



Scrutiny Committee
29 February 2024

Cost of living report

Report Author(s): Kerrie Gallagher
Health and Wellbeing Senior Manager
01508 533741
kerrie.gallagher@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk

Portfolio: Supporting people

Ward(s) Affected: All

Purpose of the Report:

This report presents the recent audit of the cost-of-living programme to the committee for review.

Recommendations:

1. To comment on the report for officers to take actions forward.

1. Summary

- 1.1 An audit on our cost-of-living response was completed in January 2024 as per our audit programme. This report presents the findings of this audit which will inform officers and members around our future working.
- 1.2 The audit highlights several positive findings for our work, along with areas where we could improve on. However, at the time of the audit it should be noted that several grants were processed which had strict guidance and controls in place. Our aim was to ensure that we paid these grants out quickly, and where we had discretion, to work on the premise of implementing quick help, with slower time support to help the household budget for the future.
- 1.3 This initial response has now moved towards a longer-term response for the Council, which has many determinant factors. This will be picked up in the health inequalities workstream that is being presented to the policy committee.

2. Background

- 2.1 The cost-of-living audit focuses on our cost-of-living response during the winter and spring of 2022/3 at a time when we were administering several large grants from central Government, which were implemented and rolled out quickly to support families who were struggling with household bills.
- 2.2 This increase in bills were caused by a range of issues such as interest rates and post-covid issues and were documented in the Scrutiny report in November 2023 [link](#)
- 2.3 The scope of the audit was: 'a high medium strategic risk was raised on the strategic risk register in relation to the cost-of-living crisis and increased demand for Council services'. This review provides assurance over the measures that were put in place during winter of 2022/23 to help residents tackle the impacts of cost of living, as well as any lessons learned.

3. Current positions/findings

- 3.1 The audit was completed in January 2024, this document is in appendix one.

4. Proposed action.

- 4.1 The team have reviewed the audit and commented in the key findings and management action plan. They will take these recommendations, along with our future work in this area forward, as part of our health inequalities work which will be presented to the relevant policy committee.

5. Other options

- 5.1 None

6. Issues and risks

6.1 **Resource Implications** – the cost-of-living pressures continues to put a strain on the Council's, particularly around housing and the help hub. These initial fundings and subsequent research will enable the Council to have a clearer picture of future resource needs.

6.2 **Legal Implications** – None

6.3 **Equality Implications** – Increased cost of living affects everyone but has a bigger impacted on low-income families due to the percentage of household budgets that go on basic living such as food and warmth.

6.4 **Environmental Impact** – None

6.5 **Crime and Disorder** – None

6.6 **Risks** – None

7. **Conclusion**

7.1 The audit was completed at a time when the Council was processing large scale government grants and a challenging time around winter pressures. We will be taking the learning from this audit as we look to focus on targeted interventions to reduce the impact on our residents, and our services in the future.

8. **Recommendation**

8.1 To comment on the report for officers to take actions forward.

Background papers

None