

Cost of Living Spotlight Review: Progress report on recommendations

Report of the Head of Communities

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

1) Recommendation

That the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny (CIRS) Committee be asked to note this update relating to the progress of the recommendations contained within the Cost of Living Spotlight Review report (March 2023); the CIRS Scrutiny Committee requested this update at the time the report was finalised.

2) Cost of Living Spotlight Review - Background / Introduction

2.1 One of the Council's key priorities in its Strategic Plan 2021-2025 is to "tackle poverty and inequality" and the Annual Action Plan 2022-23 focuses "to give extra help and support to vulnerable people and families disproportionately affected by the pandemic, or struggling to cope with poverty, inequality and the emerging cost-of-living crisis" (Devon County Council, 2022).

2.2 As local Councillors and community champions, Members of the Council expressed their concern for vulnerable residents with the recent (2022) sharp increase in the cost of living. This included inflationary pressures on necessities such as food as well as significant increases in the cost of fuel and energy. Members also sought to understand the impact that cost-of-living increases are having on Devon County Council's (DCC) staff. The Spotlight Review was established in the winter of 2022, to develop a strategic understanding of these challenges across Devon and to see if there was scope to improve the offer and support to residents and community groups, as well as to ensure that the Council as a corporate entity is doing everything possible to support staff.

2.3 The Spotlight Review was initiated and led by the CIRS Committee, with an invitation to Scrutiny Members across the Council to participate in the Spotlight Review in recognition of the cross-cutting impact of the cost-of-living crisis, and to draw on Member experience across all three Scrutiny Committees.

2.4 The scope of the review was as follows:

- To examine the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on Devon residents.
- To gain an understanding of the role of the Council in supporting Devon residents.
- To identify and explore practical solutions that could be implemented by the Council so to reduce this impact and protect those at risk of falling into poverty.

- To examine the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the provision of Council services.

2.5 The Cost of Living Spotlight Review took place on Monday 19th December 2022.

2.6 The Spotlight Review asked the CIRS Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet to endorse and act on the recommendations (**see Appendix 1**) of the Review, with a report on progress against the recommendations to go to CIRS Scrutiny Committee in 6 months.

2.7 Cabinet considered the Spotlight Review report (April 2023): [Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 12th April, 2023, 10.30 am - Democracy in Devon](#) Cabinet thanked CIRS Scrutiny Committee for its interest in this area and its thorough and helpful report; accepting the recommendations within the report.

2.8 As requested by the Spotlight Review, this paper provides an update on the recommendations (**Appendix 1**) within the Cost of Living Spotlight Review report.

2.9 Scrutiny members may find value in considering this report in the wider context of the Public Health, Communities, and Prosperity mid-year report; also being considered by Scrutiny today. The latter report provides further information on the wider activities, functions and impact of the service area.

3) Update on Recommendations

This report provides an update on the recommendations (shown in **Appendix 1**) within the Spotlight Review:

3.1 All Councillors to have a resource list and to be invited to subscribe to Devon Funding News to keep up to date on available resources.

An update relating to 3.1 is covered under the update in 3.2 below.

3.2 Wider and regular publicity of the Household Support Fund (HSF)

Members were provided with a Cost of Living resource list, and were informed about and invited to subscribe to Devon Funding News. Regular and wider publicity has been produced and distributed on the HSF and other initiatives relating to the cost of living crisis; such as the Holiday & Activity Food Programme and the Growing Communities Fund (community grants to build capacity and capability).

Please refer to **Appendix 2** outlining a chronological list of related communication activity.

Updates on the deployment of the Household Support Fund 4 and the Growing Communities Fund can also be seen in **Appendix 3**.

3.3 Write to the LGA to join the lobbying for a local government discount card, similar to the Blue Light scheme for health and social care workers, for all Devon County Council staff in recognition of their valuable role in society.

At the time Cabinet considered and responded to the Spotlight Review report, it was noted that in relation to recommendation 2, the Council was in the process of procuring a staff-wide discount scheme. The new employee benefits platform, covering discount scheme and other benefits, was launched on Monday 9th October. The launch was covered in the staff e-briefing (Inside Devon), with further details on the new DCC staff-wide discount scheme on the DCC staff webpages.

3.4 That the Council writes to Districts to identify if there is scope to align council tax reduction schemes across Devon

A number of live conversations are currently underway between Team Devon County (led by the Head of Economy, Enterprise & Skills) and Districts in relation to the possible alignment of various Council Tax relief initiatives. Currently, priority is being given to developing and aligning county-wide council tax relief and support for care leavers.

3.5 That the Council ask Government to intervene and reduce the energy price cap at the end of March.

At the time Cabinet considered and responded to the Spotlight Review report, it was noted in relation to recommendation 4, that the Government had announced recently, in the Budget Statement on 15th March 2023, that the Energy Price Guarantee would remain at its current rate for an additional three months from April 1st until the end of June 2023; with energy prices continuing to fall.

3.6 Ask Government to review the current mechanisms for supporting those in need.

When Cabinet considered and responded to the Spotlight Review report, the Government had reviewed recently the current mechanisms for supporting those in need, and had issued guidance and funding allocations relating to a new Household Support Fund (HSF No.4), which runs for a 12 month period (from April 2023 to March 2024).

Devon's approach to deployment of HSF4 can be found on DCC's website: [Household Support Fund \(HSF4\): Devon's approach | Cost of living | Devon County Council](#)

At the same time the Government announced further cost of living direct household support payments: [Help for Households - Get government cost of living support](#)

4) Options / Alternatives

This is an information paper updating CIRS Scrutiny Committee on progress against the Cost of Living Spotlight Review recommendations, and therefore has no specific options/alternatives that are not already covered by or subsumed within the detailed policies or actions referred to therein.

5) Consultations / Representations / Technical Data

This is an information paper updating CIRS Scrutiny Committee on progress against the Cost of Living Spotlight Review recommendations, and therefore has no specific

consultations/representations/technical data that are not already covered by or subsumed within the detailed policies or actions referred to therein.

6) Strategic Plan

The Council's Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025 - <https://www.devon.gov.uk/strategic-plan>

One of the Council's key priorities in its Strategic Plan 2021-2025 is to “tackle poverty and inequality” and the Annual Action Plan 2022-23 focuses “to give extra help and support to vulnerable people and families disproportionately affected by the pandemic, or struggling to cope with poverty, inequality and the emerging cost-of-living crisis” (Devon County Council, 2022). The Cost of Living Spotlight Review in December 2022 aligned to these strategic priorities.

7) Financial Considerations

The pre-existing communication resources of DCC and its partners are utilised to promote the household support available in Devon, as well as other cost of living related initiatives. This Report has no specific financial implications that are not already covered by or subsumed within the detailed policies or actions referred to therein.

8) Legal Considerations

This is an information paper updating CIRS Scrutiny Committee on progress against the Cost of Living Spotlight Review recommendations, and therefore has no specific legal considerations not already covered by or subsumed within the detailed policies or actions referred to therein.

9) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)

This is an information paper updating CIRS Scrutiny Committee on progress against the Cost of Living Spotlight Review recommendations, and therefore has no specific environmental impact considerations, that are not already covered by or subsumed within the detailed policies or actions referred to therein.

10) Equality Considerations

No executive decisions are required, as this is an information paper updating CIRS Scrutiny Committee on progress against the Cost of Living Spotlight Review recommendations, and therefore has no specific equality considerations, that are not already covered by or subsumed within the detailed policies or actions referred to therein.

The essence of the Cost of Living Spotlight Review, and the other detailed policies or actions referenced within it and this update, such as the HSF or the GCF initiatives, aim to provide financial support to those struggling financially to make ends meet and to build

individual and community resilience in that regard. Updates on the deployment of the Household Support Fund and the Growing Communities Fund can be seen in **Appendix 3**.

11) Risk Management Considerations

No specific risks have been identified in the provision of this update report on the Cost of Living Spotlight Review recommendations.

12) Summary / Conclusions / Reasons for Recommendations

The Cost of Living Spotlight Review took place on Monday 19th December 2022.

The Spotlight Review asked the CIRS Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet to endorse and act on the recommendations (see **Appendix 1**) of the Review, with a report on progress against the recommendations to the CIRS Scrutiny Committee in 6 months.

Cabinet considered the Spotlight Review report (April 2023): [Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 12th April, 2023, 10.30 am - Democracy in Devon](#). Cabinet thanked CIRS Scrutiny Committee for its interest in this area and its thorough and helpful report; and accepted the recommendations within the report.

As requested by the Cost of Living Spotlight Review, this paper provides an update on the recommendations within the Cost of Living Spotlight Review report.

Simon Kitchen
Head of Communities

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Communities: Councillor Roger Croad

Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers

The Cost of Living Spotlight Review is published on the Council's website at [Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 12th April, 2023, 10.30 am - Democracy in Devon](#) .

Date March 2023

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Cost of Living Spotlight Review Update - Final

Appendix 1 to SC/23/6 – Cost of Living Spotlight Review Recommendations

The Spotlight Review asked the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services (CIRS) Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet to endorse and act on the recommendations below, with a report on the progress against the recommendations to the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee in 6 months:

	Intention	Recommendation	Lead
1.	Ensure that people and organisations who are eligible are making use of resources they are entitled to.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. All Councillors to have a resource list and to be invited to subscribe to Devon Funding News to keep up to date on available resources. b. Wider and regular publicity of the Household Support Fund (HSF). 	Communities team in liaison with comms and District Councils
2.	The Council champions the wellbeing of Council employees.	Write to the LGA to join the lobbying for a local government discount card, similar to the Blue Light scheme for health and social care workers, for all Devon County Council staff in recognition of their valuable role in society.	The Leader
3.	The Council supports partners in their efforts to help vulnerable people.	That the Council writes to Districts to identify if there is scope to align council tax reduction schemes across Devon.	Cabinet
4.	To help alleviate the energy crisis	That the councils ask Government to intervene and reduce the energy price cap at the end of March.	Cabinet
5.	To alleviate poverty	Ask Government to review the current mechanisms for supporting those in need.	Cabinet

Appendix 2 to SC/23/6 – Chronological list of related communication activity up until 15/09/2023

Date	Topic	From Whom	Audience	Links
22/02/2023	HSF4 Devon's approach	DCC Webpage	General Public	Household Support Fund (HSF4): Devon's approach Cost of living Devon County Council
14/03/2023	GCF	Devon News	General Public	More funding to help with the rising costs of living - News (devon.gov.uk)
16/03/2023	HSF4	Devon News	General Public	Councils to receive additional funds to help support households with rising food and energy costs - News (devon.gov.uk)
17/03/2023	HSF4/GCF	Devon Connect	General Public	Devolution deal for Devon, Plymouth and Torbay gets closer; Support to help with rising costs of living; Rein in your speed for horses; More money announced for roads; and help keep Devon clean this Spring (govdelivery.com)
22/03/2023	Support Armed Forces Community	Devon News	General Public	Devon reaffirms its support for the armed forces community - News
01/04/2023	GCF	DCC Webpage	General Public	Growing Communities Fund - Communities (devon.gov.uk)
01/04/2023	HSF4 & support for Cost of Living (COL) crisis	CA Devon webpage	General Public	Projects - Citizens Advice Devon (cabdevon.org.uk)
01/04/2023	Energy Saving Devon	Devon News	General Public	Are you eligible for free energy efficiency improvements to your home? - News (devon.gov.uk)
02/04/2023	HSF4 & support for COL	EDDC	General Public	Hardship and Household Support fund - East Devon
03/04/2023	HSF4 & support for COL	ECC	General Public	Cost of living support - Exeter City Council
04/04/2023	HSF4 & support for COL	MDDC	General Public	Help with food and energy costs - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK
05/04/2023	HSF4 & support for COL	NDDC	General Public	Benefits and grants (northdevon.gov.uk)
06/04/2023	HSF4 & support for COL	SHDC	General Public	Household Support Fund - South Hams District Council

07/04/2023	HSF4 & support for COL	Teignbridge DC	General Public	Cost of living help and support - Teignbridge District Council
08/04/2023	HSF4 & support for COL	Torrige DC	General Public	Cost of Living Help Torrige District Council
09/04/2023	HSF4 & support for COL	WDDC	General Public	Household Support Fund - West Devon Borough Council
20/04/2023	COL, Health & Social Care	Provider Engagement Network	Adult Health & Social Care	PEN weekly newsletter 20 April 2023 (govdelivery.com)
24/04/2023	DEF	Members' Bulletin	County Members	Members' Bulletin: Monday 24 April 2023 (govdelivery.com)
16/05/2023	HSF4 Food Fuel & More	DCF Newsletter	Partners	Food Fuel & More - Devon Community Foundation (devoncf.com)
18/05/2023	HSF4 Early Help	Devon News	Partners	https://www.devon.gov.uk/eys/early-help-household-support-fund/
19/05/2023	HSF4	Early Years and Childcare	Partners	I need to... – Education and Families (devon.gov.uk)
08/06/2023	COL, Health & Social Care	Provider Engagement Network	Adult Health & Social Care	PEN weekly newsletter 8 June 2023 (govdelivery.com)
09/06/2023	HSF4	Devon Connect	General Public	Amber alert issued for this weekend; We're back in black; love to ride your recycled cycle and more funding available to help with the cost of living (govdelivery.com)
15/06/2023	HAF	Devon News	General Public	Free activities and meals available to eligible children over the Summer holiday - News (devon.gov.uk)
20/06/2023	Work club for refugees	Devon News	General Public	New libraries Work Club launch for Refugee Week - News (devon.gov.uk)
29/06/2023	COL, Health & Social Care	Provider Engagement Network	Adult Health & Social Care	PEN weekly newsletter 29 June 2023 (govdelivery.com)
29/06/2023	HSF4 Early Help	Devon News	Partners	Early help household support fund - Information for childcare providers (devon.gov.uk)

06/07/2023	COL & Community Resilience	DCC Strategic Lead: Communities	County Members	An email was sent to all DCC Members covering key information resources related to the cost of living crisis and community resilience.
10/07/2023	COL	West Devon DC	General Public	Support Directory - West Devon Borough Council
10/07/2023	COL	South Hams DC	General Public	Support Directory - South Hams District Council
12/07/2023	Housing crisis	Devon News	General Public	Experts join together to act as powerful voice to solve Devon's housing crisis - News
17/07/2023	GCF	Devon News	General Public	Grants available to groups giving their community a helping hand - News (devon.gov.uk)
18/07/2023	HAF	Devon News	General Public	Record number of children in Devon receive summer holiday food support - News
28/07/2023	HAF	Devon Connect	General Public	Autumn adult learners programme; Holiday activity places available; Grants to help local communities; Summer health tips; and Free summer challenge (govdelivery.com)
28/07/2023	GCF	Inside Devon	General Public	Inside Devon - Friday 28 July - Major changes to our finance system; Have you registered to park at County Hall? (govdelivery.com) !
02/08/2023	GCF	DALC	General Public	#33 2023 E-bulletin (mailchi.mp)
04/08/2023	HAF	Inside Devon	General Public	Inside Devon - Friday 4 August - Let's Move summer challenge, data protection and more! (govdelivery.com)
04/08/2023	GCF, Rural poverty grants and Housing Benefit	Teignbridge DC	General Public	Residents' update: keeping you informed (govdelivery.com)
04/08/2023	Qtr 1 April – June 2023 report	Citizens Advice Devon	General Public	"We have continued to communicate key messages to people in Devon, particularly about local issues and the help that is available, through social media, parish magazines, local media advice columns and articles. We were delighted to be invited to speak on BBC Radio Devon on the 23 rd June."
11/08/2023	Home efficiency scheme	EDDC	General Public	Residents' Update - Friday, 11 August (govdelivery.com)
11/08/2023	HSF4	Teignbridge DC	General Public	Residents' update: keeping you informed (govdelivery.com)

11/08/2023	Support grants/schemes for careers, training and finance	Torrige DC	General Public	Torrige Business Bulletin - August 2023 (govdelivery.com)
17/08/2023	Devon Food Insecurity Summit	Devon Food Partnership	General Public	Devon Food Partnership Newsletter August 2023 (govdelivery.com)
31/08/2023	COL, Health & Social Care	Provider Engagement Network	Adult Health & Social Care	PEN weekly newsletter 31 August 2023 (govdelivery.com)
01/09/2023	Free School Meals; COL	South Hams DC	General Public	https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKSWDEVON/bulletins/36dbf53
01/09/2023	Free School Meals; COL	West Devon DC	General Public	https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKSWDEVON/bulletins/36dbfd5
01/09/2023	COL Event + Tax-Free childcare	Teignbridge DC	General Public	Residents' update: keeping you informed (govdelivery.com)
08/09/2023	COL Event + Tax-Free childcare	Teignbridge DC	General Public	Residents' update: keeping you informed (govdelivery.com)
08/09/2023	HSF	West Devon DC	General Public	Latest News from West Devon Borough Council (govdelivery.com)
08/09/2023	HSF	South Hams DC	General Public	Latest News from South Hams District Council (govdelivery.com)
15/09/2023	Care Leavers/Community Fridges	Connect Me DCC Newsletter	General Public	Where's your nearest community fridge? New pilot will bring accommodation for care leavers; Improving services for children with SEND; Apply now for secondary school places (govdelivery.com)
15/09/2023	COL / HSF	Early Help Newsletter	Practitioners	E-bulletin received by subscribers, covering COL/HSF related support via Early Help

KEY

HSF = Household Support Fund
GCF = Growing Communities Fund
DALC = Devon Association of Local Councils

DCF = Devon Communities Foundation
HAF = Holiday & Activities Fund
DEF = Devon Elevation Fund

Appendix 3 to SC/23/6 – Updates on the Household Support Fund (No.4) and Growing Communities Fund

HSF4 support is targeted at those most in immediate need and to help to address the significantly rising cost of living. The following data covers the deployment of the HSF4 up to and including 31st August 2023:

6) Total spend (£) split by household composition				
Households with children (£)	Households with pensioners (£)	Households with a disabled person (£)	Other households (£)	Total amount provided to vulnerable households (by household composition) (£)
£ 3,004,156.03	£ 295,093.60	£ 373,891.29	£ 556,904.88	£ 4,230,045.80

10) Total volume of awards split by household composition				
Households with children	Households with pensioners	Households with a disabled person	Other households	Total volume of awards (by household composition)
29720	1932	4332	4782	40766

Growing Communities Fund 2022-23 and 2023-24



676.34K

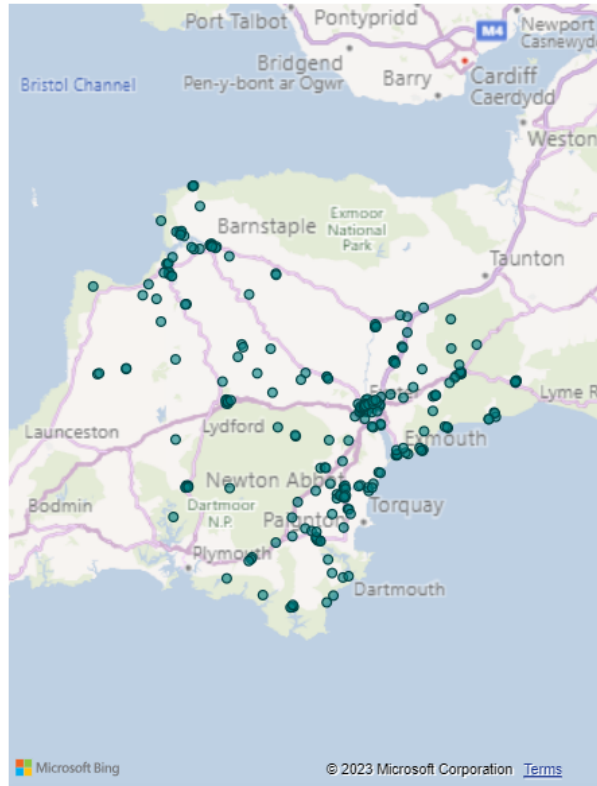
Amount Agreed to fund

353

Number of grant awards issued

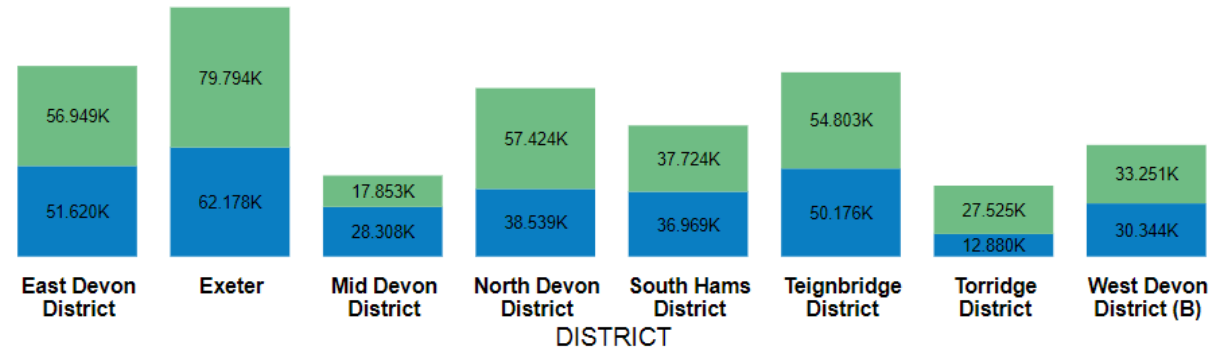
Location information

Location

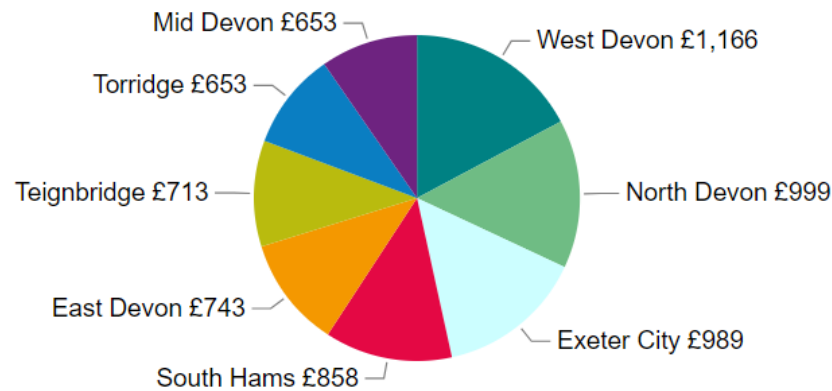


19/09/2023
Data last Refreshed

Amount Agreed to fund



Grant value per 1k of population by District



Amount Agreed to fund by Year

