

## BARNSELEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

**North Area Council Meeting:  
12<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

**Agenda Item: 6**

**Report of North Area Council  
Manager**

### **Cost of Living Workshops Developing a North Area Response**

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To apprise Members of the discussions that took place at a recent workshop regarding challenges currently faced by local communities due to the increased cost of living. Information may be used to help develop a time limited project funded by the North Area Council.

#### **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1. **Members note the dates of the two workshops that have been planned, section 8.**
- 2.2. **Members note that it is intended for workshops to be participatory, and discussion based.**
- 2.3. **Approve funding for a catering budget for the two workshops.**

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1. At the Area Council Meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> March Area Council representative received a presentation from Business Intelligence's Jill Bills regarding demography, deprivation, life expectancy and excess winter deaths.
- 3.2. In addition, Members voiced the challenges that they are experiencing in local communities and identified the following:
- Support for fuel, food and the cost-of-living crisis
  - Anti-Social behaviour and the increase in nuisance caused
  - Parking enforcement
  - Careers advice / raising aspirations of 14- and 16-year-olds including information on a variety of jobs and opportunities that would not come out of regular careers advice in school
- 3.3. At the Area Council Meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> March it was agreed that any further development work regarding the current priorities and remaining commissioning budget would be delayed until the outcome of the Welfare Review was available.

- 3.4. At the Area Council meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> May 2022 it was agreed that a further workshop would be held to discuss priorities for the North Area. The Area Council Manager was requested to focus the workshop on Cost of Living.

#### **4. Workshop – 6<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

- 4.1. On the 6<sup>th</sup> July 2022 a workshop took place lead by Emma Robinson from Business Intelligence. Supported Leyla Nayeri Senior Health Improvement Officer and the Area Manager.
- 4.2. The workshop was attended by anti-poverty working group members: Cllr Leech, Cllr T Cave, Cllr Hunt and additionally by Cllr Platts.
- 4.3. The information session included three main sections:
- Labour Market Profile
  - Cost of Living – The ‘squeezed middle’ and poverty
  - Impacts on wider determinants of health
  - Existing Support

#### **4.4. Labour Market Profile**

4,111 people of working age in the North Area are claiming Universal Credit. 14.9% of working age population. (Not all of which will be unemployed)  
The North Area overall is under the Barnsley average of 17.7%. However, St Helen's is 24%.

26.8% of Barnsley's working age people are economically inactive. The numbers have increased since the outset of the pandemic. However, the vast majority have expressed a desire to work.

The most prevalent reason for people who are economically inactive is poor mental health, followed by musculoskeletal complaints.

During the pandemic many people have re-evaluated their household budgets and some people have chosen to step back from work before retirement age, many in their 50s.

31.1% of working age adults have a Level 4 qualification or better. (Barnsley)  
18.9% of people are earning below the Living Wage. (Barnsley)

#### **4.5. Cost of Living – The ‘squeezed middle’ and poverty**

##### Low Income

Children in low-income families in Barnsley is 24.5%.  
However, in St Helen's Ward this is currently 32%.

##### Fuel Poverty

Low Income and Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) defines a household as fuel poor if:

"The household has a residual income below the poverty line (after accounting for required fuel cost)".

AND

"Lives in a home that has an efficiency rating below BAND C".

Barnsley is higher than the national average at 19.2%.

24% of St Helen's Ward households are considered to be fuel poor.

End Fuel Poverty Coalition - April 2022 figures projected that number of Barnsley households in fuel poverty could increase to 37.1%. Equating to 41,000 of households in Barnsley, 7,650 of which would be in the North Area For single adult households on low incomes - percentage is even higher at 54%

#### The 'squeezed middle'

Families with a middle-income standard of living are also struggling to manage the surging cost of living. These are typically households with high cost associated with mortgages, childcare and energy and are being forced to make large spending adjustments to cope.

YouGov Poll (2,001 people) of which 55% participants said that their health had worsened owing to issues such as higher heating and food costs.

It is predicted that over-indebtedness will rise during 2022.

The proportion of people experiencing their debt as a heavy burden has increased by almost 5% for those receiving Universal Credit and Tax Credits compared to 3% for those who are not.

There is a two-way relationship between debt and health. Indebtedness can have a significant impact on mental wellbeing.

#### **4.6. Impacts on wider determinants of health**

**Life expectancy** at birth in Barnsley:

81.8 for women and 77.9 for men.

However **healthy life expectancy** is much less.

60.1 years for women and 55.9 year for men. For men this is 6.9years lower than national average and the lowest in Yorkshire and Humber.

St Helen's Ward has the lowest life expectancy at birth within the North Area. 79.8 years for women and 75.6 years for men.

#### **Debt**

It is predicted that over-indebtedness will rise during 2022.

The proportion of people experiencing their own debt as a heavy burden has increased by almost 5% for those receiving Universal Credit and Tax Credits compared to 3% for those who are not.

There is a **two-way relationship between debt and health**. Indebtedness can have a significant impact on mental wellbeing.

#### **Excess Winter Deaths**

Further work is underway with public health colleagues to understand why the rates of excess winter deaths for Darton East ward are so high. The Senior

Health Improvement Officer advised that work is underway with Healthwatch. A link with industry related disease is being explored and data has been requested from Integrated Care partners

- 4.7. The working group had an opportunity to discuss the information that they had received.

**5. What were the main priorities identified?**

- 5.1. High numbers of low-income families in St Helen's.
- 5.2. St Helen's Ward has the lowest life expectancy at birth within the North Area. 79.8 years for women and 75.6 years for men.
- 5.3. 24% of St Helen's Ward households are considered to be fuel poor.
- 5.4. Concern that if predictions are correct by the end of 2022, 7,650 household in the North Area could be experiencing fuel poverty. (For single adult households on low incomes - percentage is even higher at 54%).
- 5.5. Concern for the 'squeezed middle' group of households who are struggling to cope with inflation.
- 5.6. Increase in indebtedness.
- 5.7. The impact on mental health caused by mounting financial pressures and indebtedness.
- 5.8. The presentation delivered at the May 2022 Area Council meeting by YMCA and Ad Astra was touched upon mentioned. Members were keen to do more to support young people's mental wellbeing as they recover from the wider impacts of covid.

**6. What support is already available?**

**6.1. Warm Homes Charter is in draft.**

There is a vision which aims to ensure that everyone lives in a warm, healthy and energy efficient home. More information will be available when the charter has been through BMBC's decision making processes.

**6.2. Warm Homes Team**

Promote, manage and administer grant-funded, fuel poverty energy efficiency schemes (private sector).

Currently recruiting additional Warm homes Officers to work with the most vulnerable residents and engage the community.

**6.3. Fuel Poverty Energy Efficiency Schemes**

Funding available for private sector properties for:

- boiler replacements
- 1st time gas central heating
- wall, loft and underfloor insulation
- windows and doors (to replace single glazing only)

Eligibility – Income <£30K, EPC Bands E/F/G (D with health condition)

**6.4. More and Better Jobs**

An employment and skills strategy for Barnsley aiming to ensure that unemployment in Barnsley is below the national average and there is an increase in apprenticeships, amongst other aims.

**6.5. More Money in your Pocket**

Offering advice and signposting for residents. Information includes:

- Housing Support
- Support with utility bills
- Food Support inc. Free school meals
- Budgeting Support to help manage money.

#### **6.6. DIAL – Warm Connections**

DIAL were able to roll out the Warm Connections project, piloted in North Area, following a successful Energy Redress Grant fund application. DIAL have the ability to support customers with energy switching.

### **7. Working Groups recommendations/ support characteristics**

- 7.1. That support should include food,
  - the subject of food bulking was touched upon
  - cook and eat sessions
  - community cooking programme, enabling participants to take a dish home for their family
- 7.2. Additional support should be available to families during the school holidays
  - autumn and winter
  - food parcels - similar to the covid lockdown ones. (risk: around venue availability and transportation)
- 7.3. Work should be undertaken to ensure that the community are aware of the support available in section 6
- 7.4. Ensuring that the community are aware that CAB can support with debt.
- 7.5. Leaflets were required for distribution in communities. These would be useful resources for Councillors.

### **8. A further workshop will be necessary to determine:**

- 8.1. Where are the gaps and how can the North Area offer support?
- 8.2. What is important to the Priority Working Group regarding this area of concern?
- 8.3. How the Area Council's underspend can be used to produce maximum, sustained impact for the community.
- 8.4. Identify potential project outcomes and existing resources that could be used to support this work.

### **9. Next Steps**

- 9.1. The Area Manager has arranged to hold two workshops
- 9.2. A diverse range of specialist stakeholders will be invited to attend to ensure local intelligence is included in gap analysis and subsequent service design.
- 9.3. Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> October (pm) - Initial workshop  
Strengths/assets, existing provision, gaps and opportunities
- 9.4. Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> October (pm) – Subsequent workshop  
Developing the opportunities, sharing best practice, ideas, innovation and inspiration
- 9.5. The Town Hall Reception Room has been booked at no cost. However the Area Manager requests a catering budget for the two workshops to provide a light lunch to participants. Maximum budget £800 for two workshops.
- 9.6. The Area Manager has sought support from the wider Area Management Team to assist with facilitation at the workshops.
- 9.7. An update of findings will be presented at the November Area Council meeting.

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**Date:**

**25<sup>th</sup> August 2022**

