



**Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council**

Forward timetable of consultation and decision making

Council 3 October 2023

Wards affected: All Wards

Centres for Warmth External funding

Report of Director (Community Services)

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members of a successful submission to Cadent Gas Vulnerability and Carbon Monoxide Allowance fund for £228,446.07 to support delivery of a project aimed at providing centres for warmth to provide the services as detailed in 3.3 – 3.7.
- 1.2 To seek endorsement for a supplementary income and expenditure budget for £228,446.07.

2. Recommendation

That Council:

- 2.1 Endorses a supplementary income and expenditure budget for the value of the external funding of £228,446.07.

3. Background to the report

- 3.1 Cadent Gas Limited are the UK's largest gas distribution network (GDN), operating 4 networks in the Eastern, North London, Northwest & West Midlands regions of England. As a regulated business, Ofgem issue Cadent with a series of objectives, conditions and allowances to support customers living in vulnerable situations across their networks. Cadent's most recent set of objectives and conditions have taken the form of a "use it or lose it" allowance called the Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA). Cadent often elects to work with expert partners to identify customers and provide important safeguarding services to them (such as income maximisation, energy efficiency and carbon monoxide safety advice).

- 3.2 The Community Safety and Safeguarding team have been working closely over several months with Cadent's Safeguarding Specialist to pull together a proposal that will provide important services such as income maximisation work and energy efficiency advice to residents in our borough who need it most. This builds on the council's longstanding relationship with Cadent through the Employment and Skills Partnership.
- 3.3 Many of Hinckley and Bosworth borough's residents are currently struggling with rising living costs. Petrol, food, energy and other bills have seen rises and we know many people are struggling to make ends meet. The Council recognised that it is important that people know what support is available that could benefit them and that they are supported to maximise their income. In response to this the council set up a Welfare Support Team to help those who are struggling financially with their priority bills such as rent, council tax, energy, water and food. The service prioritises those people who have no one else to help and who are the most vulnerable. With the funding awarded from Cadent the Council will expand this scheme in priority areas working from the proposed Centres for Warmth and doing outreach work in the communities that need our help the most, such as those with higher deprivation and those that are geographically isolated.
- 3.4 The Council's Community Houses in Earl Shilton, Barwell, Wykin and Burbage will become 'Centres for Warmth'. They will offer Carbon Monoxide awareness, Priority Services Register awareness, deliver cooking on a budget sessions and offer welfare support services for individuals who are struggling with the current cost of living.
- 3.5 The project will run over a two-year period from a start date estimated at 30th November 2023.
- 3.6 The funding will support two new welfare support officers, on a fixed term basis, that will work directly with residents who are struggling to afford core bills (such as food, energy, rent, other household bills) to maximise their income. Some examples of what this would include are benefits advice, access to grants and other schemes such as council tax support and Household Support Fund. These officers will work from the Centres for Warmth and in an outreach capacity across the borough as needed. The posts will link in with core partners across the borough such as food banks, Citizen's Advice, community pantries, work link, Leicestershire County Council, the voluntary sector and the Rural Community Council (RCC). The posts will have excellent links with other schemes such as warm spaces, mobile community hubs run by the RCC, Community Pantries delivered by Feed The Hungry and the work being delivered by the RCC with the mobile connect bus, in order to enhance the service we offer as partners and avoid duplication.

The funding will also fund one new part time post, on a fixed term basis, to support the expansion of the community kitchens to three new areas of the borough and to aid delivery of slow cooker cooking sessions to current community kitchens, current community house groups and the three new

community kitchens. The three new community kitchens will run fortnightly and will not only give these communities access to cooking sessions but will also, as we know from previous evaluation of our current kitchens, be key in reducing isolation and improving mental health.

- 3.7 Carbon Monoxide (CO) awareness and Priority Services Register (PSR) awareness will be raised with individuals attending the community houses/centres for warmth, via the community kitchens, at events attended by community house staff, with residents accessing our community house trips (many of whom are elderly) and via the welfare support officers. The objectives are that more people are aware of the dangers of CO and have a CO monitor in their property and that more people are aware of the PSR register, the eligibility criteria and that we increase take up of those that are eligible.

4. Exemptions in accordance with the Access to Information procedure rules

- 4.1 This report is to be taken in open session.

5. Financial implications (AW)

- 5.1 The funding covers the costs of the scheme of £228,446 for a two year period, therefore during that time there will be no adverse impact on the budget position of the Council. As the posts recruited to will terminate at the end of the scheme to avoid on going costs there should be no budget impact after the end of the project.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 empowers the council to do anything that individuals generally may do for inter alia the benefit of persons resident or present in its area.
- 6.2 Section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972 empowers the council to appoint such officers as it deems necessary for the proper discharge of its functions.

7 Corporate Plan implications

- 7.1 This report relates to priority ambitions of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2022-25, namely:

- People
- Place
- Prosperity

8. Consultation

- 8.1 Staff involved in the delivery of the scheme and Cadent.

9. Risk implications

- 9.1 It is the council's policy to proactively identify and manage significant risks which may prevent delivery of business objectives.
- 9.2 It is not possible to eliminate or manage all risks all of the time and risks will remain which have not been identified. However, it is the officer's opinion based on the information available, that the significant risks associated with this decision / project have been identified, assessed and that controls are in place to manage them effectively.
- 9.3 The following significant risks associated with these report / decisions were identified from this assessment:

Management of significant (Net Red) risks		
Risk description	Mitigating actions	Owner
Difficulty recruiting appropriate staff to fixed terms roles	The funding covers posts for 2 years which will help with recruitment of staff	RB
Fall in demand for welfare services	The proposal is based on estimated current demand, the services will be well advertised, and the outreach element should increase current demand	RB

10. Knowing your community – equality and rural implications

- 10.1 The proposal has been based on knowledge from our current services and the needs of residents accessing these services.
- 10.2 This proposal is based on an outreach approach to ensure that it reaches rural areas and customers who are most in need.

11. Corporate implications

- 11.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:
- Community safety implications
 - Environmental implications including the declared climate emergency
 - ICT implications
 - Asset management implications
 - Procurement implications
 - Human resources implications
 - Planning implications
 - Data protection implications
 - Voluntary sector

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