



## Community Wellbeing & Housing Committee

28<sup>th</sup> March 2023

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Title</b>                 | <i>Community Centre Saturday Opening (Previously the Winter Warmer Project)</i>  |
| <b>Purpose of the report</b> | To Approve   |
| <b>Report Author</b>         | <i>Stephen Mortimer-Cleevely &amp; Julia Sibley</i>  |
| <b>Ward(s) Affected</b>      | All Wards  |
| <b>Exempt</b>                | No   |
| <b>Exemption Reason</b>      |  |
| <b>Corporate Priority</b>    | Community<br>Recovery<br>Service delivery  |
| <b>Recommendations</b>       | <p><b>Committee is asked to:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>To continue to endorse the Council's approach of expanding the Community Centres provision to take account of the impact of current cost of living, energy and social isolation crisis on our communities.</i></li> <li>2. <i>To continue with the provision of opening at least one community centre within the borough of Spelthorne for 6 days a week, which is currently in place throughout the winter period, engaging centre staff to provide the additional provision.</i></li> <li>3. <i>To consider the relative merits of contractual changes or enhanced pay options.</i></li> </ol> |

## 1. Summary of the report

SBC seeks to extend our current response to the current cost of living and energy crisis with a proportionate and appropriate offer that will support the most in need, utilising its existing assets and staff resource, whilst minimising the impact on SBC budgets.

## 2. Key Issues

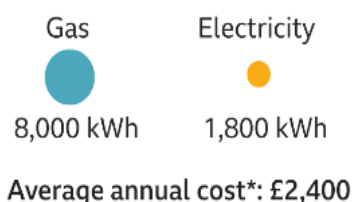
- 2.1 During the winter, the health sector experienced their usual winter surge of presentations at primary care and in the acute settings with an increase in falls and frailty and other environmental related or triggered conditions. This last winter saw the same winter pressures with the additional burden of vulnerable members of the population being at further risk from the impacts of cost of living and the energy crisis.
- 2.2 The Council had an opportunity to maximise its assets that were normally underutilised at weekends, to help create 'warm places' for these residents by opening the Fordbridge Centre and Greeno Centre on alternative Saturdays. The offer was a subsidised hot lunch and hot drinks to take home and also included opportunities for social interaction, watching TV, reading the paper, playing games or light exercise. A shower was also made available at the Greeno Centre, which is available for those residents whose families or carers can support when using the shower.
- 2.3 Staff were asked to cover these shifts by consent and both HR and Unison were consulted. Independent Living could not offer shift swaps as staff capacity is low, but full-time staff received a time and a half payment for Saturday work. Staff are required to have food preparation, manual handling, and safeguarding training to cover this provision.
- 2.4 If the 6 day a week offer continues there will be a significant additional cost, which may attract external funding, but will ultimately be the subject of a growth bid adding up to 20% of the budgeted costs of running a community centre. This described in more detail in the options element.
- 2.5 In the event the additional provision is agreed then the number of attendees will be limited to those who can transport themselves as Spelride does not operate on a Saturday. Independent Living does have access to minibus transport but vehicle capacity and trained staff availability are limiting factors.
- 2.6 Residents are still facing difficult times ahead as rising energy bills are set to wipe out nearly three-quarters of their annual state pension, leaving many more than £800 worse off. The current price cap for energy bills is due to decrease slightly in April, but households should not expect their bills to decrease, with many likely to see increases, due to the current Government support being withdrawn after March.
- 2.7 Higher energy bills often hurt our elderly residents significantly more than the rest of the population because they spend a greater amount of their income on heating their home.
- 2.8 While the state pension has increased and will pay out an annual average of £9,623 after April, just £3,000 will be left to live on per year once bills have been paid - even after the triple lock raise.

- 2.9 To help those on the state pension deal with rising costs, the Government launched a £300 payment for older households. On top of this, state pensioners on low income who claim Pension Credit were also eligible for the Government's £650 cost of living payment. The Winter Fuel Payment was also doubled from £300 to £600 for more than eight million pensioner households this winter. The full new state pension comes to £185.15 per week, while the basic state pension comes to a weekly rate of £141.85 per week.
- 2.10 Four in 10 people over the age of 66 rely on the state pension as their main source of income, according to the Money and Pensions Service.

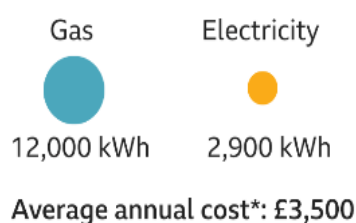
See below the financial implication for our residents sourced by Ofgem/BBC:

How might your bill work out?

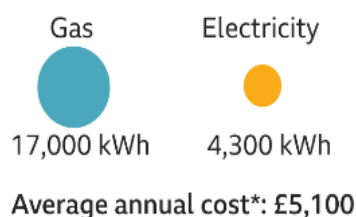
Low (flat or one-bedroom house) 1-2 people



Medium (three-bedroom house) 2-3 people



High (five-bedroom house) 4-5 people



\*Examples are illustrative, with costs based on Ofgem price cap rates and customers with typical usage, paying for dual fuel by direct debit

Source: British Gas, Ofgem, BBC research



- 2.11 If the current provision is extended, we would need to consult with relevant staff and review the agreement which is in place, as currently we are paying staff overtime to cover the opening of the centres. If this offer is going to be

extended for a fixed period or a permanent arrangement, then we would need to consider amending staff contracts to include Saturday opening and giving a day off during the week to offset, which will also have implications for other community centre staff.

- 2.12 Uptake of the current provision has been steady each week, with approximately 50 meals per week being provided at the Fordbridge Centre, and approximately 10 meals per week at the Greeno Centre.
- 2.13 Agreeing to open 6 days a week for a pre-determined period comes with some risk, particularly considering the current budget constraints, we risk raising client expectation and ultimately disappointing if we subsequently decide to return to 5 day a week provision.
- 2.14 The current offer was agreed to be extended until the end of March 2023 by Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee. Except for May 6<sup>th</sup> when we will be showing the coronation, the community centres will be closed on Saturdays.

### **3. Options analysis and proposal**

#### **3.1 Option 1**

Do not extend the current temporary provision and risk increased admissions, loneliness and increased resident poverty.

#### **Option 2 (preferred option)**

Endorse the continuation of the 6 days a week Winter Warmer approach (with a new name) and then review in 6 months. The additional cost profile added to Independent Living budget would be in the region of **£42,015**. Which takes into account a 20% increase in overall operating costs including energy costs. Making enhanced payments for staff who work Saturdays. Independent Living understand that there may be some appetite to fund this provision via the SBC cost of living fund potentially for this period though there is also provision within the NWS Alliance Prevention Fund. It needs to be recognised to enable this initiative to become a permanent provision a growth bid would need to be submitted to embed the additional budget implications. Our community centres are a highly regarded and a well-attended resource, unfortunately they require a subsidy to operate, see attached the Fordbridge Budget by way of example (**Appendix 1**). Service managers have had an indication from both Greeno and Fordbridge centre managers that they would be willing to continue to work alternate Saturdays to enable the 6 day a week offer to continue. Therefore, the projected budget increase we feel is a reasonable estimation of the projected additional 6-month cost of shared Saturday opening. This approach relies heavily on staff goodwill and is likely to result in increased burn out and staffing and rota issues.

#### **Option 3**

Endorse the continuation of the 6 days a week Winter Warmer approach and then review in 6 months. Making contractual changes to staff contracts. The additional cost profile added to the Independent Living budget would include all items in Option 2, this would be in the region of **£32,784**.

#### **Option 4**

Defer a decision based on weather conditions and new central government response.

#### **4. Financial implications**

- 4.1 The Council were awarded non recurrent funding from the NWS Alliance Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) of £132,000 where we assigned an element (£30,000) to this project. A proportion of this funding is already earmarked for preventative services delivered by SBC. There was no deadline to spend this by March 2023 but there is an expectation of timely use. Officers originally recommend that £30,000 be assigned to this project, with the option to increase this based on attendance and need. However, the remaining funds have been earmarked for alternative projects which would have to be shelved to contribute towards this initiative.
- 4.2 A number of funding options have been briefly discussed including the use of the SBC specific Cost of Living provision or additional use of NWS Alliance Prevention funding, officers suggest that either of these would be appropriate use for this short term initiative, but a permanent offer would require a growth bid in the region of **£32,784 - £42,015 p.a.**

#### **5. Risk considerations**

- 5.1 Risks of inaction are well documented nationally and ultimately inaction will lead to potential poverty, loneliness and increased presentation at primary care and increased hospital admissions.
- 5.2 These initiatives and additional responsibilities that are created by this approach draw heavily on our limited resources. There are staffing implications here that need to be funded, potentially from external sources.
- 5.3 If this is decided to be a permanent provision, then a growth bid will ultimately be needed to cover the ongoing costs once short-term funding has been utilised.
- 5.4 Staff welfare must be considered, at all levels, a service rarely opens out of hours without additional support being required.

#### **6. Legal considerations**

- 6.1 Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides specific authority for the Council to incur expenditure on anything which is in the interests of and will bring direct benefit to its area. The preferred option would support residents who are suffering from the cost of living crisis and are at risk of social isolation thereby benefitting the local community.
- 6.2 As the report has noted, there are employment implications for staff who are employed by the Council at these centres. A variation may be required to employment contracts of these staff to reflect the change in working hours.

#### **7. Procurement considerations**

- 7.1 There are none

## **8. Other considerations**

- 8.1 The Council can agree and endorse this project, but although warmly received as a principle this still requires 'buy in' from our residents.

## **9. Equality and Diversity**

- 9.1 This initiative potentially only 'scratches the surface' of this issue with many residents who are house bound and have little engagement with our services may struggle to access this offer. In the first instance we may only offer this provision to centre members.

## **10. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications**

- 10.1 The proposed project will be informed by our sustainability and climate change team who will support in relation to cost saving and energy initiatives.

## **11. Timetable for implementation**

- 11.1 The Council are proposing that this initiative be instigated by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.

## **12. Contact**

- 12.1 Stephen Mortimer-Cleevely 01784 448616

**Background papers:** *There are none*

### **Appendices:**

**1 Fordbridge Budget YTD 22 23**

**2 Winter Warmer Project Costings BAU Model**