

**Cheshire East People's Panel on the Cost of Living**  
**Draft Initial Responses of the Council to the recommendations**  
**January 2023**

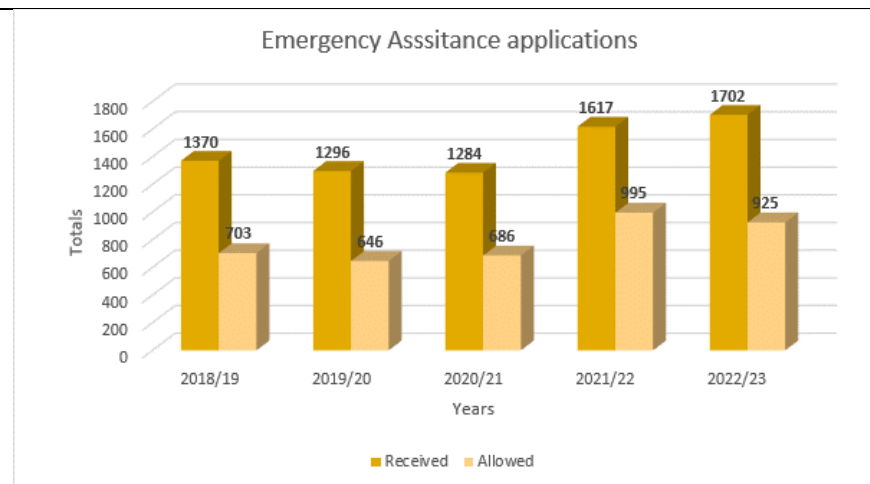
No.	Theme	Recommendation	Response	Explanation
1	Community and appropriate support	<p><b>Increase awareness of current existing schemes for support</b></p> <p>Heavily promote and maintain an offline and online benefits and support directory</p> <p>Make leaflets widely available</p> <p>Heavily promote 121 support for those most affected</p> <p>Council support to set up voluntary organisations and support with training</p>	We can take this forward	<p><i>Cheshire East Council continue to promote the existing schemes of support. We have continued to update the information on the "Live Well" website to offer support, advice, and signposting.</i></p> <p><i>The webpages received 5,064 views between 1 December 2022 and 19 January 2023. <a href="https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/cost-of-living">Cost of living (cheshireeast.gov.uk)</a></i></p> <p><i>A cost-of-living crisis team are available on 0300 123 5024 between 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday, or by email through <a href="mailto:costoflivingsupport@cheshireeast.gov.uk">costoflivingsupport@cheshireeast.gov.uk</a>.</i></p> <p><i>The telephone line has supported 499 people to date. 29 emails have been sent between December and January requesting support with funds, gas, and food.</i></p> <p><i>The council would welcome any further ideas from the People's Panel as to where and how they should promote the existing schemes of cost of living support.</i></p>

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2	Rethinking funding and distribution	<p><b>Make a renewed effort to reach everyone in need – universal consideration plus targeted provision</b></p> <p>Ensure outreach is effective and everyone's voice is heard Provide funding and support to local organisations to work together to help those in need Consider universal supports (e.g., free school meals for all)</p>	<p>We can take this forward (partial)</p>	<p><i>Outreach is being provided through the Council's Communities team and through the voluntary and community sector.</i></p> <p><i>The council is running ongoing campaigns to promote applications for Pension Credit and for free school meals. This work includes proactively contacting those people on Council Tax support who appear eligible. During the coronavirus central government provided funding under a programme called the "HAF (holidays activities with food)" programme. Now that this funding has ceased, Cheshire East council are considering funding this provision.</i></p> <p><i>The council has invested in the Citizens Advice Bureau to roll out a Home Energy Support scheme, which allows people to donate their government funded Winter Fuel Payments to those who need it more. Wilmslow Town Council have committed £10,000 to this fund, and private donations have been made of between £600 and £1,000. 53 people have been supported by the scheme (as of January 2023).</i></p> <p><i>A proposal has been developed for a £200,000 Cost of Living Community Response Grant scheme. This report will be considered at the end of January 2023. This proposes to make available £100,000 in 2023/24 and £100,000 in 2024/25, to voluntary, community, faith, and social enterprise sector organisations to apply for. This is funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.</i></p> <p><i>The Health and Wellbeing Grant is now open offering funding the Volunteer, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise sector to address key health issues. The Grant has been developed through partnerships between the Council, Central Cheshire Integrated Care Board and Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. The aims of the fund are to:</i></p>
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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce health inequalities by addressing a specific gap in provision or where there is an identified need.</li> <li>• Improve access to local health and care services including clear linkages with respective care communities.</li> <li>• Develop VCFSE led community mental health services specifically for people who have serious long term mental health issues in the community</li> </ul> <p>There is a total of £381,049 with funding being split into four categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental Health support and interventions (£66,516)</li> <li>• Community Mental Health Transformation (£200,000)</li> <li>• Physical Health and Wellbeing Grants (£103,733)</li> <li>• Community Grant to support those with Visual Impairments (£10,800)</li> </ul>
3	Rethinking funding and distribution	<p><b>Make information about needs and funding available at a very local level</b></p> <p>Make existing information accessible (e.g., interactive presentation formats) use and rent empty shops to distribute</p> <p>Create a system for residents to support local funding decisions</p>	We can take this forward	<p>We will consider opportunities for digital signage and vacant units to promote and communicate our work.</p> <p>Cheshire East Crowd is a crowdfunding initiative to encourage, support and create community projects that will make a difference. Once projects are live on the platform, people can pledge as little as £2 towards it. There are 44 projects on the Cheshire East Crowd currently.</p> <p>The Cheshire East council consultation on budget proposals is live until 30 January 2023, to allow residents to indicate which proposals in the Medium-Term Financial strategy they support. Regular consultation and engagement activities take place throughout the year.</p>

				<p><i>Following the People's Panel, Cheshire East council will consider how they may use participatory democracy processes in future, either through further People's Panel sessions, or through a larger scale Citizens Assembly.</i></p>
4	Energy, Transport and Planning	<p><b>Maximise use of land for community food growing</b></p> <p>Allotments Community orchards Planters in streets (with herbs)</p>	We can take this forward (partial)	<p><i>The majority of allotments are managed by the local town and parish councils. We will share this idea with them through our Town and Parish Councils network. Cheshire East Council will consider any community suggestions or requests in relation to suitable land.</i></p>
5	Community and appropriate support	<p><b>Increase benefits and support the working poor</b></p> <p>Council to lobby government to increase benefits at least in line with inflation Expand non-criteria based discretionary awards</p>	We can take this forward (partial)	<p><i>The Council Tax Support scheme was amended for 2022/23 to allow for 100% relief for those on the lowest incomes and "passported" benefits – previously everyone paid at least 20% council tax.</i></p> <p><i>Discretionary housing payments are funded by central government, who pass the funding to the council to administer. The council receives limited funding for this area and the funding decreased in 2022/23. At the time of writing, we are awaiting confirmation of the level of funding for 2023/24.</i></p> <p><i>A new Council Tax Support fund will also support this recommendation by reducing council tax bills by £25 in 2023/24 for all customers who are in receipt of council tax support.</i></p> <p><i>Since 2021, there has been increased demand for Emergency Assistance grants, shown on the graph below. This budget is also limited funding so must focus on those in most need of support.</i></p>



*Unrelated to the working poor but related to supporting income maximisation, Cheshire East Council are running an ongoing campaign to promote and encourage take up of Pension Credit.*

*The Volunteer, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sector on Cheshire east offer guidance and sign posting to services, the Cost of Living Community Support Grant will enable groups to develop this further ensuring more residents are supported.*

*The People's Panel report will be shared with local MPs through the regular communications that occur between Cheshire East Council and MPs.*


*The report will also be shared with all members of Cheshire East Council.*

6	Energy, Transport and Planning	<p><b>Develop and implement a policy to require Sustainable Energy use (SEU) on all new developments (housing and commercial)</b></p> <p>Provide guidance on SEU Implement a strategy in planning and development of refuse, delay and obstruct to ensure rigorous compliance Close loopholes and ensure transparency, review post build</p>	We can't take this forward	<p><i>The Government is in the process of introducing the Future Homes and Buildings Standard. The Future Homes and Buildings Standard are a set of rules and changes to building regulations which will improve the energy efficiency of new homes. From June 2022 new homes in England are required to produce around 30% less carbon emissions compared to requirements under the former regulations. Further, higher performance standards for new homes will be required from 2025. New homes at this time will not be built with fossil fuel heating, such as a natural gas boiler. These homes will be future-proofed with low carbon heating and high levels of energy efficiency and no further energy efficiency retrofit work will be necessary to enable them to become zero-carbon as the electricity grid continues to decarbonise. The full technical specification for the Future Homes Standard is expected to be consulted on in 2023.</i></p> <p><i>Cheshire East Council has recently adopted the second part of its Local Plan called the Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (or SADPD). The SADPD includes planning policies and standards for larger non-residential and residential schemes to include an element of renewable and low carbon energy generation on site. The Plan also provides clarity about the Council's approach to solar, wind and initiatives including District Heating Systems alongside setting out clear design and other related policies to support the Council's response to climate change, including maximising opportunities for both natural heating and ventilation in buildings. The Council has recently started an update to its Local Plan which will provide an opportunity to promote sustainable energy use further.</i></p> <p><i>The Council are also progressing a heat network for the Garden Village at Handforth, which could provide low carbon heat through ground source heat pumps to the proposed new development.</i></p>
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7	Energy, Transport and Planning	<b>Prioritise provision of affordable buses for more people</b> Expand criteria for concessions Ensure access to key amenities	We can't take this forward	<p><i>There are significant cost pressures in relation to local bus services of around £3.5m. This followed loss of the central government grant. In 2022/23 Cheshire East Council supported this pressure through using funds from Council Reserves. This is unsustainable and the Council can no longer afford to fund local bus services at this level.</i></p> <p><i>To manage a reduction in budget in relation to local buses the council has proposed changes as to how the council will assess which bus routes to support for funding. It is proposed to assess services through assessment against 13 criteria under three objectives:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Supporting the economy and environmental sustainability</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Business growth- journey purpose</i></li> <li>○ <i>Sustainable economic growth</i></li> <li>○ <i>Impact on carbon emissions</i></li> <li>○ <i>Contribution to carbon emissions based on vehicle type and age</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Improving access and social inclusion</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Integration – transport interchange</i></li> <li>○ <i>Accessibility – travel choice</i></li> <li>○ <i>Areas of deprivation</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>Bus Service performance</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Cost per passenger</i></li> <li>○ <i>Alternative/ external funding options</i></li> <li>○ <i>Service usage</i></li> <li>○ <i>Patronage trends – commercial potential</i></li> <li>○ <i>Fare paying patronage recovery post covid (compared to 2019)</i></li> <li>○ <i>Concessionary patronage recovery post covid (compared to 2019)</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>The Communities Team are currently researching options of a Rural Community Transport Scheme to increase connectivity for residents in</i></p>
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				<p>rural areas. This is being co-produced with the VCFSE sector and we would welcome collaboration with the People's Panel.</p> <p>It is likely that services will be reduced during the year. The team would welcome feedback from the People's Panel on this area to feed into the consultation.</p>
8	Community and appropriate support	<p><b>Food accessibility for short and long term</b></p> <p><b>Short term:</b></p> <p>Make food banks more accessible by widening the eligibility criteria</p> <p>Food banks to offer advice on more affordable options such as food clubs</p> <p>Encourage and support the development of food clubs to support food banks</p> <p><b>Long term:</b></p> <p>Utilise natural free food sources for everyone:</p> <p>Plant small orchards or fruit trees at the end of streets and in parks</p> <p>New developments should have a significant percentage of fruit orchards, fruit trees, fruit bushes</p> <p>Promote foraging with emphasis on food security not novelty</p>	<p>We're already doing this (short term)</p> <p>We can take this forward (long term) (partial)</p>	<p><b>Short term:</b></p> <p><i>In December 2022, funding was given to the Cheshire Community Foundation, to enable the recruitment of a Cheshire East Food Poverty Co-ordinator. Funding has also been awarded to start "The Bread and Butter Thing" – a mobile food club to make life more affordable for people on low incomes, to build stronger communities and to reduce waste. A location in Crewe has been secured for a first location. The CVS are recruiting to the post of Food Poverty Co-ordinator. When in post, this person will be considering the recommendations of the People's Panel as part of their role.</i></p> <p><b>Long term:</b></p> <p><i>The Council will consider this as part of development of future urban parks and open space with a focus potentially on fruit trees in park refurbishment. The team are happy to work with communities who wish to bring forward ideas and projects in this area. With respect to new developments, we would encourage residents to respond to consultations on planning policy and to individual applications to consider this. The council will explore foraging, and if this could be promoted, in more detail. This would require careful consideration given potential land ownership issues and health and safety issues.</i></p>



9	Energy, Transport and Planning	<p><b>Improve and make more efficient the dial a ride service across Cheshire East</b></p> <p>Link together other or existing transport services to share resources, promote and interact</p> <p>Implement a branding/ umbrella term collectively</p> <p>Easier accessible information on services</p>	<p>We're already doing this</p>	 <p><i>The 'go-too' bus service is funded by the Department for Transport's rural mobility fund in partnership with Cheshire East Council and Ansa Transport. Users can request the service by downloading and using the 'go-too' app on their smartphone, or they can call the booking line on 0300 123 5103. Customers can set up a payment card to pay their fares.</i></p> <p><i>The service operates with two 'midi' 16-seater buses, both with low-floor access for wheelchair users, prams, and pushchairs from 7am-9pm Monday to Saturday. It is part of a three-year trial costing £1.25m.</i></p> <p><i>The service operates between Bunbury, to the north west of Nantwich and Buerton to the south east, taking in Audlem, Hankelow, Marbury, Wrenbury, Brindley and Bulkeley. No commercial services operate in this part of the borough. It uses intelligent routing technology to plan the most cost and time-effective route, instead of a fixed route followed by commercial operators.</i></p> <p><i>It also contributes to key council objectives of reducing carbon emissions and car dependency, while helping to promote more active travel.</i></p> <p><i>The service enables people living in the area to enjoy easy access to leisure, shopping, work, and healthcare, such as GP appointments.</i></p> <p><i>Research by Ansa Transport, which operates the service, found that 68 per cent of users would not have used another bus service before 'go-too' took to the road, while 45 per cent said 'go-too' made their journey</i></p>
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				<p>easier. More significant was the finding that 61 per cent of passengers had access to a car.</p> <p><i>In addition to the Go-Too pilot scheme there is also the FlexiLink service, also operated by ANSA. This is a borough wide, demand responsive service. This service is for residents with a disability, those over 80 or those that live beyond the reach of any other public transport. The fare is £3 per journey or free if you have a concessionary bus pass. All journeys have to be pre-booked so that the route can be planned efficiently. This service will be reviewed to consider the current service patterns and eligibility criteria (i.e., should this be open to wider ridership) and fare levels. Dial-a ride services are high cost services to operate, so can only be maintained in areas where users have no other bus services, will be heavily used and where funding is available.</i></p>
10	Energy, Transport and Planning	<p><b>Introduce sustainable energy technologies to existing council owned buildings</b></p> <p>Retrofitting existing council buildings both public and domestic</p> <p>Include council owned infrastructure</p> <p>e.g lampposts/ signage</p> <p>Encourage other agencies to follow suit</p>	We're already doing this	<p><i>All council buildings are now being supplied with green electricity backed by the Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin (REGO) scheme which offsets a significant proportion of the emissions meaning all assets at CEC under our financial control consume 100% green electricity. This includes Leisure centres and Streetlighting. Since 2019, Schools under CEC energy framework benefit also from 100% green electricity.</i></p> <p><i>Cheshire East Council has been successful in securing funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and has submitted applications for further funding to provide additional carbon reduction measures.</i></p>

				<p><i>A programme of energy efficiency measures including LED light replacements across twelve buildings have provided a reduction in electricity usage.</i></p> <p><i>The installation of building mounted solar arrays on Council buildings is providing self-generated green electricity, reducing the amount of grid electricity the Council is required to purchase. Seventeen solar PV installations have been completed to date, providing approximately 1GWh per year, and a further two are in plan.</i></p> <p><i>The decarbonisation of our gas usage is one of the most challenging and expensive areas of our carbon reduction and requires investment in building fabric improvements and grid upgrades to fully decarbonise the heating of our buildings. Following the successful applications for Public Sector Decarbonisation Funding the Council has put in place a programme of replacing gas boilers with air source heat pumps where this is possible. As these replacements are completed, we anticipate a reduction in gas use. To date three air source heat pump installations have been completed, a further twelve pumps are expected to be installed over the next 3 months.</i></p> <p><i>The carbon emitted from our streetlighting has reduced radically over the last few years through the installation of LED lanterns and more modern control equipment across most of the asset. The replacement of over 4,000 illuminated signs and bollards to LED are being progressed to completion this year, with new sign lanterns produced from recycled materials and a tree planted for everyone installed.</i></p> <p><i>The Council is building its first ground based solar farm at Leighton Grange Crewe expected to be fully realised within the next year, with over 7,600 solar panels providing renewable energy to our composting</i></p>
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				<p>plant. Feasibilities are currently being finalised for additional solar capacity in the borough but realising these carbon reductions are subject to connection and planning risks.</p>
11	Rethinking funding and distribution	<p><b>Adopt a community wealth building approach</b></p> <p>Support local businesses with regard to procurement</p> <p>Encourage anchor institutions in deploying their resources for local benefit</p> <p>Make effective use of diverse buildings</p> <p>Consider where the money goes from procurement of public services</p>	<p>We're already doing this</p>	<p>Cheshire East Council want to make a positive impact on people and places in Cheshire East. We call this impact social value, and look at this across three themes- social, economic, and environmental. We take into account social value across all our activities, including procurement, as an employer, through partnership working, through community assets and through planning.</p> <p>A range of social value resources have been created to support and guide the social value activities of the council and to help organisations we work with. They are on the council website at the following link: <a href="https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/social-value-resources">Social value resources (cheshireeast.gov.uk)</a></p> <p>For any contracts below the procurement thresholds, the preference is always to buy local and to try and keep provision as local as possible. However, this is not always possible. In these instances, we would initially look to Cheshire provision, then North West and then further afield.</p> <p>In addition, a Social Value portal is being introduced, this will be used for procurements from February 2023. Cheshire East Council are also considering introducing a carbon digital platform, using the DEFRA framework, to track carbon footprints. This will enable around 80% of spend to be tracked. This is estimated to be introduced later in 2023.</p>

12	Community and appropriate support	<p><b>Pursue warm hubs, providing they have</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum basic facilities</li> <li>Sufficiently numerous to be local</li> <li>Don't exclude people who don't want to socialise</li> <li>Have quiet zones or days</li> <li>Transport to them</li> <li>Working areas</li> </ul>	We're already doing this	<p><b>WARM PLACES</b></p> <p>Keeping Cheshire East warm</p> <p><i>Cheshire East Council have implemented a warm hubs network, branded as "Warm Places". Warm Places have been categorised into three- those which offer hot food funded by the council, those which offer hot drinks funded by the council, and libraries and other warm places, where the offer varies from venue to venue.</i></p> <p><i>Warm Places have now been mapped against the 8 Care Community areas to ensure coverage across the borough. For each Warm Place the website describes the offer there, the location, including a map, and opening time details. There are currently 75 warm hubs in place, this has increased from 53 in December 2022.</i></p>
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