

This Report will be made public on 26 August 2022

Report Number **OS/22/03**

**To:** Overview and Scrutiny  
**Date:** 6 September 2022  
**Status:** Non-Key Decision  
**Head of Service:** Charlotte Spendley, Director – Corporate Services  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Jenny Hollingsbee, Cabinet Member for Communities, Lifeline, Area Officers & Street Homeless

**SUBJECT:** Cost of Living Summit

**SUMMARY:**

On 27 July 2022 Full Council considered a motion with various actions relating to the cost of living, including holding a cost of living summit. Council resolved to examine these matters as part of a future Scrutiny programme. This report sets out the proposed arrangements for a cost of living summit.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**Overview and Scrutiny is asked to:**

1. To receive and note report OS/22/03.
2. To approve the proposed arrangements for the summit.

## 1. BACKGROUND

1.1 On 27 July 2022 Council resolved to examine the following matters as part of a future scrutiny programme -

- a) To declare a cost-of-living emergency for Folkestone and Hythe.
- b) To build on the good work the council already carries out with regards to its collaboration with the voluntary sector and convene a cost-of-living summit within the district by October, looking at every possible way in which residents can be assisted through what will be a very tough winter.

This summit should involve all the voluntary organisations within the district who currently provide assistance to residents. As well as key organisations such as Kent Police, Citizens Advice, local GP's, and the district school network.

The summit should provide a blueprint for residents to manage through the cost-of-living emergency with regards to, education, funding, and awareness.

- c) To both lobby our local MP and call on the leader of the council to write to the secretary of state for work and pensions for the following:
  - Immediately restore the Universal Credit supplement of £20, which was cancelled by the Government in September 2021.
  - To increase the rate of universal credit and other support payments to a sum which is appropriate to the current level of inflation.

1.2 Given the short period of time between 27 July and October, and the difficulty in aligning the diaries of many busy partners, it was considered expedient to make use of a meeting with voluntary sector partners that was already scheduled for 20 September. This is a quarterly remote meeting that is organised by the Revenues and Benefits Service to discuss welfare issues with colleagues and partners.

1.3 Council asked for all voluntary organisations assisting residents to be invited and so leading councillors and colleagues have been consulted to identify organisations and obtain contact details. So far, approximately 100 people have been invited from 60 different organisations.

1.4 It would have been difficult to conduct a summit with so many participants remotely, so invitations have been issued for a physical meeting in the Council Chamber at 2pm on 20 September. Many of those invited are away on holiday so it is unclear how many will be attending in person. In case the number of partners, members and officers wishing to attend in person exceeds the limit for the Council Chamber, alternative arrangements are being investigated to host the summit at a larger venue.

## 2. THE SUMMIT

2.1 To ensure the summit was developed in line with Member's expectations, informal discussions were held with Councillor Keutenius (as Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee) and Councillor Hollingsbee (as Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Communities, Lifeline, Area Officers & Street Homeless). These discussions have helped officers produce the outline for the summit set out below.

- a) Objective – to ensure that the council is working effectively in partnership with local organisations and the voluntary sector to support residents in need with food, warmth and energy during the coming winter months.
- b) Format – the format of a formal council meeting may inhibit debate and be uncomfortable for some attendees. Therefore, it is proposed to have an informal meeting from which a report can be produced back to a subsequent meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- c) Agenda – to provide structure and clarity over the areas of debate an agenda will be produced but there will be no formal reports.
- d) Speakers – following a welcome and introduction by Councillor Keutenius, it is proposed to have four speakers and invitations have been issued accordingly. Firstly, a senior officer from the Revenues and Benefits Service, then a representative from the Rainbow Centre, then a representative from the Community Hubs and finally a representative from the Citizens Advice Bureau. Each speaker will be asked to set out how their organisation is responding to the cost of living crisis and the support they are offering to residents. There will be time for questions after each speaker and, after the final speaker, all the speakers will participate in a panel session with questions from the audience. When the panel session has concluded, colleagues will be encouraged to stay and network with their peers.
- e) Outputs – it is proposed to send a pro-forma to all attendees asking them to provide full contact details and information about the services they provide and the locations they serve. This should assist in the compilation of a comprehensive register that can be used by residents to access help and by organisations to make cross-referrals.

It has also been highlighted that the council needs to develop a plan to get information and advice to hard to reach residents. Kent County Council have already done some work in this area, and we will seek to link with this when developing a plan for FHDC.

A report summarising the presentations, discussions and actions arising from the summit will be considered at a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### 3. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

3.1 A summary of the perceived risks follows:

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
Lack of engagement from the voluntary sector	4	1	Invitations have been issued well in advance and discussions have taken place through other meetings to raise awareness.

### 4. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

#### 4.1 Legal Officer's Comments (AK)

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

#### 4.2 Finance Officer's Comments (LW)

This report sets out the proposed arrangements for the Cost of Living Summit and there are no direct financial implications arising from it.

#### 4.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (AS)

There are no equality & diversity implications arising as a direct result of this report. The preparation for the summit itself should give appropriate consideration to accessibility to make sure that it can be inclusive for representatives from across the district.

#### 4.4 Climate Change Implications (AT)

No significant implications arising from this report. Emissions from travel from participants attending the summit are likely to be minimal. The proposed venue (Civic Centre) is situated close to Folkestone Central station giving participants the opportunity to use public transport to attend.

### 5. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting

Bob Palmer – Interim Assistant Director, Corporate Services  
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The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report: None