

AGENDA ITEM 21: THE COST -OF-LIVING CRISIS

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to keep members updated regarding the town council's response to the cost-of-living crisis and to identify the links between this crisis and that of climate change and the need to build resilience in Ilminster.

Overview

The rising cost of gas and electricity, together with the increased cost of essential items such as food, have come together to create a perfect storm as we approach winter. It is anticipated that residents and businesses will be faced with difficult choices as the crisis potentially deepens.

It is clear that, in responding to the challenges that this crisis presents, measures that also address the climate crisis run alongside. This link gives the town council an opportunity to back up its climate emergency declaration with action and to progress its resilience agenda.

Action Taken

- Cllr Jenner-Hurford has put together a survey to ascertain the local demand for warm spaces. This has been shared on social media and printed copies made available. The results will be collated and fed back to members by email at the end of November.
- Interest in providing a warm space has been expressed by the Quakers who, together with the Minster, intend to open the Minster Rooms. As soon as details are confirmed, they will be shared with members and publicised.
- Support for the Food Bank is being provided.
- Members considered actions connected to resilience and climate change on Members' Day.

Actions in the Pipeline

The following strategies, agreed at the October Full Council meeting, are in the process of being actioned:

- A list of venues/events be provided to residents via social media and the website and put up in the Market House fortnightly to enable residents to access somewhere warm.
- Logs from Herne Hill and our open spaces be made available to those with a need via the Food Bank.
- Members to keep an ear open for any signs in the community that a need for help that could be supported by the town council has arisen.

Proposed Actions That Address Climate and Resilience Agendas

On Members' Day, 22 October, Members considered a variety of measures aimed at addressing some of the challenges of climate change and improving Ilminster's resilience. These were considered under 4 main headings: Heat, Flooding, Power Outages, Food Scarcity.

Attached is a summary produced from the ideas collected. The intention is to put as many of these as practicable into an action plan and to determine the role of the town council for each item. If successfully carried out, many of the actions should result in savings in terms of money and energy and this feeds into our response to the cost-of-living crisis.

Additional benefits from carrying out many of these actions will be to reduce social isolation, to bring together members of the community, improve mental and physical wellbeing.

Conclusion

Members to note the report, to continue to contribute ideas and to be eyes and ears in the community, alerting the town council to impacts of the cost-of-living crisis.

Cllr Leanne Taylor, Mayor of Ilminster

November 2022