

A meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS)** will be held in **CIVIC SUITE, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN** on **THURSDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2023** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

## **AGENDA**

### **APOLOGIES**

#### **1. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 6)**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) meeting held on 7th September 2023.

**Contact Officer: B Buddle**  
**01480 388008**

#### **2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary and other interests in relation to any Agenda item.

**Contact Officer: B Buddle**  
**01480 388008**

#### **3. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 7 - 18)**

- a) The Panel are to receive and comment on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme and current Notice of Key Executive Decisions.
- b) Members to discuss future planning of items for the Work Programme

**Contact Officer: B Buddle**  
**01480 388008**

#### 4. **SUPPORT TO THE FINANCIALLY VULNERABLE** (Pages 19 - 34)

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider and comment on the approach set out in the report.

*Executive Councillor: B Pitt*

**Contact Officer: P Fox  
01480 388530**

27 day of September 2023

**Michelle Sacks**

Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service

#### **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests.**

Further information on [Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests is available in the Council's Constitution](#)

#### **Filming, Photography and Recording (including Live Streaming) at Council Meetings**

This meeting will be filmed for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's YouTube site. The whole of the meeting will be filmed, except where there are confidential or exempt items. If you make a representation to the meeting you will be deemed to have consented to being filmed. By entering the meeting you are also consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes. If you have any queries regarding the streaming of Council meetings, please contact Democratic Services on 01480 388169.

The District Council also permits filming, recording and the taking of photographs at its meetings that are open to the public. Arrangements for these activities should operate in accordance with [guidelines](#) agreed by the Council.

**Please contact Mrs Beccy Buddle, Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny), Tel No: 01480 388008/e-mail [Beccy.Buddle@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:Beccy.Buddle@huntingdonshire.gov.uk) if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Committee/Panel.**

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the [District Council's website](#).

**Emergency Procedure**

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.

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## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS) held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Thursday, 7 September 2023.

PRESENT: Councillor J E Kerr – Chair.

Councillors M J Burke, S Bywater, S Cawley, S J Criswell, N J Hunt, M Kadewere, C Lowe and D J Shaw.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors T Alban and J E Harvey.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor S W Ferguson.

### 17. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6th July 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair. The Minutes of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 6th July 2023 and 10th August 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 18. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

### 19. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Panel received and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which has been appended in the Minute Book) which has been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st September 2023 to 31st December 2023.

### 20. ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

By means of a report and presentation by the Strategic Communications Manager (copies of which were appended in the Minute Book) the Engagement Principles Report was presented to the Panel.

Councillor Criswell observed, that although a great piece of work, the principles within the report were very generic and could be applied to many Councils across the Country. He felt that further development could be undertaken to make this more relevant to the Council and District, which would also enable residents to better understand the aims and ideals of the Joint Administration. The Panel heard that the generic style of the Principles had been developed from the Government's best practice guidelines on this subject.

The flowchart was praised for its clarity by Councillor Shaw, who requested that this be developed to show specific consultees to provide better signposting within the community.

Following a question from Councillor Hunt, it was acknowledged that engagement across all demographics within the community can be challenging, however this communication would continue to be developed to ensure as wide a reach as possible.

The Panel praised an excellent piece of work and in general felt that this area of work was being developed in the right direction.

Following the discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the comments would be passed back to the team for their consideration and for the report to progress to Cabinet.

## **21. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

With the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was presented to the Panel.

The Panel advised that there were several areas where they would like to receive an update at a future meeting and it was agreed that the Work Programme would be updated to reflect these topics.

Members expressed interest in the following areas, which are to be added to the Programme along with detail of how these can be progressed;

- GP waiting times;
- The issue of concrete affecting public buildings, can an update be provided on how the affects the building at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital;
- Lack of NHS Dentists in the District;
- Hydrogen Vehicles;
- Green Bin Subscription service implementation;
- Alternative Land Management follow up report;
- Environmental side of planning – such as requirements for renewable energy, green spaces;
- Corporate quarterly performance reports;
- Engagement with Parish Councils and development of that relationship – example given that no statutory obligation to advise Parishes of licencing applications within the Parish; and
- Great Fen project update.

*7.25pm Cllr M Burke entered the meeting.*

Chair

## Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023-24

| <b>Performance and Growth Agenda Items</b> |  |                        |  |
|--|--|------------------------|--|
| <b>Meeting Date</b>                        | <b>Pre-Scrutiny</b>  | <b>Scrutiny Review</b> | <b>Task and Finish Groups Working Groups</b>   |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> November 2023              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk Management Strategy</li> <li>• Performance Management Framework</li> <li>• Corporate Performance Report 2023/24 Q2</li> <li>• Finance Performance Report 2023/24 Q2</li> <li>• Treasury Management Six Months Performance Review</li> </ul>  |                        |  |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> December 2023              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure Funding Statement 2022/23</li> <li>• Market Towns Programme – Winter Update</li> </ul>   |                        |  |
| 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2024              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final 2024/25 Budget and Medium - Term Financial Strategy (2025/26 to 2028/29) including Capital programme</li> <li>• 2024/25 Treasury Management, Capital and Investment Strategies</li> <li>• Financial Performance Report 2023/24 Q3</li> <li>• Corporate Performance Report 2023/24 Q3</li> </ul> |                        |  |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2024                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market Towns Programme – Spring Update</li> </ul>   |                        |  |
| Unscheduled/Pending Further                |  |                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market Towns Programme</li> <li>• Business Development</li> </ul> |

## Environment, Communities and Partnerships Agenda Items

| Meeting Date                  | Pre-Scrutiny   | Scrutiny Review  | Task and Finish Groups<br>Working Groups   |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redesign of Council Tax Support Scheme</li> <li>• Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Garden Waste Subscription Service – Parish Council Engagement Update</li> <li>• Tree Planting on A14</li> </ul>   |  |
| 7 <sup>th</sup> December 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non Domestic Rates Rural Settlements List</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open Spaces Update</li> <li>• Flooding Management Update</li> </ul>   |  |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> January 2024  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update on Reducing the Carbon Impact of Council Facilities</li> <li>• Update on Alternative Land Management Scheme</li> </ul>   |  |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non Domestic Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy</li> </ul>                                  |  |  |
| Unscheduled                   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GP Waiting Times</li> <li>• Issue of concrete affecting public buildings – specifically Hinchingsbrooke Hospital</li> <li>• Lack of NHS Dentists within the District</li> <li>• Corporate performance reports</li> <li>• Great Fen Project update</li> <li>• Romans Edge Lettings Plan</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with Parish Councils and development of relationship</li> <li>• Hydrogen Vehicles</li> <li>• Environmental impacts on planning – renewable energy, green spaces</li> </ul> |



## Task and Finish Groups

### Performance and Growth

#### Review of External Appointments to Outside Organisations

**Membership:** Cllrs S Cawley, S J Corney, I D Gardener and S A Howell

**Progress:**

**Summer 2022:** Terms of Reference have been established. Questionnaire has been sent to all relevant boards and organisations. Regular meetings are established from September.

**September 2022:** Evidence and information gathering underway.

**November 2022:** Information gathering completed.

**February 2023:** Report presented to O&S Panel and Cabinet

**March 2023:** Cabinet response to the report received by the Panel.

**July 2023:** Communication to be sent to all Councillors who are representatives on outside organisations to advise the new reporting progress.

**Next steps:** Plan to regularly review and monitor implementation of recommendations.

### Environment, Communities and Partnerships

#### Climate Working Group

**Members:** Cllrs T D Alban, J Kerr, C Lowe and D Shaw

**Lead Officer:** Neil Sloper

**Progress:**

**November 2022:** Initial Meetings held to establish Terms of Reference for the group.

**April 2023:** Regular meetings established. Evidence and information gathering to be progressed.

Group to be involved in the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy Development.

**Next Steps:** Subgroup formed to develop the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy.

Ongoing dialogue with the team to develop a proposed work plan.

**Climate Sub Group**  
**Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy**

**Members:** Cllrs T D Alban, J Kerr, C Lowe and D Shaw

**Lead Officer:** George McDowell

**Progress:**

**February 2022:** Initial meeting held

**May 2023:** Regular meetings established. Residents survey agreed.

**July 2023:** Meeting to review the outcome of the survey.

**September 2023:** Meeting planned to review applications for the EV pilot scheme

**Next Steps:** Final report anticipated for November 2023 cycle of meetings

**NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS INCLUDING THOSE TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE**

**Prepared by:** Councillor Sarah Conboy, Executive Leader of the Council  
**Date of Publication:** 18 September 2023  
**For Period:** 1 October 2023 to 31 January 2024

Membership of the Cabinet is as follows:-

| Councillor Details         |  | Councillor Contact Details   |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| Councillor S J Conboy      | Executive Leader of the Council and Executive Councillor for Place | Cloudberry Cottage<br>9 Earning Street<br>Godmanchester<br>Huntingdon PE29 2JD<br><br>Tel: 01480 414900 / 07831 807208<br>E-mail: <a href="mailto:Sarah.Conboy@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Sarah.Conboy@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a> |
| Councillor L Davenport-Ray | Executive Councillor for Climate & Environment                     | 73 Hogsden Leys<br>St Neots<br>Cambridgeshire PE19 6AD<br><br>E-mail: <a href="mailto:Lara.Davenport-Ray@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Lara.Davenport-Ray@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>   |
| Councillor S Ferguson      | Executive Councillor for Customer Services                         | 9 Anderson Close<br>St Neots<br>Cambridgeshire PE19 6DN<br><br>Tel: 07525 987460<br>E-mail: <a href="mailto:Stephen.Ferguson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Stephen.Ferguson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a>                               |

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|                          |   |   |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Councillor M Hassall     | Executive Councillor for Corporate & Shared Services          | <p>Care of Huntingdonshire District Council<br/> St Mary's Street<br/> Huntingdon<br/> Cambridgeshire PE29 3TN</p> <p>Tel: 07825 193572<br/> E-mail: <a href="mailto:Martin.Hassall@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Martin.Hassall@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a></p> |
| Councillor B Mickelburgh | Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources                  | <p>2 Grainger Avenue<br/> Godmanchester<br/> Huntingdon<br/> Cambridgeshire PE29 2JT</p> <p>Tel: 07441 392492<br/> E-mail: <a href="mailto:Brett.Mickelburgh@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Brett.Mickelburgh@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a></p>                     |
| Councillor B Pitt        | Executive Councillor for Community & Health                   | <p>17 Day Close<br/> St Neots<br/> Cambridgeshire PE19 6DF</p> <p>Tel: 07703 169273<br/> E-mail: <a href="mailto:Ben.Pitt@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Ben.Pitt@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a></p>   |
| Councillor T Sanderson   | Deputy Executive Leader and Executive Councillor for Planning | <p>29 Burmoor Close<br/> Huntingdon<br/> Cambridgeshire PE29 6GE</p> <p>Tel: 01480 436822<br/> E-mail: <a href="mailto:Tom.Sanderson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Tom.Sanderson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a></p>   |

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|                       |   |   |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Councillor S Taylor   | Executive Councillor for Leisure,<br>Waste & Street Scene | 66 Wren Walk<br>Eynesbury<br>St Neots<br>Cambridgeshire PE19 2GE<br><br>Tel: 07858 032076<br>E-mail: <a href="mailto:Simone.Taylor@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Simone.Taylor@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a> |
| Councillor S Wakeford | Executive Councillor for Jobs,<br>Economy and Housing     | 4 Croft Close<br>Brampton<br>Huntingdon<br>Cambridgeshire PE28 4TJ<br><br>Tel: 07762 109210<br>E-mail: <a href="mailto:Sam.Wakeford@huntingdonshire.gov.uk">Sam.Wakeford@huntingdonshire.gov.uk</a> |

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Notice is hereby given of:

- Key decisions that will be taken by the Cabinet (or other decision maker)
- Confidential or exempt executive decisions that will be taken in a meeting from which the public will be excluded (for whole or part).

Notice/agenda together with reports and supporting documents for each meeting will be published at least five working days before the date of the meeting. In order to enquire about the availability of documents and subject to any restrictions on their disclosure, copies may be requested by contacting the Democratic Services Team on 01480 388169 or E-mail [Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk).

Agendas may be accessed electronically at the [District Council's website](#).

Formal notice is hereby given under The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 that, where indicated part of the meetings listed in this notice will be held in private because the agenda and reports for the meeting will contain confidential or exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. See the relevant paragraphs below.

Any person who wishes to make representations to the decision maker about a decision which is to be made or wishes to object to an item being considered in private may do so by emailing [Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk) or by contacting the Democratic Services Team. If representations are received at least eight working days before the date of the meeting, they will be published with the agenda together with a statement of the District Council's response. Any representations received after this time will be verbally reported and considered at the meeting.

**Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) (Reason for the report to be considered in private)**

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the Financial and Business Affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information)
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations that are arising between the Authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of or office holders under the Authority
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings
6. Information which reveals that the Authority proposes:-
  - (a) To give under any announcement a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
  - (b) To make an Order or Direction under any enactment
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

Huntingdonshire District Council  
Pathfinder House  
St Mary's Street  
Huntingdon PE29 3TN.

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- Notes:-
- (i) Additions changes from the previous Forward Plan are annotated \*\*\*
  - (ii) Part II confidential items which will be considered in private are annotated ## and shown in italic.

| Subject/Matter for Decision                          | Decision/ recommendation to be made by | Date decision to be taken | Documents Available | How relevant Officer can be contacted  | Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.) | Relevant Executive Councillor | Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel |
|--|--|---------------------------|---------------------|--|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Market Towns Programme - Autumn Update               | Cabinet                                | 17 Oct 2023               |                     | Pamela Scott, Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager Tel No: 01480 388486 or email: Pamela.Scott@huntingdonshire.gov.uk |  | S Wakeford                    | Performance & Growth               |
| Market Towns Programme - Autumn Update, Part II##*** | Cabinet                                | 17 Oct 2023               |                     | Pamela Scott, Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager Tel No: 01480 388486 or email: Pamela.Scott@huntingdonshire.gov.uk | 3  | S Wakeford                    | Performance & Growth               |

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| Subject/Matter for Decision              | Decision/ recommendation to be made by | Date decision to be taken                                | Documents Available | How relevant Officer can be contacted   | Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.) | Relevant Executive Councillor | Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel      |
|--|--|--|---------------------|---|--|-------------------------------|---|
| Community Chest Grant Aid Awards 2023/24 | Grants Panel                           | 18 Oct 2023<br>15 Nov 2023<br>20 Dec 2023<br>17 Jan 2024 |                     | Claudia Deeth Tel No: (01480) 388233 or Email: Claudia.Deeth@huntingdonshire.gov.uk                             |  | B Pitt & M Hassall            | Environment, Communities & Partnerships |
| Electric Vehicle Charge Strategy         | Cabinet                                | 14 Nov 2023  |                     | George McDowell, Parking Services Officer Tel No: 01480 388386 or email: George.McDowell@huntingdonshire.gov.uk |  | L Davenport-Ray               | Environment, Communities & Partnerships |



| Subject/Matter for Decision               | Decision/ recommendation to be made by | Date decision to be taken | Documents Available | How relevant Officer can be contacted   | Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.) | Relevant Executive Councillor | Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel      |
|---|--|---------------------------|---------------------|---|--|-------------------------------|---|
| Redesign of Council Tax Support Scheme    | Cabinet                                | 14 Nov 2023               |                     | Katie Kelly, Revenue and Benefits Manager Tel No: 01480 388388 or email: Katie.Kelly@huntingdonshire.gov.u      |  | S Ferguson                    | Environment, Communities & Partnerships |
| Performance Management Framework***       | Cabinet                                | 14 Nov 2023               |                     | Emma Charter, Performance and Data Analyst Tel No. (01480) 388013 or email emma.charter@huntingdonshire.gov .uk |  | S Ferguson                    | Performance & Growth                    |
| Non-Domestic Rates Rural Settlements List | Cabinet                                | 12 Dec 2023               |                     | Katie Kelly, Revenue and Benefits Manager Tel No: 01480 388388 or email: Katie.Kelly@huntingdonshire.gov.uk     |  | S Ferguson                    | Environment, Communities & Partnerships |

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| Subject/Matter for Decision            | Decision/ recommendation to be made by                         | Date decision to be taken | Documents Available | How relevant Officer can be contacted  | Reasons for the report to be considered in private (paragraph no.) | Relevant Executive Councillor | Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Panel |
|--|--|---------------------------|---------------------|--|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Infrastructure Funding Statement       | Cabinet  | 12 Dec 2023               |                     | Clara Kerr, Service Manager - Growth Tel no: 07810 637540 Email: clara.kerr@huntingdonshire.gov.uk                     |  | T Sanderson                   | Performance & Growth               |
| Market Towns Programme - Winter Update | Cabinet  | 12 Dec 2023               |                     | Pamela Scott, Housing Strategy and Delivery Manager Tel No: 01480 388486 or email: Pamela.Scott@huntingdonshire.gov.uk |  | S Wakeford                    | Performance & Growth               |
| Approval of Council Tax Base 2024/25   | Cabinet, Chair of Corporate Governance and Section 151 Officer | 15 Dec 2023               |                     | Katie Kelly, Revenue and Benefits Manager Tel No: 01480 388388 or email: Katie.Kelly@huntingdonshire.gov.uk            |  | N Wells                       | Performance & Growth               |

**Public**  
**Key Decision – No**

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Title/Subject Matter:** Support to the Financially Vulnerable

**Meeting/Date:** Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships). 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023

**Executive Portfolio:** Communities and Health

**Report by:** Interim Corporate Director (People)

**Ward(s) affected:** All

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### **Executive Summary:**

This report sets out the strategic context for our work on financial vulnerability, directly linking it to the priorities and actions set out in the council's Corporate Plan. It then looks at the definition of financial vulnerability, differing levels of need and how these levels of need require different types of intervention.

The common causes of financial vulnerability, deprivation and poor health are described as shaping our framework for action. The description of a pilot project working with those with enduring Council Tax debt introduces our group of interventions which in turn leads to a description of how these interventions may be deployed in different circumstances and to different groups. Our intention to simplify and strengthen a diverse and complex system of support is then described. This will inform and be supported by the scheduled revision of our Community Strategy.

### **Recommendation(s):**

The Panel is asked to consider and comment on the approach set out in the report.

## 1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Committee on our developing approach to supporting the financially vulnerable, in line with the priorities set out in the Council's [Corporate Plan](#). Links are then made to the planned refresh of the Community Strategy.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council's [Corporate Plan](#) sets out the Council's vision for 2023-2028 as:

We all want to live in a place with the highest possible quality of life. A place people are drawn to, where they feel included and can aspire to something. A place people are proud to call home.

The priorities within the plan, shaped by local people and viewed through a green lens, provide the framework to achieve this vision. These are:

- Priority 1: Improving the quality of life for local people.
- Priority 2: Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations.
- Priority 3: Delivering good quality, high value for money services with good control and compliance with statutory obligations.

### Priority 1: Improving quality of life for local people

**Improving the happiness and wellbeing of residents**

We want the highest possible quality of life for the people of Huntingdonshire. It will be a place which attracts employers and visitors and somewhere residents are proud to call home. We will be evidence based, responsive and support the foundations of a good life. This includes personal independence, prosperity, social connection, community and good health.

**Keeping people out of crisis\***

We will identify the root causes that lead people into crises and find ways to prevent them. We will do this through our own actions. We will also work in partnership with residents, businesses, community groups, charities and our public sector partners.

**Helping people in crisis\***

Where a crisis has already happened, we will work holistically to understand the issues, the cause of these issues and what opportunities exist to address them. We will seek to prevent multiple personal crises becoming entrenched and unmanageable by addressing root causes.

\* Crisis – A life changing event, or series of significant events within a short period of time, which can threaten or harm an individual's life experiences, often needing support to prevent further negative consequences.

- 2.2 The Corporate Plan (pages 11-13), also set out actions for 2023/2024 that relate to financial vulnerability and financial crisis. The primary purpose of this is to set out how work undertaken to date has led to further developments in our approach. In all cases our approaches are informed by the 'Do, Enable, Influence' framework set out in the corporate plan.

- 2.3 This framework recognises that although a key player, the Council cannot (and should not) act alone. As well as working with our statutory partners, [The Huntingdonshire Community Strategy – Transition Plan 2021 to 2023](#) sets out our approach to working with the community,

community organisations and other local partners to deliver positive outcomes for our residents. It sets out the need for joined-up solutions, and the creation of opportunities that make sense to our residents, not just the organisations that deliver them. The approaches set out in this report are driven by those principles.

### 3. ANALYSIS

- 3.1 Financial vulnerability is the risk of a person not being able to withstand or recover from financial shocks. While this might be a sudden loss of income or a sudden increase in expenditure, it can also be the result of cumulative impacts of these factors over a longer time. In such circumstances even those with above average incomes can be financially vulnerable. Data from the [Financial Conduct Authority](#) (May 2022) suggests around 25 million UK citizens exhibit characteristics of financial vulnerability.
- 3.2 Such numbers illustrate the scale of the challenge for 'Keeping People Out of Crisis' in relation to financial vulnerability. Latest [data from the Office of National Statistics](#) indicates that 7.4% of Huntingdonshire's population suffer income deprivation. This is defined with people on low incomes who are in receipt of benefits and tax credits. Based on a total Huntingdonshire population of 180,833 ([2021 Census](#)) this means there are 13,381 people experiencing income deprivation. The numbers who are financially vulnerable will be even greater.
- 3.3 The nature of financial vulnerability and financial crisis across a population is illustrated in Figure 1.

### 4. SUPPORT FOR THE FINANCIALLY VULNERABLE

- 4.1 A range of services exist to support the financially vulnerable and those in financial crisis. Some services seek to address financial aspects of the vulnerability or crisis, by seeking to maximise income (e.g., benefits maximisation, support from the Household Support Fund). Others also seek to address the imbalance between income and expenditure (e.g., support with budgeting or access to social utility tariffs). Other services seek to address the consequences of financial crisis or vulnerability (food banks, provision of warm spaces). While there are some notable exceptions, many services focus primarily on a single aspect of financial vulnerability or crisis. That single aspect is often a symptom of the problem rather than its underlying cause.
- 4.2 Such support is inherently valuable. It addresses immediate hardship and helps prevent 'downward spiral'. However, there are clear limitations to approaches that address neither the root causes of problems nor the fact that these causes are complex and inter-related.

*"This isn't a warm hub, it's a necessity hub"*

User, Warm Space programme, Winter 2022/23

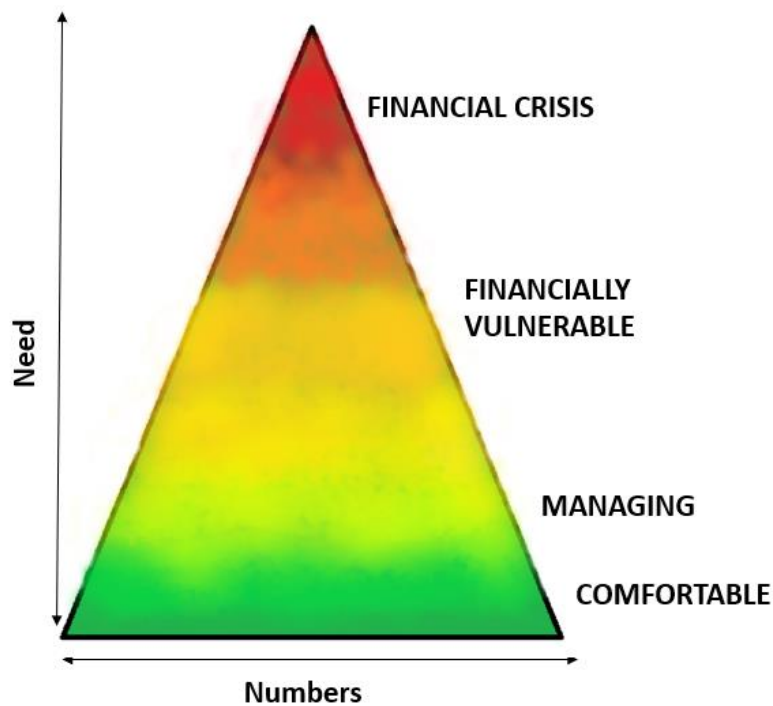


Figure 1: The nature of financial vulnerability in a population

## 5. FINANCIAL VULNERABILITY: COMPLEXITY AND CAUSES

5.1 Financial vulnerability is not simply an issue of low income. The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) says '*all customers are at risk of becoming vulnerable, but this risk is increased by having characteristics of vulnerability*'. THE FCA describes four key drivers of financial vulnerability:

- health
- life events
- financial resilience
- financial capability

5.2 It is clear from paragraph 5.1 that financial vulnerability is about much more than income and expenditure. Our developing approach is therefore based on support that considers both the consequences and causes of financial vulnerability. This approach allows us to characterise our activity in terms of the preventative models used by partners such as health and the police. In this model:

- primary prevention is where an illness or a problem is prevented from developing.
- secondary prevention is where a disease or issue is detected and dealt with early, ideally before symptoms are present, thus minimizing serious consequences.
- tertiary prevention is where an existing problem is managed to prevent complications or further damage.

5.3 This preventative activity can be overlaid onto of the levels of need previously shown in Figure 1

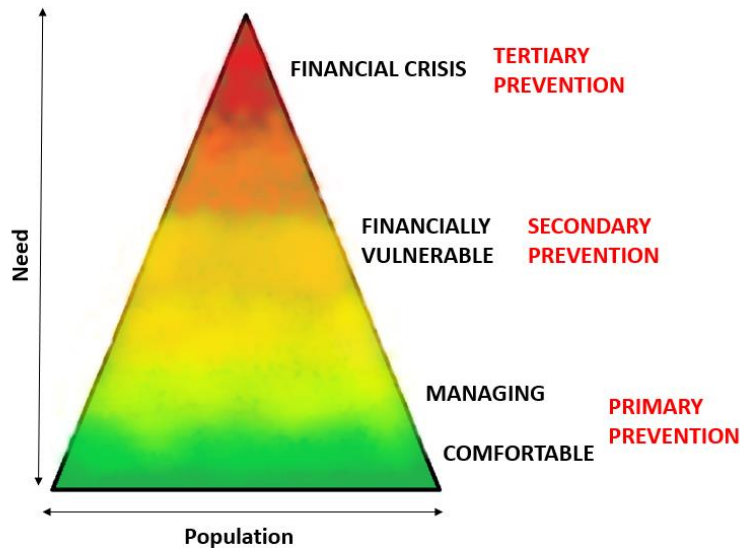


Figure 2: A prevention model for financial vulnerability

5.4 One of the benefits of this model is that it gives an immediate, intuitive visualisation of the scale of the intervention needed at each point. For example, primary prevention activities that deliver to small numbers of people will not be of significant impact at a population level, however valuable they are for the individuals receiving the intervention. In this context it is important to note that actions set out in Priority 2 of the corporate plan will represent primary prevention for financial vulnerability for many of our residents.



5.5 As financial vulnerability is not just about income, support to the vulnerable (and those already in crisis) must consider the different causes of financial distress. For example, Para 5.1 explains that the risk factors for financial vulnerability includes health. It would be tempting to consider improving health be an issue solely for the NHS. That is not the case. In fact, access to good quality healthcare is a minority contributor to good health at a population level. Rather, good health is created by where we live, learn, work and play. Various models have quantified the contribution of each of these 'wider determinants of health'. One is shown in Figure 3:



Figure 3: The Determinants of Health (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation)

5.6 The [Marmot Review](#) described how the variation in exposure (or access) to the wider determinants of health produces a ‘social gradient of health inequalities’. Put simply, the lower one’s social economic status, the poorer one’s health is likely to be. The poorest not only die sooner but spend more of their lives with a disability. Marmot sets out the social and economic costs of health inequality and identifies local government as pivotal in addressing these issues.

5.7 As Figure 3 illustrates, the wider determinants of health are a diverse range of social, economic and environmental factors which influence health, well-being and inequality ([HM Government, 2018](#)). These inequalities result in [different aspects of deprivation](#) that come together to shape the lives and futures of those in our communities. These relate to:

- Income
- Employment
- Education
- Skills and Training Deprivation
- Health
- Crime
- Barriers to Housing and Services
- Living Environment

5.8 These relationships between the causes of financial vulnerability, poor health and deprivation are shown in Figure 4



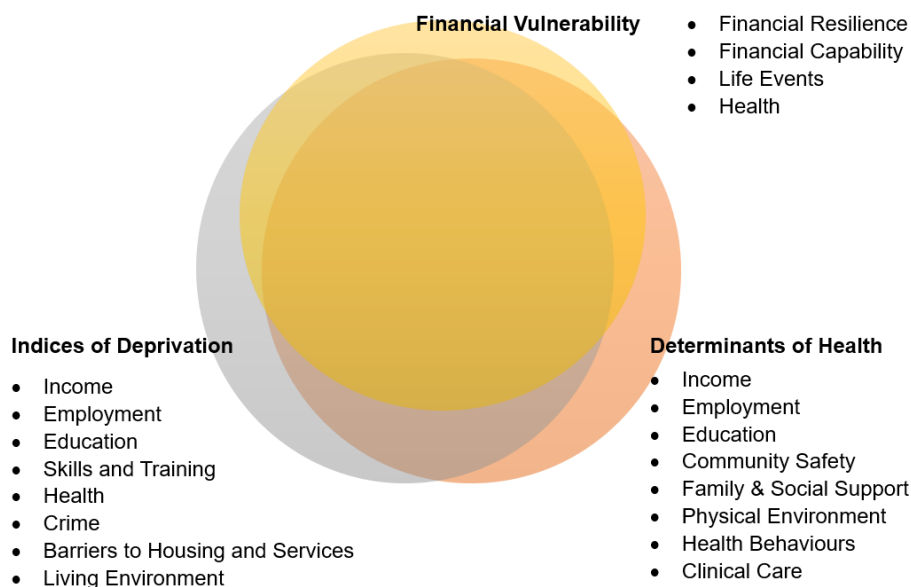


Figure 4: The common causes of poor health, financial vulnerability and deprivation.

5.9 These massive overlaps shown in Figure 4 mean that in practice, residents whose circumstances make them financially vulnerable will likely be vulnerable to poor health. Indeed, we might consider *'the causes of poor health to be the same as the causes of poor wealth'*. While as a council we have relatively little control or influence on some of the factors listed above (e.g., educational attainment), others are much more in our sphere of delivery or influence (e.g., physical activity; skills and employment). This is informing our action - as set out in the case study below.

## 6. CASE STUDY: COUNCIL TAX DEBT RELIEF PILOT

6.1 Individuals who fall into arrears with Council Tax trigger a process of both support and enforcement which, if unresolved, can result in an attachment of earnings or benefits order. For those on benefits a (usually small) amount is deducted at source to pay off the debt. For many this represents a debt that can take many years to clear.

6.2 Our Council Tax Support Scheme aims to help those on a low income by reducing the amount of Council Tax they must pay. Recent proposals to amend the scheme, if adopted, should reduce the number of people newly falling into Council Tax debt. However, a significant number of residents have existing debt.

6.3 In partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council and Citizen's Advice Rural Cambs, we have developed a pilot which will to offer individuals a package of support that seeks to address the wider causes of debt. These are based on the wider determinants models set out above. While not all offers will be suitable for all participants, the intention is for a 'basket of offers' to be made available to each participant.

6.4 The purpose of highlighting the pilot project here is to show the practical application of the principles described above. These are:

- a targeted approach to a defined group (in this case a group 'in crisis'; so tertiary prevention)
- a holistic approach that recognises the interrelated causes of financial crisis

- a personalised approach that recognises individual circumstances
- ongoing support and encouragement delivered by single 'case manager'.
- a basket of interventions based on the wider determinants of health/wealth, including:
  - a financial health check (including income/benefits maximisation)
  - financial literacy/skills education
  - free gym and physical activity offers
  - link with Healthy You, (lifestyle services such as stop smoking and weight management)
  - access to a skills and employment advisor (including volunteering opportunities)
  - digital connectivity
  - social isolation – link to community activities (in addition to volunteering and physical activity opportunities)
  - link to How Are You Hunts (including self-help tools) for mental health and wellbeing.

## **7. SUPPORT IN A COMPLEX SYSTEM**

7.1 Given the clear evidence on the commonalities between the determinants of health, financial vulnerability, inequality and deprivation, our approach has a sound theoretical basis. Yet the basket of interventions we propose are broadly already available. So, it is reasonable to ask what value we are seeking to add to the current system of support. To answer that we need to understand that the current system of supporting those in need. It is characterised by:

- Services commissioned or provided by statutory sector organisations such as the council and its partners (such as, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority; Cambridgeshire County Council; the local health service; the Department for Work & Pension and more).
- Services provided by the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector. The size and scope of these organisations varies from the national to the hyper-local. Some organisations are funded by the local statutory sector (Ro others are not. In some cases, these arrangements have been the outcome of competitive commissioning processes. In other cases, grant funding arrangements are more ad hoc in nature. In many cases there are no local funding arrangements.

7.2 While the above results rich mix of provision, there are significant drawbacks. The system is incredibly complex and varies across geographies. This makes it difficult to navigate for both professionals and residents alike. Additionally, many services, are set up to address a single issue rather than the range of needs faced by the vulnerable and those in crisis. The combination of these factors leads to those in need being bounced around the system or being unable to identify and access support.

*“We realised through public consultation that the health and inequality needs people expressed were already available within the town, but there was no easy or clear way to find this out”*

Funded Partner – Health Inequalities Programme 2022/23

7.3 The support available in the local system is provided in a number of different ways, each of which requires different levels of resource, effort, skill and time to deliver.

7.4 These different levels of support are illustrated in Figure 5. They may be defined as:

7.4.1 Case Management: a process where those in need are supported to develop an agreed plan based on awareness and availability of the various support available.

7.4.2 Referral: Those in who are need are ‘introduced’ to providers in the system to provide support that is not available from the organisation/department they are engaging with

7.4.3 Signposting: Those in need engaging with the system are informed of other services that might benefit them.

7.4.4 Self-Service: Those able can access digital or physical directories of support – either independently or because of successful signposting. The onus is then on the ‘self-server’ to engage with the support service(s) they consider might be helpful.

7.4.5 Nothing: Those in need are unaware of the support available, or access support for a single issue but are not linked with a range of support based on their needs

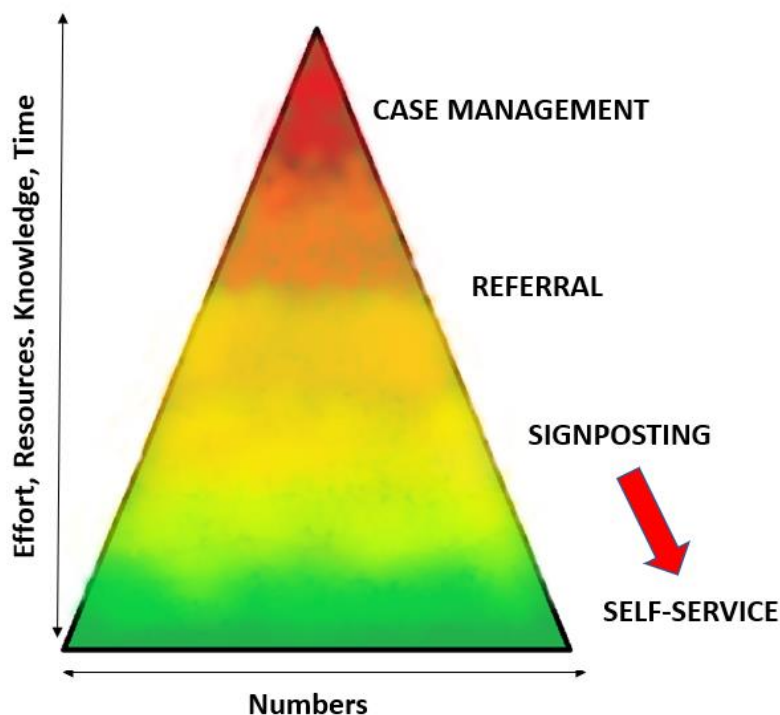


Figure 5: Differing Approaches to Support. Note that signposting acts to turn those seeking support into ‘self-servers’.

- 7.5 The closer to the apex of the triangle in Figure 5, the greater the resource is required to deliver that approach. Case management approaches require development of a relationship, provision of ongoing support and regular engagement with the client.
- 7.6 The numbers seeking support from the system are greater than the capacity to deliver a case management approach to them all. For example, there were 1690 applications to the Cambridgeshire County Council administered Household Support Fund from Huntingdonshire residents 15<sup>th</sup> May and 31<sup>st</sup> July.
- 7.7 A case management approach is not deliverable to all the financially vulnerable and in crisis. However, we may make significant improvements in access to support by simplifying and better coordinating the other types of support set out above and shown in Figure 5.
- 7.8 For example, the basket of opportunities developed for the Council Tax project can be amended and delivered in different ways depending on the population group and the level of need. The FCA risk factors for financial crisis includes 'life events.' Rather than awaiting symptoms of financial crisis before support is offered, support could be offered at the point of such life events. This is the basis for a pilot we are developing which directs people to support when they move home. Other stressful life events (e.g., bereavement, job loss, pregnancy), offer further potential opportunities for intervention. The approach may also be amended and deployed in other ways such a geographical area of high deprivation or when people present for support in places such as food banks or warm (community) spaces.

## **8. DO/ENABLE/INFLUENCE: SIMPLIFICATION AND COORDINATION OF THE SYSTEM**

- 8.1 Historically, public services to support those in need were designed around the delivery a range of individual services. More recently, it has been recognised that many of the problems faced by individuals and families are inter-related and that service delivery in silos has severe limitations. This has led to moves towards multi-agency partnerships and working, co-location of services and 'lead professionals' to coordinate service delivery. This approach assesses need more holistically and delivers a more personalised approach to providing services and support.
- 8.2 This approach is increasingly common for those in the greatest need and who meet certain thresholds for support. Their need is therefore translated into a demand for services.
- 8.3 Yet need still exists below these various service thresholds. Individuals may interact with a range of public and voluntary services, yet this may be on a transactional or single-issue basis where their overall needs will neither be visible nor sought. For example, individuals may seek financial support or use food projects without being linked with other support. In these circumstances the system is 'blind' to the wider needs of those seeking support, even when interacting with them.
- 8.4 As illustrated in Figure 5, when the system 'signposts' those in need, it interacts with someone seeking help and then invites them to self-serve. Yet there are several barriers to 'self-service' of which awareness (the barrier signposting attempts to overcome) is only one. For example, [15% of adults in England are functionally illiterate](#) and given education and skills are determinants of health/wealth described (see Figure 4), this figure is likely to be higher in the population who are vulnerable or in crisis. Other issues that limit the impact of signposting are shown in Figure 6.
- 8.5 While signposting will be appropriate in some circumstances (e.g., those searching online for support), it is a less than optimum outcome for someone who is in receipt of support from one of the services or organisations in the system (e.g., a food project, a community group or

council service). Supporting a modal shift from signposting to referral would therefore result in improved access to the correct support for those in need.

- 8.6 Designed with partners, we have developed the [We Are Huntingdonshire](#) website. Those working with residents in need of support are taken through a series of simple questions that helps identify what a resident may need help with and directs them to the information to enable them to find a solution. Residents with multiple needs can be referred to our Residents Advice and Information Team for more in-depth support. Additionally, we are working with County Council colleagues to review referral tools in place in other areas.
- 8.7 As well working to join up offers and services through improved referral pathways, we will seek to simplify the system where we can. For example, we have begun work with our partners at Citizens Advice Rural Cambs and Cambridgeshire County Council to consider our interactions and the possible joint models for supporting the financially vulnerable and those in financial crisis. A basic analysis of the different aspects of the services provided is shown at the top of Figure 6. While to some extent these approaches are complimentary, there is also overlap. We are also undertaking process mapping work to better understand how those seeking support arrive to the attention of the three services, and what their journey is after the initial contact. There is no predetermined outcome for this work, though we will consider both better coordination and consolidation of services.

## **9. EXTERNALLY FUNDED WORK**

- 9.1 Better access to support packages that reflects people's real-life needs is core to our approach. However, the reality of public sector funding systems means that external short-term or one-off funding often becomes available. Such funding streams tend to have narrowly stipulated outcomes. However, in such cases we also seek to adopt and advance the principles and approaches set out above. Current examples are:
- 9.2 UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Barriers to Skills and Employment (till March 2024). As with the provision of services to support the financially vulnerable, the skills landscape is complex, confusing and can be difficult to access. However, there is a wealth of (often fully funded) provision in this area. As well as lack of awareness, people often face practical barriers to access such as transport and childcare. Many face similar issues with accessing employment (or increasing hours of employment)
- 9.3 This fund allows us to provide direct support to individuals to overcome those barriers. This will be delivered through skills and employment advisors who will not sit in a fixed location but will go into the community and offer support to people in locations they already attend (community groups, food projects etc). We are also working with partners to link this approach with existing services such as the St Neots Citizens Hub and specific cohorts such as young people in supported accommodation, young people not in employment education or training (NEET) and participants in the Council Tax Debt pilot. In each case supporting the pathway to better quality participation in the jobs market will consider that the barriers may not simply be practical (e.g., transport) but may be based on other issues (from the wider determinants model). In such cases the 'basket of opportunities' approach will be used.

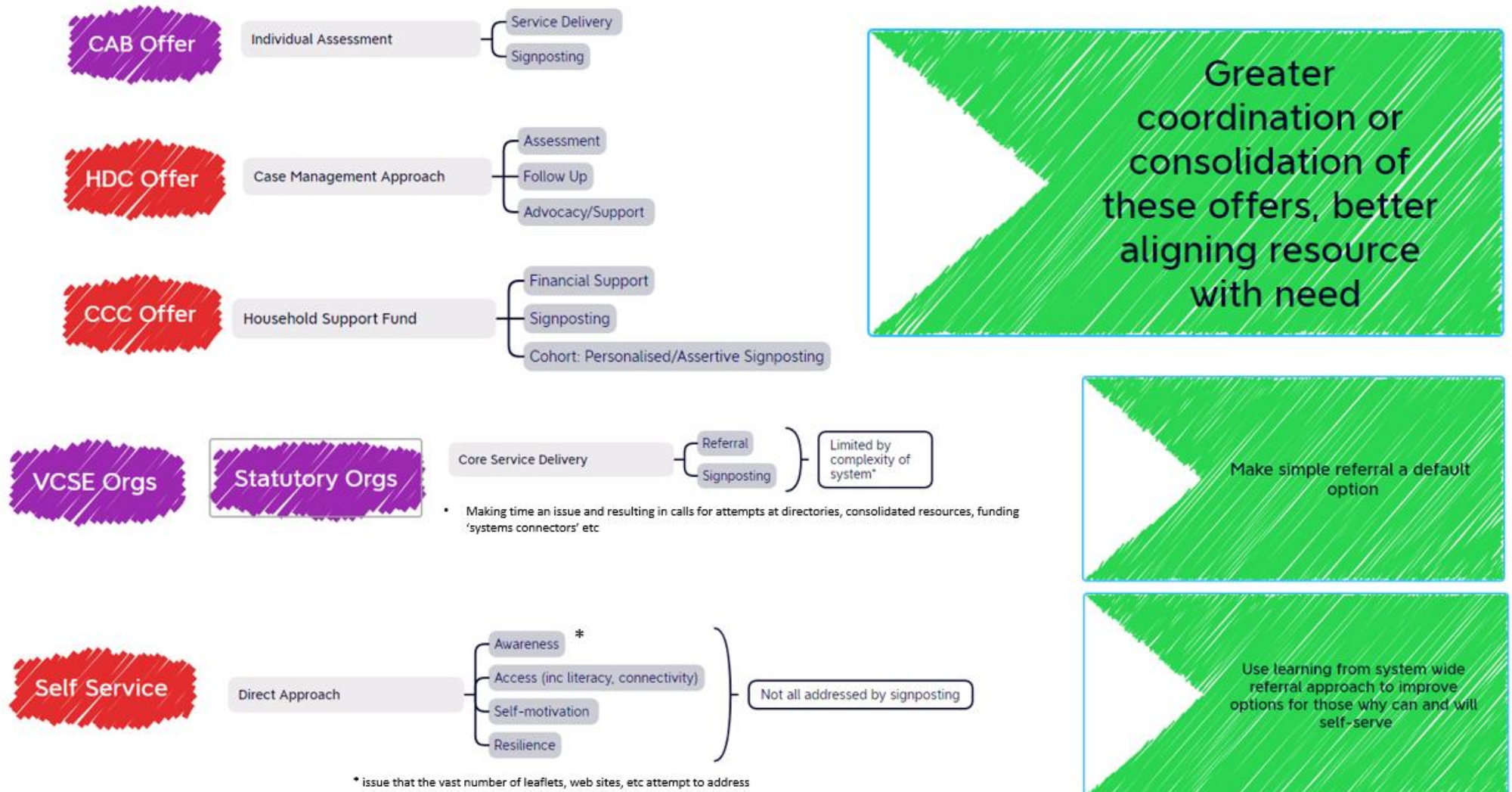


Figure 6: Improving access to support.

- 9.4 Integrated Care System Funding: Physical Activity: HDC has received £249,600 from the local NHS Integrated Care System to offer residents evidence-based interventions for those with mild to moderate frailty and those at risk of cardiovascular disease. We are delivering this programme using the Council's 'Do, Enable, Influence' model. In addition to activities delivered by our Active Lifestyles Team (Do), we are also looking to support and work with organisations who wish to deliver new and sustainable initiatives (Enable). This model of 'in the community' and 'by the community', builds on the approach of the 2022/2023 Health Inequalities programme. To allow us to broaden our pool of delivery partners we have worked with Hunts Forum (our contracted VCS infrastructure support organisation) to develop and adopt a set of 'minimum governance requirements' that strike a balance between giving us assurance on public expenditure without creating unnecessary barriers to participation, especially for smaller voluntary and community organisations. As part of this programme, we are also exploring innovative approaches to connect residents to existing services or opportunities that would prevent or delay frailty or cardiovascular disease (Influence).

## 10. SUMMARY

- 10.1 The strong links between income and health are [well-understood and accepted](#), with many health outcomes improving incrementally as income rises. Income can affect many aspects of health and in turn, have a knock-on effect on the other social determinants. For example, a parent's income may be linked to a child's early development and educational opportunities, which in turn can affect a child's employment opportunities and their income.
- 10.2 Progress on the priorities across the corporate plan will therefore contribute to the financial, physical and mental health of the population. However, we cannot deliver these outcomes alone. A significant challenge is both the scale of the problem and the fact that in times of financial constraint, much of the support offered is non-statutory in nature. For example, our Residents Advice and Information Team developed as a response to supporting the consequences of the pandemic and is not funded from core budgets. Similarly, the County Council anti-poverty response is predominantly funded by the Household Support Fund, which has been renewed by government on an annual basis and is not guaranteed after this financial year.
- 10.3 Our approach to delivery in partnership based on the wider determinants; better connecting those in need to existing support in the system and our do/enable/influence delivery model will underpin the forthcoming refresh of the [Community Strategy](#). As part of the development of that work we will consider how our investment in the voluntary sector can best enable this approach. This also builds on [Huntingdonshire Futures, our place strategy](#) which seeks to improve the lives of all our residents, communities and businesses and which has 'health embedded' as one of the key journeys within the plan.

## **11. KEY IMPACTS/ RISKS**

- 11.1 While work to better coordinate the existing system of support is not necessarily dependent on resource, the current funding arrangements for the HDC and CCC services represent a risk to the overall capacity of the system.

## **12. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

- 12.1 The Community and Health strategy will be revised and presented to committee in this financial year.
- 12.2 We are working with our main funded service providers (Citizen's Advice Rural Cambridgeshire and Hunts Forum) to consider how our contracted arrangements can best support the approach set out in this paper.
- 12.3 We continue to work alongside Cambridgeshire County Council who have begun to explore the feasibility of a countywide referral tool/system. While we continue to promote 'We Are Huntingdonshire (WAH)'; any countywide developments will need to inform our approach to further development of the WAH tool.

## **13. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES**

- 13.1 Paragraph 2 of this report sets out the links to the corporate plan, with a particular emphasis on Priority 1.

## **14. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 None

## **15. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 15.1 The report does not request new resource, though note the current funding arrangements for the Council's Resident Advice and Information Team.

## **16. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

- 16.1 Paragraph 5 of this report described the overlap between the causes of financial vulnerability and the causes of ill-health. Action on financial vulnerability is therefore action to improve health.



## **17.BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 17.1 Links to background papers and primary sources of information are made in the report.

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