

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Cabinet Delegated Decision

12th June 2024

TITLE:	Community Measures to Reduce the Cost of Living (UKSPF E13)
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Councillor Price - Deputy Leader & Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning
CONTACT OFFICERS:	Marc Wootton – Principal Regeneration Officer Gillian Wright – Climate Change Officer
WARDS INVOLVED:	Non-Specific

Appendices Attached

Appendix 1: Board Report 19th October 2023

1. Reason for the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for a revised delivery plan and the appointment of three project partners, at a combined cost of approximately £440,000, to deliver a series community measures to reduce the cost of living as part of the UKSPF delivery programme.
- 1.2 The project has a budget of £438,545 and is within the current UKSPF allocation for 2024/25.

2. Recommendations

Is recommended that the Deputy Leader:

- 2.1 Approves the revised delivery plan to deliver a series community measures to reduce the cost of living as part of the UKSPF delivery programme.
- 2.1 Approves the three project partners and funding values of approximately £400,000.
 - Extend Beat the Cold Service Level Agreement to deliver engagement (£40,000).

- Passport capital to Staffordshire Warmer Homes to align and enhance existing model (£340,000)
- Extend the Support Staffordshire Service Level Agreement to include the Community Energy Fund totalling £15k for approx. 3 groups of up to max £5k per group (£17,000).

3 Executive Summary

- 3.1 The Staffordshire Moorlands Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan makes provision to support communities with the cost of living through the “communities and place” investment programme.
- 3.2 In Staffordshire Moorlands, 16% (7,089) households are living with fuel poverty. For every 1000 Staffordshire Moorlands homes, on average, 102.3 receive support from the main national energy efficiency programme.
- 3.3 The [Council's Corporate Plan](#) has a priority action under Aim 1 to “Develop a Private Sector Housing Strategy to improve conditions for homeowners and private tenants”. The [Council's Climate Change Plan](#) has ‘tackle fuel poverty and reduce emissions from homes’ as an objective under The Way We Live strand. Several schemes that support energy efficiency measures already operate in the Staffordshire Moorlands area and contribute to measures that reduce the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.
- 3.4 The main existing funding schemes are through Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and Ofgem (through the Energy Company Obligation (ECO)). These aim to reach homes with low energy performance rating and low incomes or vulnerable occupants. The funds vary in application from social rented, private, and private rented. There are stringent rules and algorithms on Government designed programmes such as Sustainable Warmth Competition and ECO. These are mostly aimed at a whole house approach.
- 3.5 Original proposals to deliver a response to these challenges were outlined in Nov 2023 and approved by the UKSPF Board (See Appendix 1).
- 3.6 Unfortunately, due to various challenges since that time these plans were never fully developed, and no services/suppliers commissioned.
- 3.7 The Council's (Regeneration and Climate teams) have now revised these plans and identified strategic partners that can respond to the challenges of cost of living and deliver the outputs of the E13 intervention area.
- 3.8 The below table outlines the revised delivery plan, identifying core areas of delivery, strategic partners/leads, and expected costs:

Project Lead/Partner	Activity/Delivery	Approx. Cost £
Beat the Cold	Public engagement programme (information, advice, and guidance)	£41,000
Support Staffordshire	Community engagement programme (including grants, energy audits and development schemes)	£17,000
Staffordshire Warmer Homes	Housing energy improvement scheme	£340,000 (capital)
SMDC	New Energy Officer Staffing Post Marketing/Engagement collateral/Small measures	£40,000
		£438,000 (budget £438,545)

3.9 Collectively the project partners will deliver all contracted outputs for the UKSPF intervention E13 - Community measures to reduce the cost of living. These outputs are:

- Provide support to a minimum of 500 people
- Provide 3 organisations with grants (to support energy reduction)
- Provide 200 households with support
- Enable 50 households to take up energy efficiency measures.

4. How this report links to Corporate Priorities

4.1 The project contributes to the following aims of the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Corporate Plan:

Aim 1 - Help create a safer and healthier environment for our communities to live & work.

Aim 4 - Protect and improve the environment.

4.2 It will also support delivery with the following objectives:

- Develop a positive relationship with communities.
- Improve residents' access to benefits and financial support.

5. Alternative Options

5.1 None - Failure to deploy the funding allocation will result in withdrawal of the allocation and local communities not being supported.

6. Implications

- 6.1 Community Safety - (Crime and Disorder Act 1998)
None
- 6.2 Workforce
The partnership delivery is monitored by the regeneration team who are leading on the delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Delivery Plan.
- 6.3 Equality and Diversity/Equality Impact Assessment
This report has been prepared in accordance with the Council's Diversity and Equality Policies.
- 6.4 Financial Considerations
The allocation of £438,545 is the E13 UKSPF budget for 2024/25
- 6.5 Legal
A Funding Agreement will be created/agreed with each delivery partner
- 6.6 Climate Change
All contractors will provide details of their latest Environmental Policies and procedures identifying their commitment to UK Net Zero/Environmental Strategies.
- 6.7 Consultation
Consultations for the UKSPF Investment Plan in July 2022. The Staffordshire Moorlands UKSPF Board were consulted in January 2024 and agreed this approach.
- 6.8 Risk Assessment
The Funding Agreement will cover risks arising and these will be minimised through project management and partnership working. An officer group, with full District representation has been established to oversee implementation of the project.

ANDREW P STOKES
Chief Executive

Web Links and Background Papers

Appendix 1 – UKSPF Board Report/Proposal

Contact details

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7. Introduction & Background

- 7.1 In May 2022, SMDC submitted its UKSPF Investment Plan. As part of this plan the cost of living was identified as a major challenge for residents in this area. With rising inflation, particularly in food, energy, and petrol costs, residents will find their income squeezed and will lead to increased levels of financial hardship in the district. This contributes to the vicious cycle of decreasing local spend explained above which will in turn affect high streets.
- 7.2 The cost of living has risen considerably over at least the last 24 months in the UK. According to the Office for National Statistics, food and energy prices have been rising markedly over the past year, particularly gas prices, partly in response to the conflict in Ukraine. Global recovery from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is putting further pressure on prices. In the UK, prices of consumer goods and services rose by 9.6% in the year to October 2022 – the fastest rate in four decades. The Consumer Prices Index (CPIH) shows inflation rose by 6.3% in the 12 months to August 2023, although it has recently begun to slow.
- 7.3 Gas, electricity, and fuel prices have generally increased over the past three to four years, but more recent sharp increases have focussed attention on their impact. They have a very clear impact on household budgets, business costs, inflation and fuel poverty. The wholesale price of gas in January 2022 was almost four times higher than in early 2021, with large rises since summer 2021. Gas and electricity prices rose at 1.7% and 6.7%, respectively, in the year to August 2023. These were both unchanged from July.
- 7.4 National Energy Action (NEA) defines fuel poverty as when a household spends 10% of its income on keeping its home at a satisfactory heating level. At the start of October 2021, National Energy Action estimated 4 million households in the UK were in fuel poverty – struggling to afford to keep their homes warm and safe. Then, the GB-wide energy price cap was raised in October 2021. NEA estimates showed that an additional half a million households were then classed as fuel poor. The GB energy price cap was raised again from 1 April, a jump of an additional £700 per year to leave the ‘average’ domestic energy bills at ~£2000, leaving a further 2 million households in fuel poverty. Almost half (47%) of adults in Great Britain are using less fuel such as gas or electricity in their homes because of the rising cost of living (ONS data).
- 7.5 The OBR expects real disposable household income per person to still be below pre-pandemic levels by 2027/28.
- 7.6 The community and voluntary sector in Staffordshire Moorlands is active but needs more support. There is an opportunity to support Staffordshire Moorlands’ community and voluntary sector and develop their capacity to support residents and businesses. This would strengthen local ties, bring people together, and build community resilience. There is opportunity for community organisations to deliver more services in local communities.

8. UK Shared Prosperity Funding

8.1 The Staffordshire Moorlands Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan makes provision to support communities with the cost of living through the “communities and place” investment programmes whose objectives are:

- Strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging, through investment in activities that enhance physical, cultural and social ties and amenities, such as community infrastructure and local green space, and community-led projects.
- Building resilient, safe and healthy neighbourhoods, through investment in quality places that people want to live, work, play and learn in, through targeted improvements to the built environment and innovative approaches to crime prevention.

8.2 The investment priority to support measures to reduce the cost of living is:

E13: Community measures to reduce the cost of living, including through measures to improve energy efficiency, and combat fuel poverty and climate change.

8.3 The key deliverables are as follows:

- 500 people supported.
- 3 organisations receiving grants.
- 200 households receiving support.
- 50 households taking up energy efficiency measures.

8.4 The budget for this intervention is £438,545 (revenue £98,007 capital £340,530).

8.5 The use of Shared Prosperity Fund must complement existing energy efficiency schemes in order to further assist in reducing the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. The funding must be used to provide support to households to adopt energy efficiency measures and it must be completed and the outputs achieved by 31st March 2025.

9. Original Project Proposal

9.1 Consistent with the objectives set for communities and place (as set out above) and the investment priority of delivering “community measures to reduce the cost of living, including through measures to improve energy efficiency, and combat fuel poverty and climate change” it was proposed that organisations be invited to submit, through open competition, proposals that deliver energy efficiency measures for the poorest households, including those in fuel poverty.

9.2 The key requirements will be for a provider that is able to:

- Target the poorest households, including the provision of an outreach service to target households and the provision of advice and information in community settings;
- Effectively promote the opportunities to participate to target households;
- Complement existing provision of other energy efficiency schemes in the Staffordshire Moorlands area;
- Lead to reduced fuel bills for participating households;
- Have measurable impacts in reducing the use of energy and CO2 emissions;
- Lead to the achievement of the key deliverable set out above;
- Build community capacity;
- Provide complimentary advice and information on energy efficiency measures that can be taken by households;
- Provide practical support to households in undertaking measures that reduce energy use, including, for example draught proofing and installing insulation;
- Managing a grant fund to support the uptake of energy efficiency measures by the target group.
- Where possible, consideration needs to be given to working with existing providers to ensure complementarity and added value, subject to satisfying procurement rules. The successful provider/s will need to have a proven track record of delivering community measures to reduce the cost of living and improve household energy efficiency. They must also be able to demonstrate a methodology for measuring, monitoring and reporting the intervention's outputs and outcomes.

9. Revised Project Partner Plan

9.1 Due to required delivery timescales it has been agreed to deliver this project with strategic partners who are already engaged in complimentary services. The new revised project plan achieves all of the outcomes of the original but without the requirement for a tender exercise to appoint a private contractor. It also harmonised and assimilates to existing schemes to enhance the achievable outputs beyond the funding available. The new proposal will achieve more thorough and sustained partnership and aligning complimentary programmes.

10. Capital Funding Delivery

10.1 The capital element of the funding will be delivered as follows:

Delivery Partner - Staffordshire Warmer Homes

Focus: Housing energy improvement scheme

Expected Cost: £340,530

Procurement: Passport to Staffordshire Warmer Homes by agreement. There will not need a procurement exercise as SCC will follow the Council's quality assurance protocols.

Activity: Funding to support delivery of other energy grant funds by:

- funding enabling works (e.g. when a repair is needed for the energy efficiency work to go ahead), and
- topping up projects that are over the permitted cost caps in other existing schemes.

Background: Community Home Solutions (CHS) – manage the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2) programme for Staffordshire Warmer Homes. They can access Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and Great British Insulation Scheme (GBIS) funding and also manage Staffordshire County Council Covid recovery energy (COMF) funding. They work closely in partnership with Beat the Cold delivering the majority of their grant referrals.

The engagement programme led by Beat the Cold will directly target those suitable for the top up funding. It is intended to top up the Staffordshire Moorlands portion of the COMF model to do enabling works to support delivery of the capital.

This will be done by passporting the UKSPF capital funds to SCC Warmer Homes. SCC have already undertaken a quality assurance assessment of the delivery partner CHS as have Midlands Net Zero Hub (MNZH). Other districts have worked to this model.

Suitable reporting and trackers will be established with payment schedules and timescales.

Outputs: The expected outputs are as follows:

- 50 - households taking up energy efficiency measures.
- 200 - households receiving support.

11. Revenue Funding Delivery

11.1 The revenue element of the funding will be delivered via two partnership models as follows:

Delivery Partner - Beat the Cold.

Focus: Public engagement programme (information, advice and guidance)

Expected Cost: £41,000

Procurement: Beat the Cold – is an extension to an existing contract for a time limited period. This would have a competition waiver and effectively be a direct award.

Background and activity: Beat the Cold are an existing strategic partner of SMDC offering impartial energy advice and administering referrals to grant programmes. By using analysed data and targeting more households, they will reach more people and gain better outcomes. The existing Service Level Agreement (SLA) runs to 2025. The Council can add the additional service provision as an addendum.

- Operate advice line, email and website with qualified energy advisers.
- Outreach
- Up to 30 home visits per year
- Attend at last 2 public events with at least 50 members of the public.
- Attend 4 meetings with partners
- Cost £13,000 plus VAT annually
- Quarterly Report provided.
 - Q1-3 2023/4 – 345 households supported, 2/3 vulnerable households, 1 event attended, 11 home visits, 24 partnership meetings (benefits across several LAs)

Outputs: The expected outputs are as follows:

- 500 people supported/reached.

Community Fund Delivery Partner – Support Staffordshire

Focus: Community engagement programme (including grants, energy audits and development schemes)

Expected Cost: £17,000

Procurement: Extend the Support Staffordshire Service Level Agreement to include the Community Energy Fund totalling £15k for approx. 3 groups of up to max £5k per group (£17,000).

Background and Activity: The proposal is that community groups can apply for grants using the same guidance as the Community Climate Change and Nature Fund with the two key differences,

1. The funding can only be used for either improving energy use at a community asset building or a community led energy support and advice project.
2. The grants will be up to £5,000 for a minimum of three organisations.

Unlike the Community Climate Change and Nature Grants, there will only be one round of this fund. Groups may only apply once. We would require detailed evidence of spend and project updates.

Outputs: The expected outputs are as follows:

- 3 Organisations receiving grants.

11.2 The Council will also employ an energy officer and fund marketing collateral and small DIY type energy measures. (£40,000)

12. Wider Output Overview

12.1 The wider outputs from the proposed interventions are set out in the table below:

Measurable Energy Outputs	Lower	Higher	Beneficiary
Capital	50	100	Owner Occupier
Referral to existing grants	100	150	Owner Occupier
Uptake of grants	50	75	Owner Occupier
Small measures from energy visits	50	100	All tenures and archetypes
Total	250	425	

Unmeasurable or longer term	Lower	Higher	Beneficiary
Small measures from advice	100	200	All tenures and archetypes
Longer term investment	25	75	Owner Occupier - able/willing to pay
ID potential pipeline for future grants and other schemes	1000	5000	All tenures and archetypes
Uptake of advice given	500	1000	All tenures and archetypes

	Lower	Higher	Beneficiary
Community Grants	3	10	Community Buildings or capacity build groups