Crawley Borough Council

Report to Cabinet 23 November 2022

Warm Hubs

Report of the Head of Crawley Homes CH/198

1. Purpose

1.1 This report sets out the Council's response to the cost of living crisis, specifically the Council's approach to offering warm hub provision in the borough covering the period 28 November 2022 to 31 March 2023.

2. Recommendations

2.1. To the Cabinet:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) Approve the proposal for the Council's warm hub provision.
- b) Delegate authority to the Head of Crawley Homes and Head of Community Services in consultation with the Leader of the Council to approve changes to the supply of Council warm hub provision.
 (Generic Delegation 7 will be used to enact this recommendation)
- c) Delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Head of Crawley Homes and Head of Community Services to approve funding to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to deliver warm space provision and associated cost of living requirements from existing cost of living budgets and reserves.
 - (Generic Delegation 7 will be used to enact this recommendation)
- d) Delegate authority to the Head of Crawley Homes, Head of Community Services in consultation with the Head of Governance, People and Performance, to negotiate, approve and complete all relevant documentation including legal requirements.
 - (Generic Delegations 2 & 3 will be used to enact this recommendation)

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

3.1. With the rising cost of living there is concern that residents will struggle to heat their homes, although this is only one of many areas of concern in relation to the current economic climate. Households are facing unprecedented challenges including increasing difficulties in paying household bills, housing costs, increasing borrowing and use of credit, less access to food and ability to save.

- 3.2. The concept of warm hubs is to provide a space to residents who cannot afford to heat their homes; the warm hub is available to them as a space to spend time, at no cost with heating.
- 3.3. The idea of warm hubs has taken off across the country with delivery by local authorities and the VCS. We have completed a mapping exercise for Crawley and the VCS are already mobilising with warm hub type provision and so our model is to ensure there is a minimum provision available in the borough, as well as complementing existing and emerging provision to ensure coverage across a range of neighbourhoods, particularly the most deprived.
- 3.4. Council warm hubs will not just be a place where residents can spend time in a heated location, residents will also have access to hot drinks (at no cost) and will be able to receive basic signposting advice on cost of living and well-being by council staff and/or VCS staff. Where possible will also aim to provide a snack, although this will be subject to demand (Crawley Homes contractors, Mears and Wates, are set to donate non-perishable snacks to the hubs).
- 3.5. Over the longer term the Council will work with the VCS to explore options for additional wrap around support at council hubs and/or move to a co-delivery model where the VCS take the lead with support from us.

4. Background

- 4.1. The option to deliver warm hubs is a discretionary one but considered in the context of the rising cost of living and a Council priority to create stronger communities.
- 4.2. During the pandemic household incomes were impacted through furlough and the loss of jobs. As the town emerges from the pandemic and the economy and incomes started to recover households were hit by a growing cost of living crisis resulting from the world economy reacting to the war in Ukraine and the impact this had on the supply of fuel and some food sources.
- 4.3. In relation to energy costs, all residents will benefit from the Energy Price Guarantee and Support Scheme. Additionally, some of the Council's most vulnerable residents will receive additional payments this winter including the cost of living payment to those on means tested benefits, pensioner cost of living payment and disability cost of living payment
- 4.4. Despite the position set out on 4.3 the Council is aware that residents continue to be impacted by the rising cost of living, such as by the rising cost of food prices, household essentials and fuel; household incomes are therefore being squeezed
- 4.5. In 2022 Ofgem increased the energy cap twice (April and October), putting mounting pressure on households with a 54% increase on energy in April 2022 alone. The Office for National Statistics reported in February 2022 that 66% of adults in Britain had already started to report an impact in cost of living with 79% of that sample citing gas and electricity bills as a cause; energy bills have increased since then and therefore the impact on households is being compounded. It is likely that many households have been managing over the warmer summer months but as they move into the winter period will increasingly be feeling the squeeze on their income on account of rising energy costs. The energy price guarantee, that took effect on 1 October 2022, means that energy costs will be held at £2,500 for the average household on a standard tariff. As a way of budgeting most vulnerable residents will operate on a pre-paid meter, which incurs a higher charge rate. As outlined in 3.2 there is additional support available, but this will not be enough for some households particularly as they are squeezed by other rising costs which are not matched by rising

incomes. For example, The Office for National Statistics writes that food and non-alcoholic beverage prices rose by 14.6% in the 12 months to September 2022.

4.4 Households are therefore having to make difficult decision about how they spend their income, such as feeding themselves instead of heating their homes. This fuel poverty has negative impacts on health and wellbeing. Providing warm hubs will assist in giving relief from such impacts.

5. Description of Issue to be Resolved

- 5.1. The Council has instigated a cost of living working group that has looked at exploring a range of responses to the cost of living crisis.
- 5.2. Delivery of warm hubs is one of the responses to the rising cost of living and the difficulties the Council acknowledges customers are experiencing across Crawley. Both anecdotal evidence and data is demonstrating the impact of the cost of living crisis, some examples are shown below in 5.3 and 5.4.

5.3. National Context

The most recent data release from The Office for National Statistics shows a worsening position for households and we know that they have been squeezed further since March 2022, which is the reference point for this data:

- Around 9 in 10 (87%) adults reported an increase in their cost of living over the previous month in March 2022 (16 to 27 March 2022), an increase of 25 percentage points compared with around 6 in 10 (62%) adults in November 2021 (3 to 14 November 2021).
- Nearly a quarter (23%) of adults reported that it was very difficult or difficult to pay their usual household bills in the last month, compared with a year ago, in March 2022 (16 to 27 March 2022); an increase from 17% in November 2021 (3 to 14 November 2021).
- Of adults currently paying off a mortgage and/or loan, or rent, or shared ownership, 30% reported that it was very or somewhat difficult to afford housing costs, and 3% claimed to be behind on rent or mortgage payments, in March 2022 (16 to 27 March 2022).
- Among all adults, 17% reported borrowing more money or using more credit than they did a year ago, in March 2022 (16 to 27 March 2022).

5.4. Local Context

There is a high risk that the sharp rise in cost of living and rise in inflation is more likely to disproportionately affect those in the most deprived areas of Crawley (ONS). Three of the Lower Layer Super Output Areas in Broadfield have been identified as most at risk of falling below an acceptable standard of living in Crawley due the result of rising costs (Minimum Income Standard (MIS) 2021 - Loughborough University/Joseph Rowntree Foundation). These are

- 012C Broadfield Rise/Pelham/Creasys Drive
- 013D Broadfield Place/ Coachmans Drive
- 012E Plantain Cr/Fennel Cr

Local community and voluntary organisations are already seeing significant rise in demand for their services including support to access food, advice and guidance in relation to paying household bills, housing, debt management and accessing benefits:

 Crawley Foodbank Partnership and Free Shop Crawley have seen a significant increase in demand from 2021 with new households accessing the services. For example, Free Shop Crawley saw a 10% increase in their client base in one week in October 2022 increasing the number of families they work with from 600 to 660.

- The Easter Team (Crawley Foodbank partner) have reported that -
 - 256 new households have accessed the service between Jan-Jun 2022 along with existing clients.
 - A high number of residents accessing their service are from Broadfield and Bewbush
 - In 2020, 508 households accessed their service, increasing to 816 in 2021 with a further upward trend predicted for 2022
- Citizens Advice West Sussex have seen an increase in individuals accessing the service who need advice and guidance due to not being able to pay household bills, access to food or needing support to access benefits
- Community organisations themselves are also being impacted by the rise in overhead costs and utilities which is disproportionate to grants from funding bodies which were awarded by set amounts. There is a high risk that this will have a negative impact on the level of service delivery at a time that demand to support vulnerable individuals and families is at its highest.
- Crawley Homes Financial Inclusion Team are seeing an increasing number of referrals. Additionally, the number of referrals into the service is exceeding the number of case closures and a waiting list for support is in operation.
- 5.5. Provision of council warm hubs not only gives the opportunity of thermal comfort to our residents this winter but provides opportunity to engage and signpost residents to council resources, such as Help with money worries | Crawley GOV where they can get support to maximise income, put together a household budget or advice about debt management.

6. Information & Analysis Supporting Recommendation

- 6.1. The hybrid proposal for delivery of warm hubs is recommended as this enables the council to have a visible presence in the community whilst complementing existing offers in the VCS enabling residents a range of days, times and spaces in which they can visit a warm space.
- 6.2. The schedule for provision of council warm hubs is shown in appendix A, provision is mapped out by neighbourhood, day and time. This is the schedule the Council will launch with but will keep under review, with the potential for exploring further neighbourhoods and venues based on demand.
- 6.3. It is proposed that the Council offer warm hub provision between 28 November 2022 and 31 March 2023 (18 weeks) as these are the coldest months where residents will need additional support and options for keeping warm.
- 6.4. Appendix B shows existing warm hub type provision in place through the VCS or via West Sussex County Council (WSCC), this is mapped out by geographical area and shown alongside the Council's preliminary warm hub offer. Provision continues to emerge in the VCS and not all neighbourhoods currently have an offer. The council will continue to monitor emerging provision and will maintain a directory of hubs on its website.
- 6.5. Those warm hubs already in place in the VCS can provide a warm space plus some wrap around support and other benefits which include food, warm clothes etc. Our model must therefore include support for the VCS who are respected and trusted by the most vulnerable in our communities; we will assist with funding to help expand this provision. It may also be more plausible over time to move to a position where the VCS are the main provider of warm hubs in Crawley with support from the council. There is already evidence that residents are using these trusted sites, such as the

Free Shop warm space coffee mornings, currently operating one day a week on a fortnightly basis and attended by 69 residents on 12 October 2022.

- 6.6. The Council is aware that the VCS continues to mobilise with warm hubs. The Council will therefore manage its support to them accordingly ensuring that any funding it allocates to enable their provision is distributed fairly, according to need and by neighbourhood. The Council's aim is for provision that is balanced but acknowledging that it is imperative to provide the most support to areas of greatest deprivation as this is where the need and the impact of the cost of living is the most acute.
- 6.7. The Council will need to keep council provision under review in relation to availability in the VCS, for example some warm hub provision is currently term time only and so the Council will either look to offer further funding to enable school holiday provision at such locations or the Council will seek to mobilise additional council warm hub provision. The cost outlined for warm hub provision in 7.1 does not include the costs of any additional warm hub provision we may need to cater for in school holidays. As mentioned in 6.4 the VCS continue to mobilise with provision and we will react accordingly if there is need during school holidays.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. The cost of delivering council warm hub provision will be funded from WSCC funding that has been given to us to support with the cost of living. Based on the proposal for delivering council warm hubs shown in Appendix A, the cost of room hire at all venues is £28,612 for the period 28 November 2022 to 31st March 2023 based on band C charges. Approximate heating charges for all council facilities is £9,558, this is based on a charge of £6 per hour. In addition, the Council will need to factor in the cost of staff overtime where provision is offered outside of core business hours, this is shown at 8.4. The total cost of providing warm hubs is £78,170 this includes facility hire, heating charges and staffing.
- 7.2. Broadfield Community Centre is the only non-council venue where a charge will be compulsory and we have negotiated a reduced hourly hire rate given the frequency and duration of booking between November 2022 and March 2023, the total hire charge for the period is £9,681 (this is included within the £29,095 as stated in 7.1)
- 7.3. Paragraph 7.1 identifies costs of £78,170. An allocation of £75,000 towards the cost living crisis has been given by WSCC, this leaves a balance of £3,170. Bids have been made to the UK shared prosperity fund, if successful £40,000 is ringfenced towards the cost of living crisis. If this is not successful there is a reserve for connecting communities which can be utilised.
- 7.4. The potential loss of income for not charging community centre rates at band A and band B is shown below;
 - Loss of income for not charging at band A hire charges is £28,500.90
 - Loss of income for not charging at band B hire charges is £11,923.00 However it is unlikely that all the community centres would be let for the periods when the warm hubs were in use.
- 7.5. Venues to be used for council warm hubs are trusted spaces already used by communities, this is important for avoiding stigma. Funding will be allocated to cover the hire cost of the Council's own community centres, ensuring there is no detrimental effect on income generation. We will work positively with our grant funded organisations, delivering financial efficiency wherever possible. However, the Council must acknowledge the additional financial challenges and pressures these organisations are also facing.

7.6. Assistance to the VCS to deliver warm hubs provision, cost of living support and food provision including the foodbank could be made from the reserve for voluntary sector transition funding.

8. Staffing Implications

- 8.1. Council warm hubs will need to be staffed by appropriate council staff. Initially, each hub will need to have a minimum of two council staff delivering each session, although this may need to be more dependent on the hours of operation and size of venue. We will need to monitor demand at hubs and where necessary adjust the number of staff supporting each hub accordingly. At least one member of staff at each centre will need to have a current DBS check. For health and safety reasons hubs will always be operated by a minimum of two staff regardless of demand.
- 8.2. Although some centres have Wi-Fi provision, which would enable staff working in the centres to undertake work remotely if hubs are quiet, this will cause a level of disruption to existing work streams as we will be moving staff away from business as usual work and staff will only be able to undertake certain tasks such as admin work whilst working in hubs. If hubs are busy there will be no option to continue with any business as usual work for staff in those hubs. It is therefore important to recognise that the delivery of council hubs will have an impact although we will ensure staff resource it taken from across the organisation to minimise the impact in any one service area. The potential impact on the organisational resources and other priorities is a further reason for moving forward with a hybrid model of delivery as described above.
- 8.3. For centres with no Wi-Fi provision we will explore options for mobile hot spots to allow staff to work (if there is capacity to do so). Enabling remote access will also assist with information retrieval to help signpost residents to information about the cost of living where needed. This will be an additional cost to that set out in 7.1.
- 8.4. The Council will need to factor in staff overtime for council warm hubs operating outside of core hours. Whilst there will be a range of staff on differing grades who will support hubs a budget of approximately £40,000 is needed to cover overtime provision, this is an estimate based on the top of salary grade H (spinal point 27) including on costs after the expected pay award and initial provision show in Appendix A. The cost of this will be covered from WSCC funding provided to us to support our cost of living response, cost of living reserves and where appropriate from any funding assigned through the Shared Prosperity Fund, as outlined in 7.3.

9. Equalities Implications

- 9.1. Warm hubs will be inclusive and accessible venues. Although they have been developed with the most vulnerable sections of our communities in mind, the service will be advertised across Crawley and all residents will be welcomed.
- 9.2. There will be a positive impact on all protected characteristics
- 9.3. The only limitation to be considered are potential language barriers if a resident presents at the centre whose first language is not English. It would not be feasible to provide translation support at hubs, but we can consider individual needs if we need to undertake more in-depth work with a household presenting at hubs.

10. Risks

- 10.1 If the Council fails to take forward its own warm hub provision and/or support the VCS to enable provision, the likelihood is that it will incur reputational risks around its lack of response to this emerging and growing issue of families in crisis as a result of the rising cost of living.
- 10.2 A full risk assessment will need to be completed ahead of opening council hubs, this will cover both resident and staff safety issues around the operation of warm hubs and will include staff safety, lone working and escalation of safeguarding concerns.

11. Communications Plan

- 11.1 To ensure maximum utilisation of warm hubs the Council will devise an inclusive communications plan ensuring that the Council is advertising hubs using a range of methods and locations, notably this will include:
 - Media release to launch hubs
 - Warm hub directory on our webpages
 - Social media posts covering locations, dates and times of council and VCS warm hub provision
 - Internal communications to promote and encourage word of mouth with customers
 - Public poster campaign, including distribution to council noticeboards and community buildings
 - Promotion at community development networks and forums

Report author and contact officer:

Amanda Kendall (Head of Crawley Homes) amanda.kendall@crawley.gov.uk 01293 438521

Appendix A
Weekly council provision by neighbourhood
Provision is weekly, unless specified.

Day	Neighbourhood &	Hub	AM	PM	Cost
	Location	Provider	provision	Provision	
Monday	Broadfield				
	Broadfield	CBC		1pm-5pm	£48
	Community Centre				
	Bewbush				
	Bewbush Centre	CBC	9am -12pm	12pm-5pm	£100.80
	Langley Green				
	Langley Green	CBC	9am-12pm	12pm-3pm	£40.80
	Community Centre		'	' '	
	Ifield				
	Ifield West	CBC		3pm-7pm	£53.60
	Community Centre			' '	
	Tilgate				
	Tilgate Community	CBC	9am-12pm	12pm-	£113.90
	Centre			5.30pm	
Tuesday	Broadfield				
. accuay	Broadfield	CBC	9am-12pm	12pm-	£78
	Community Centre		σαιτι-τεριτι	3.30pm	2.0
	Langley Green			0.00pm	+
	Langley Green	CBC	9am-12pm	12pm-3pm	£40.80
	Community Centre		βαιτι- τΖΡΙΤΙ	120111-00111	270.00
	Ifield				
	Ifield West	CBC	+	3pm-9pm	£80.40
	Community Centre	CBC		Spin-apin	200.40
Madaaada.	•				+
Wednesday	Broadfield	000	0 40	40.0	0444
	Broadfield	CBC	9am-12pm	12pm-9pm	£144
	Community Centre				
_	Langley Green	000	10	1000	0.10.00
То	Langley Green	CBC	9am-12pm	12pm-3pm	£40.80
commence	Community Centre				
14.12.22					
Thursday	Broadfield				
	Broadfield	CBC	9am-12pm	12pm-	£93
	Community Centre			4.45pm	
	Bewbush				
Excludes	Bewbush Centre	CBC	9am -12pm	12pm-5pm	£100.80
01.12.22,					
08.12.22,					
05.01.23,					
19.01.23,					
02.02.23,					
02.03.23					
11.03.23					
	Ifield				
	Ifield West	CBC		3pm-9pm	£80.40
	Community Centre			(fortnightly)	
	Furnace Green				
То	Furnace Green	CBC		3pm-9pm	£80.40
commence	Community Centre			1	
08.12.22	1				

Friday	Broadfield				
•	Broadfield Community Centre	CBC	9am-12pm	12pm- 5.30pm	£102
	Bewbush				
	Bewbush Centre	CBC	9am -12pm	12pm-4pm	£88.20
	Ifield				
	Ifield West Community Centre	CBC		3pm-9pm	£80.40
	Tilgate				
	Tilgate Community Centre	CBC	9am-12pm	12pm-6pm	£120.60
Saturday	Broadfield				
•	Broadfield Community Centre	CBC		4.15pm- 10pm	£69
Sunday	Furnace Green				
Excludes 04.12.22 & 22.01.23	Furnace Green Community Centre	CBC		1pm-9pm	£107.20

Appendix BWeekly Council provision, council, VCS and WSCC provision combined Provision is weekly, unless specified.

Day	Neighbourhood &	Hub	AM	PM	Cost
	Location	Provider	provision	Provision	
Monday	Broadfield				
	Broadfield	VCS	9.30am -		N/A
	Community Centre		12.30pm		
	 Monday Munch 				
	Broadfield	CBC		1pm-5pm	£72
	Community Centre				
	Broadfield Library	WSCC	10am-12pm	12pm-5pm	N/A
			·		
	Bewbush				
	Bewbush Centre	CBC	9am -12pm	12pm-5pm	£100.80
	Langley Green				
	Langley Green	CBC	9am-12pm	12pm-5pm	£54.40
	Community Centre				
	West Green				
	Crawley Baptist	VCS	TBC	TBC	N/A
	Church				
	Ifield				
	Ifield West	CBC		3pm-7pm	£53.60
	Community Centre				
	Tilgate				
	Tilgate Community	CBC	9am-12pm	12pm-6pm	£120.60
	Centre				
	Furnace Green				
	St Andrews	VCS	10am-12pm	12pm-4pm	N/A
	Church,		Term time	Term time	
	Cornerstone Cafe				
	Town Centre				
	Library	WSCC	9am-12pm	12pm-7pm	N/A
Tuesday	Broadfield				
	Broadfield	CBC	9am-12pm	12pm-	£117
	Community Centre			3.30pm	
	Broadfield Library	WSCC	10am-12pm	12pm-5pm	N/A
	Langley Green				
	Langley Green	CBC	9am-12pm	12pm-5pm	£54.40
	Community Centre				
	West Green				
	Charis Centre	VCS	9.30am- 12pm	12pm- 4.30pm	N/A
	Crawley Baptist Church	VCS	TBC	TBC	N/A
	Ifield				
	Ifield West	CBC		3pm-9pm	£80.40
	Community Centre			' '	

	Furnace Green				
	St Andrews Church, Cornerstone Cafe	VCS	10am-12pm Term time		N/A
	Town Centre				
	Library	WSCC	9am-12pm	12pm-7pm	N/A
	St John's Love Your Neighbour	VCS	10am-12pm	12pm-2pm	N/A
Wednesday	Broadfield				
	Christian Fellowship	VCS	9.15am – 11am		N/A
	Broadfield Community Centre	CBC	9am-12pm	12pm-9pm	£216
	Broadfield Library	WSCC	10am-12pm	12pm-5pm	N/A
	Bewbush				
	Bewbush Centre, Free Shop	VCS	9.30am- 11.30am (fortnightly)		N/A
	Langley Green				
	Langley Green Community Centre	CBC	9am-12pm	12pm-5pm	£54.40
	West Green				
	Charis Centre	VCS	9.30am- 12pm	12pm- 4.30pm	N/A
	Crawley Baptist Church	VCS	TBC	TBC	N/A
	Furnace Green				
	At Andrews, Cornerstone Café	VCS	10am-12pm Term time	12pm-4pm Term time	N/A
	Town Centre				
	Library	WSCC	9am-12pm	12pm-7pm	N/A
	St John's Love Your Neighbour	VCS	10am-12pm	12pm-2pm	N/A
Thursday	Broadfield				
	Broadfield Community Centre	CBC	9am-12pm	12pm- 4.45pm	£139.50
	Broadfield Library	WSCC	10am-12pm	12pm-5pm	N/A
	Bewbush				
	Bewbush Centre	CBC	9am -12pm	12pm-5pm	£100.80
	West Green				
	Charis Centre	VCS	9.30am- 12pm	12pm- 4.30pm	N/A
	Crawley Baptist Church	VCS	TBC	TBC	N/A
	Ifield Ifield West Community Centre	CBC		3pm-9pm (fortnightly)	£80.40
	Furnace Green			(iorangilay)	
	Furnace Green Community Centre	CBC		3pm-9pm	£80.40

	Library St John's Love	WSCC	9am-12pm	12pm-7pm	NI/A
				IZPIII-/PIII	N/A
		VCS	10am-12pm	12pm-2pm	N/A
E : 1	Your Neighbour		•		
Friday	Broadfield				
	Broadfield Community Centre	CBC	9am-12pm	12pm- 5.30pm	£153
	Broadfield Library	WSCC	10am-12pm	12pm-5pm	N/A
	Bewbush				
	Bewbush Centre	CBC	9am -12pm	12pm-4pm	£88.20
	West Green				
	Charis Centre	VCS	9.30am- 12pm	12pm- 4.30pm	N/A
	Ifield				
	Ifield West	CBC		3pm-9pm	£80.40
	Community Centre				
	Tilgate				
	Tilgate Community Centre	CBC	9am-12pm	12pm-6pm	£120.60
	Furnace Green				
	St Andrews Church, Cornerstone Cafe	VCS	10am-12pm Term time	12pm-4pm Term time	N/A
	Town Centre				
	Library	WSCC	9am-12pm	12pm-7pm	N/A
	St John's Love Your Neighbour	VCS	10am-12pm	12pm-2pm	N/A
Coturdov	Broadfield				
Saturday	Broadfield	CBC		4.15pm-	£109.25
	Community Centre			10pm	
	Library	WSCC	10am-2pm		N/A
	Furnace Green				1
	Furnace Green Community Centre	CBC	9am-12pm (3 rd Saturday each month)	12pm-9pm (3 rd Saturday each month)	£160.80
	St Andrews Church, Poppins	VCS	10am-12pm (1 st Saturday each month)		N/A
	Town Centre				
	Library	WSCC	9am-12pm	12pm-5pm	N/A
	St John's Warm Space	VCS	9am-12pm		
Sunday	Furnace Green				
	Furnace Green Community Centre	CBC		1pm-9pm	£107.20