

Report

Cabinet



Part 1

Date: 10 May 2023

Subject Newport City Council response to external pressures impacting Council services

Purpose To present an update to Cabinet on Newport City Council's response to external factors impacting on delivery of Council services.

Author Policy and Partnership Manager

Ward All

Summary This report provides an update on the cost-of-living crisis, which has been the main external pressures faced by our residents, communities, and services during this month.

Collaboration and partnership working is key to supporting our citizens and therefore this report provides information on how this way of working is enabling a greater access for our residents to support, advice and guidance.

Proposal Cabinet to consider the contents of the report on the Council's activity to respond to the external factors on Newport's communities, businesses, and council services.

Action by Executive Board and Corporate Management Team

Timetable Immediate

This report was prepared after consultation with:

- Executive Board
- Corporate Management Team

Signed

Background

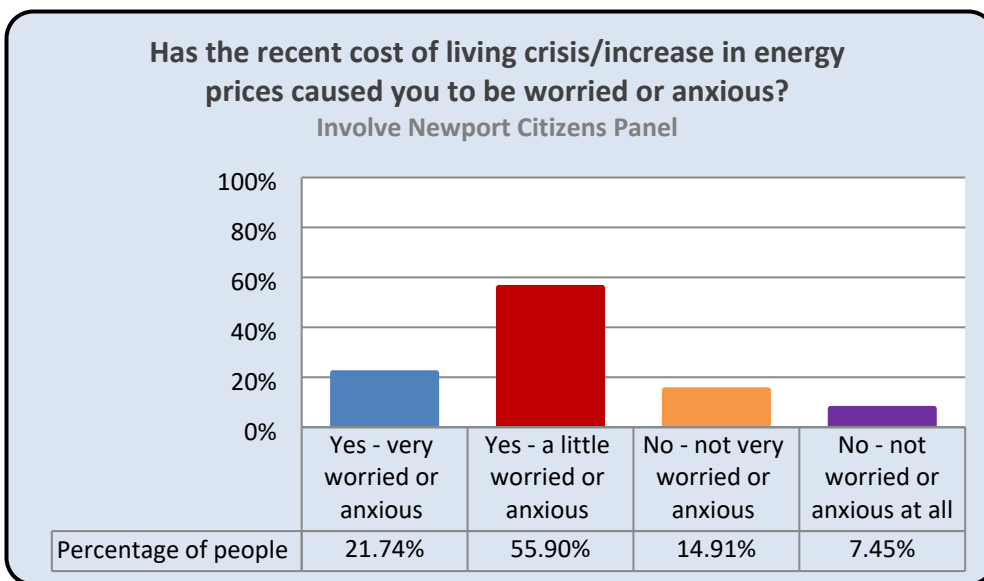
This report is a monthly update to Cabinet members on the key pressures facing our communities, businesses, and council services, along with updates on how we are working collaboratively with our partners to help support our residents.

Cost of Living Crisis

In its role as a forum for the sharing of information on how our residents are being affected and how we can work in partnership to mitigate some of the impact on our residents, the Council's Cost-of-Living officer Task and Finish Group worked with partners to facilitate a Cost-of-Living event on 26 April. 180 residents attended this event. A more detailed update will be provided within next month's report.

As noted in last month's report a survey was shared with 'Involve', Newport Citizens' Panel of residents who give their views on a range of topics about local services and life in Newport through regular surveys. The survey asked residents several questions relating to the current cost of living issues and how it has affected them. We also asked for feedback on what has helped them so far and what more could be done to support residents to manage the issues and challenges they were facing.

Approximately three quarters of the 164 people who responded said they were very or little worried or anxious about the cost-of-living crisis and increase in energy prices but felt they can access information and advice and that there is enough information available to them.



The full analysis including qualitative data on what needs to be improved to support residents manage the cost-of-living crisis will be shared with the officer group and partners and will inform initiatives and planning for the winter of 2023-24.

Support

Newport schools are planning ways of supporting families during the May half-term holiday and bank holidays and will be facilitating the dissemination of seven days' worth of food vouchers to those families entitled to free school meals. Schools are awaiting guidance from Welsh Government on access to free school meals for those students during the longer summer break.

Support and information, including a summer term newsletter, is being provided to Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors to support them to address the impact of poverty upon education.

Previous reports have highlighted the facilitation of the UK Government Energy Bill Support Scheme (EBSS) Alternative Scheme for households who do not have a domestic supply and therefore missed out on the credit applied to energy company bills from October 2022 to March 2023.

£280 payments have been processed to date, but applications have been far less than expected and additional publicity and encouragement for eligible Newport residents to apply will be shared across Newport before the scheme closes on 31 May 2023.

Ukrainian Refugee Support

As mentioned in the previous month's report, one of the Welsh Government Super Sponsor hotels will close at the end of May impacting on 9 households. Newport's team are working intensively with partner agencies and Welsh Government to support residents to move on into placements with hosts or the private rented sector.

Newport has a long history of welcoming people seeking sanctuary and will continue to offer a place of safety for those fleeing conflict and persecution.

Risks

Newport Council will be reviewing the Council's Corporate and service area risks as part of the new Corporate Plan.

Risk Title / Description	Risk Impact score of Risk if it occurs* (1-5)	Risk Probability of risk occurring (1-5)	Risk Mitigation Action(s) What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect?	Risk Owner Officer(s) responsible for dealing with the risk?
Cost of Living impact on Council services	4	4	See this report on the Council's response to the cost-of-living crisis.	Corporate Management Team
Supporting refugees to settle in Newport.	4	2	See this Report on the Council's response to re-settlement programmes.	Corporate Management Team, Head of Housing and Communities, Director of Social Services

* Taking account of proposed mitigation measures

Links to Council Policies and Priorities

Corporate Plan
Strategic Equalities Plan

Options Available and considered

1. To consider and note the contents of the report on the Council's response.
2. To request further information or reject the contents of the report

Preferred Option and Why

1. To consider and note the contents of the report on the Council's response.

Comments of Chief Financial Officer

The report highlights the various factors which are putting pressure on Council services to help and respond, with the report highlighting the support which is available. Whilst a significant amount of this

specific support is funded from UK Government and Welsh Government, certain factors are having an impact on the Council's in-year financial position and affecting the medium-term financial outlook.

Especially in the context of an extremely challenging medium-term horizon, budget managers and Heads of Service will be expected to continue to monitor the impact of the external factors included in this report, especially in areas where grant funding ends, and work with Finance colleagues to escalate any material financial implications and report them where relevant. This will need to also include plans to mitigate any issues, as far as is possible.

Comments of Monitoring Officer

There are no legal issues arising from the report. Any specific legal implications will be addressed as part of the Council's operational responses to the key issues identified in the report.

Comments of Head of People, Policy and Transformation

The cost-of-living crisis continues to impact on our residents and staff and this report highlights how we are working with partners to raise awareness of how to access advice and support.

It is well documented how these pressures have an inequitable impact on our most disadvantaged and vulnerable residents, and it is therefore any support we can provide to mitigate the impact is of value. The results of the survey will help us to better understand how this is affecting our citizens, and support evidence-based interventions.

The council is continuing to consider HR implications for our workforce and working with all service areas closely during this period.

Scrutiny Committees

Not applicable as this an information only report and no decision is required from the Council.

Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment:

Not applicable as this is an information only report and no decision is required.

Wellbeing of Future Generations

Long Term – The short term actions the Council is taking now is considering the longer-term impacts which the cost of living is having on communities and businesses in Newport. Newport Council alongside partners are providing financial and non-financial support to help households and businesses.

Collaborative – Newport Council is working collaboratively across the organisation and also our external partners from Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, schools, Welsh Government and other local partners to support cost of living support.

Integration – The actions that the Council and is taking supports the Council's organisational priorities for community cohesion, early intervention, and prevention. This also supports the Welsh Government's priority for Wales being a nation of sanctuary.

Involvement – We are involving communities and residents who are providing vital front-line support and helping vulnerable / disadvantage households, and refugees. The Council is also providing regular updates and communications to those impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.

Prevention - The short term actions the Council is taking now is considering the longer-term impacts which the cost of living is having on communities and businesses in Newport. Newport Council alongside partners are providing financial and non-financial support to help households and businesses.

Consultation

Not Applicable

Background Papers

Monthly reports to Cabinet.

Dated: 3 May 2023