, creative economy (a) local employers have access to the skills required to grow their businesses, (b) residents have the appropriate qualifications and skills to access local employment opportunities.

4.4 Climate Change

Highlights grant funding secured to address fuel poverty and installation of renewable energy / sustainable heating

5. Resource implications

- 5.1 The additional measures set out to support residents with the rising cost of living have considerable cost implications. Runnymede Borough Council's support for these measure is being funded from the following budgets: -

They are being funded by:-

Homeless Support Grant	£90,000
COMF	£120,000
Community First Grant	£25,000
Disabled Facilities Grant	£100,000

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 The Council has the discretion to exercise its power under the Localism Act 2011 s.1, to provide such support as set out in this report to its vulnerable residents where there is no statutory restriction preventing it from doing so. This level of support mirrors the duties placed upon the Council further to the Homeless Reduction Act 2018 and the Civil Contingencies Act 2005 without seeking to restrict or change any of those duties.

- 6.2 To support the resourceful approach of repurposing funds from existing budgets into new budgets to support the measures outlined in this report, a supplementary budget estimate is being requested for approval in the sum of £50,000 of Homelessness Support Grant to be transferred into Community Services salaries for the remainder of this financial year.

7. Equality implications

An Equalities Screening of the impact additional measures to address the rising cost of living has been undertaken.

An Equalities Impact Assessment demonstrates the positive impact the additional measures proposed will have on some of the most vulnerable members of the community of Runnymede.

8. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

Measures designed to address fuel poverty are included in the Council's response to the rising cost of living.

These measures will have an environmental impact and form part of the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

9. Other implications

Measures designed to mitigate the rising cost of living will help to alleviate the most extreme poverty within the borough.

Specifically the Northwest Surrey Health Alliance and Surrey County Council have been consulted on how the authority is responding to the rising cost of living.

Conversations with partners and residents will continue on the Council's response to poverty more generally.

Conversations to date have helped inform the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Partner organisations engaged in these discussions include: -

- The local Citizens Advice Bureau
- The local Food Bank
- Voluntary Support North Surrey

10. **Conclusions**

Runnymede Borough Council have been able to provide significant support for residents with the cost of living.

A series of new initiatives are being proposed which will further mitigate the impact and provide support for some of the most vulnerable measures of the Runnymede Community.

These initiatives are aligned to the strategic objectives of the authority as set out in the Corporate Plan and within the supporting suit of linked strategies.

Background papers

Corporate Plan

Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Local Government Association – Cost of Living Hub