



Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Forward timetable of consultation and decision making

Executive: 18 June 2025

Wards affected: All wards

Cost of Living update

Report of Director, Community Services

1.0 Purpose of report

To update Executive on

- The work undertaken by the welfare support team in response to the cost-of-living crisis.
- Key achievements and workstreams in relation to those experiencing financial hardship.
- Performance trends in relation to the welfare support service.

2.0 Recommendation

That Executive

- 2.1 Acknowledge and endorse the extensive work undertaken by the team to support residents of the borough affected by the cost-of-living crisis.
- 2.2 Acknowledge the increase in demand upon services due to the cost-of-living crisis.
- 2.3 Recognise the importance of the service to residents in any future Local Government Reorganisation structure.

3.0 Background to the report

- 3.1 In light of the growing financial strain faced by a significant portion of Hinckley and Bosworth's residents, the authority took the proactive step of declaring a Cost-of-Living Emergency in August 2022.
- 3.2 Many of Hinckley and Bosworth borough's residents are currently struggling with rising living costs. We feel it is important that people know what support is available that could benefit them and that they are supported to maximise their income. The Welfare Support Service has now been established for 4 years and has assisted over 3500 residents throughout that time. Support offered ranges from support to claim the correct benefits, maximise households' incomes, access to grants and help towards food and energy costs.
- 3.3 The [Hinckley and Bosworth Community Health and Wellbeing Plan 2023-2026](#) recognises five key priorities for the local community, with rising living costs identified as a primary concern. A Cost of Living action plan has been collaboratively developed with key stakeholders to ensure and drive delivery of key actions to respond to the current cost of living at a local level. It has also been highlighted that there is a high number of cross cutting themes and workstreams with that of another two of the priorities identified in the Health and Wellbeing Plan, namely Housing and Mental Health.

4.0 Welfare Support Service Update

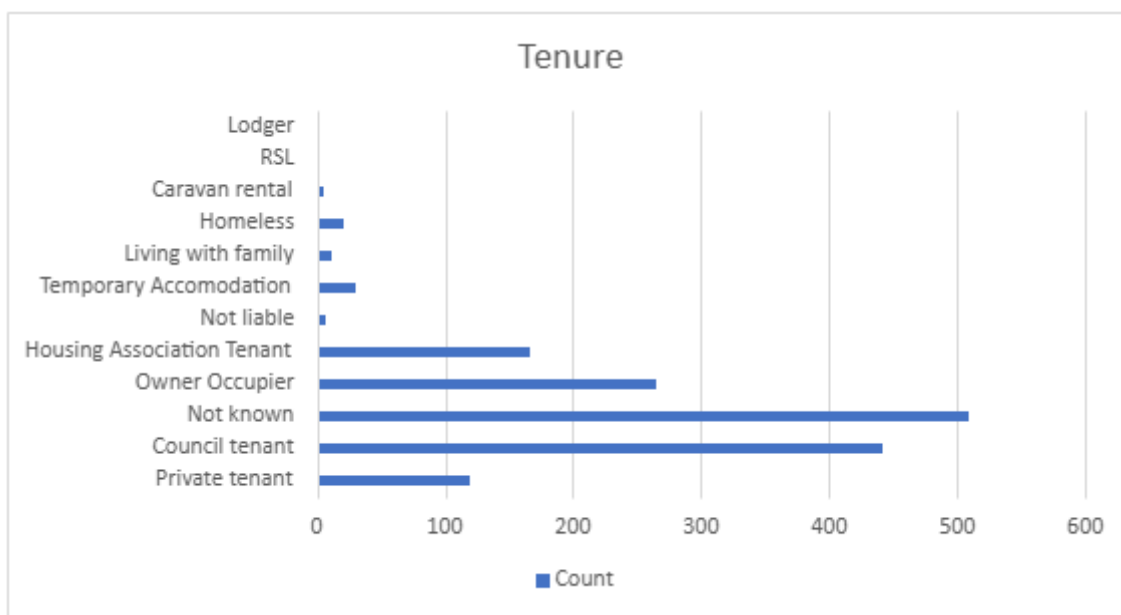
- 4.1 The Service remains jointly funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Cadent. During 2024/25 the team experienced some staffing changes that meant we went from 4 welfare support officers to 3, due to one officer taking a permanent position in Tenancy Management.
- 4.2 During the 2024/25 period, the Welfare Support Service assisted 1,617 residents of Hinckley and Bosworth who were experiencing financial hardship. Notably, over 33% of these residents accessed the service on more than one occasion. Several factors have contributed to this figure, with the Household Support Fund (HSF) playing a significant role.

The HSF, provided by the Government and administered by Leicestershire County Council, supports families with children and individuals most in need. It replaced the Covid Local Grant Scheme (CLGS) and offers food vouchers in the form of supermarket gift cards and financial assistance towards fuel debt. The fund allows one referral per applicant per round.

When the HSF opens, we experience a surge in referrals, as many individuals seek immediate assistance from this fund. Often, these individuals are less inclined to engage in broader financial inclusion efforts. The welfare support service completed a total of 225 HSF referrals across 4 different funding rounds during 2024/25.

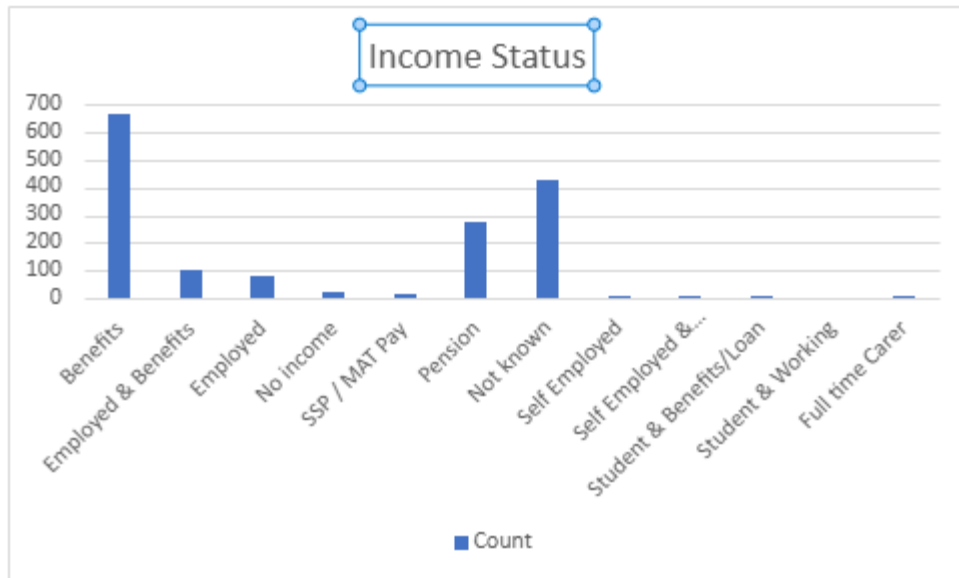
- 4.3 The graph below shows that over 27% of all referrals in 2024/25 were for Hinckley and Bosworth Council tenants. Additionally, more than 16% of referrals were from homeowners, a significant increase compared to 2023/24, when homeowners made up only 7% of all referrals.

This data highlights the growing impact of the cost of living crisis, indicating that more people in our community are struggling financially.



- 4.4 The below graph shows the income status of the residents that accessed the service. There has been an increase in residents, accessing welfare support, who receive a pension, this may be down to the work we have carried out around raising awareness of a historically underclaimed benefit, pension credits.

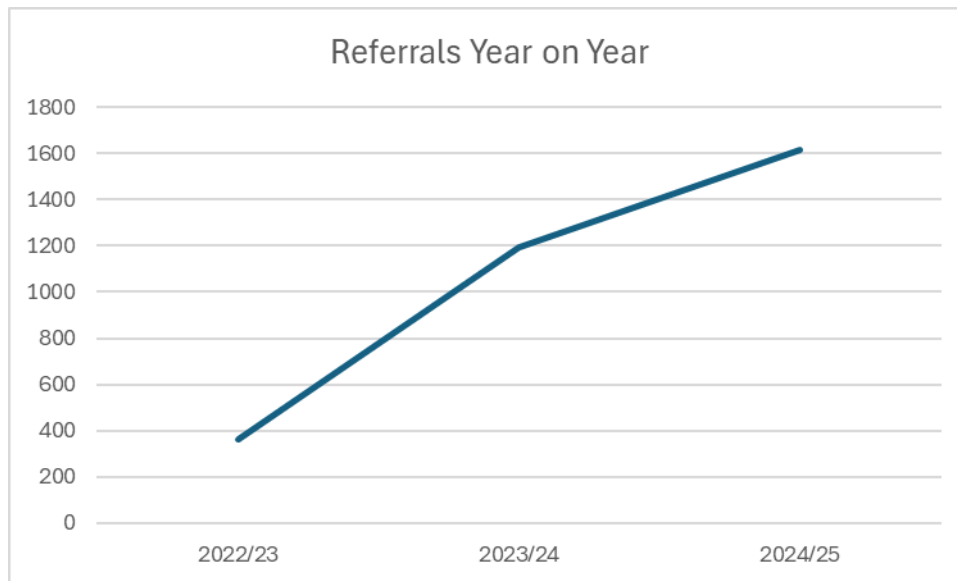
In August 2024, the new government announced that pensioners would no longer automatically receive a winter fuel payment and instead would only receive the payment if they were in receipt of the qualifying benefit, Pension Credits. Welfare Support has been collaborating with partners and internal teams, such as Housing and Revenues and Benefits, to promote Pension Credits eligibility to the appropriate residents in the borough. By partnering with our Revenue and Benefits team, we have adopted a more targeted and collaborative approach. This includes working with the Department of Work and Pensions to ensure that all eligible residents, particularly those receiving State Pensions and Housing Benefit, are informed about Pension Credits.



- 4.5 The table below outlines the main types of support offered by the Welfare Support service. In 2024/25, 72 individuals were referred for food assistance, a notable decrease from the 133 referrals in previous years. This reduction is attributed to the extensive efforts we have undertaken to address food poverty. Welfare Support officers have been asking more detailed questions to better understand the circumstances and determine if there is a genuine need for emergency food parcels or if there is a more suitable provision they can be referred to.

Key Support Given	Yes
Benefits Advice Given	277
Big Difference/Trust Funds/ Warm Homes Discount Advice	106
Referred for Food Parcel	72
Debt Advice	135
Mental health issues disclosed?	54

- 4.6 The graph below illustrates a substantial year-on-year increase in referrals from 2022/23 to 2024/25. This growth has been matched by an expansion in our team, which has enabled us to meet the rising demand.



4.7 Further performance data can be found on the attached infographics at Appendix 1.

4.8 The true impact of the service can be seen from the great feedback we have received from residents.

"Hi. Just received my household support vouchers and my washer and cooker are arriving tomorrow. I've also had a positive 1st meeting with a social worker. Just wanted to say a huge thank you for all your help so far and possibly the future too. It is really appreciated."

"I have recently spoken with a customer who was referred to welfare support around September time last year as she was financially struggling with the rising costs with inflation. She has told me that she felt extremely supported and grateful to the officer that dealt with her as she never realised how much support she could get, She was also scared about applying for DHP as she said she had no idea what she was doing so the support she had with this was amazing." - Housing Options officer about a resident,

5.0 Food Poverty

5.1 Since taking on the role in May 2024, the Food Poverty Officer has made significant strides in tackling food poverty within the borough. A key achievement has been the creation of the Hinckley and Bosworth Food Poverty Network, which aims to encourage knowledge sharing among relevant service providers. To date, three meetings have been held, where providers have discussed best practices and challenges. These meetings have also included presentations on GDPR, to boost confidence in data sharing, and from Citizens Advice on the support they can offer to food bank users. Further presentations are planned on housing pressures and Domestic Abuse.

- 5.2 Further work around practical resource development has also taken place in the form of resource folders, contact directories, provision tables and a free and affordable meal guide. All these resources are available to both emergency food providers and professionals alike, with the aim of encouraging a more holistic approach to food poverty.
- 5.3 Strong engagement with internal teams has been created to address concerns raised by food providers such as referral consistency and general processes. The Food Poverty Officer is also in the process of creating a process to support those in temporary accommodation to access food provisions suitable for their needs i.e. food parcels that can be used with no cooking facilities such as kettle packs, ensuring no household is left behind when accessing essential support. Furthermore, the officer is also an integral part of the first county wide Food Insecurity Working Group.
- 5.4 The Food Poverty Officer has also built a strong relationship with our Food Waste Officer and continues to promote food waste initiatives and build relationships with community champions and Wonky Veg Box provider.

6.0 Community Outreach and Rural Work.

- 6.1 In 2023/24, funding from Cadent enabled the Welfare Support Service to reach more rural communities that might otherwise struggle to access our services. This support allowed us to visit various community groups and promote the advice and assistance available through the Welfare Support Service.

Recognising that our monthly drop-in sessions at the Hinckley Hub may not be accessible to everyone, we focused on engaging with community groups in rural areas. This approach has proven to be very successful and has been warmly welcomed by these communities. Some of the rural groups attended include;

- Newbold Verdon Coffee Morning.
- Burbage Patient Participation Group
- U3A AGM
- Barwell Winter Warmer event
- Craft session in Newbold Verdon and Ratby ran by HBBC community Houses
- Welfare Support drop-in sessions held at Ratby library
- Cancer Screening event at Sport in Desford
- Mayflower club, Markfield

- 6.2 In order to further promote the service and reduce stigma around accessing our service, we have held 2 stalls on Hinckley Market as well as attending the St George's Day events in Hinckley town centre. Below are some highlights. We also attended a multi-agency patch walk that followed a fire incident at a property in Burbage to promote the welfare support service, on people's doorsteps.



7.0 Exemptions in accordance with the Access to Information procedure rules

7.1 The report is to be taken in open session.

8.0 Financial Implications [CS]

8.1 The following table details the external funding secured per year towards these workstreams:

Workstream	Funding Body	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	TOTAL
Welfare support	UKSPF	£40,000	£80,000	£80,000	£51,398	£251,398
Centres for Warmth	Cadent	£0	£57,110	£114,220	£57,116	£228,446
Food Poverty	UKSPF	£0	£0	£33,110	£35,898	£69,008
TOTAL		£40,000	£137,110	£227,330	£144,412	£548,852

9. Legal implications [ST]

9.1 None

10. Corporate Plan implications

- 10.1 This report relates to priority ambitions of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2024-28, namely:
- People
 - Place
 - Prosperity

11. Consultation

- 11.1 Relevant council teams have been consulted in the preparation of this report, alongside relevant information and intelligence from key partners such as emergency food providers, voluntary organisations and service user data.

12. Risk implications

- 12.1 It is the council's policy to proactively identify and manage significant risks which may prevent delivery of business objectives.
- 12.2 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.
- 12.3 The following significant risks associated with this report / decisions were identified from this assessment:

Management of significant (Net Red) risks

Risk description	Mitigating actions	Owner
Current Welfare Support Service, Warm Welcome Support and Food Poverty work is reliant on temporary external funding	Continue to look to identify and access external funding opportunities and opportunities to sustain services	AC/RB

13. Knowing your community – equality and rural implications

- 13.1 Council services, including welfare support services are promoted and delivered across the borough. Expanded work with Cadent funding has further enhanced accessibility of the welfare support service and reach into all communities via outreach work.
- 13.2 Statistics are captured for services within this report to ensure that any gaps in access can be identified and rectified.

14. Climate implications

- 14.1 Uniform swap shop work reduces school uniforms going to landfill.

15. Corporate implications

15.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:

- Community safety implications
- Environmental implications
- ICT implications
- Asset management implications
- Procurement implications
- Human resources implications
- Planning implications
- Data protection implications
- Voluntary sector

Background papers: Appendix 1 – Cost of Living Infographic 2024-25

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