

Written response to question from Councillor Carla Hofman:

Question:

To the Lead Cabinet Member for communities

Can the lead member provide an update on the support the council has provided to local people on the cost of living crisis following the approval by cabinet of a package of measures late last year?

Response from Councillor Bill Handley, Lead Cabinet Member for Communities:

We've heard a great deal about the cost of living crisis, so I won't labour the point here except to describe the things that the council has been doing to mitigate the effects on our residents. We have resolved to identify and target our response to those people who are just about managing – in work and not receiving government benefits but finding themselves in financial difficulties due to recent events.

Late last year the council allocated a £400,000 budget to help mitigate the effects of the rising cost of living and then moved quickly to implement a number of support measures.

Although this Council has provided vital funding for a range of programmes that I will touch on in a moment, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System which provided funding for the Warm Hubs that popped up in many villages in the early winter. More about them in a moment.

Rather than go through the full programme of measures run by the council, I want to highlight three main things.

Firstly, we made available 400 electric blankets and slow cookers to reduce the cost of cooking food and of keeping warm and, using the council's own data, we targeted those who are just about managing. We have had some heart-warming letters of thanks.

Secondly, warm hubs. When the council made the decision late last year to increase funding, we went from trying to deliver just a handful of hubs to 25 of them. This happened in a matter of weeks. Cambridgeshire ACRE have been instrumental in this as our partner, but once again our community volunteers have made the difference as the hubs can only work with their help and I'd like to thank them all.

And finally, food parcels. Our food parcel scheme provides one week of food to the door without having to go through any complex application process. We are looking to expand this scheme and I would urge members to refer people in their wards who they think would benefit. Again, this campaign is having a big impact on people's lives.

Members will have seen a key decision notice published for Cabinet in March where we will be assessing the next phase of our cost-of-living support. I'm proud of all of the work that has been undertaken by officers, partners and volunteers on this and I look forward to working with our dedicated officers and partners on the next steps. to continue to support vulnerable South Cambs people through this very difficult time.