

**Public  
Key Decision - No**

## **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Title:** Warm Spaces

**Meeting/Date:** Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships) – 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023

**Executive Portfolio:** Executive Councillor for Community and Health

**Report by:** Chief Delivery Officer

**Wards affected:** All

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### **Executive Summary:**

As set out in the Community (Transition) Strategy 2021-23, Huntingdonshire District Council are committed to supporting their residents through a positive and ongoing working relationship with local communities. There is an immediate and pressing need to provide support via the district's established community network throughout the cost-of-living crisis particularly throughout the winter months.

Warm Spaces have been recognised nationally as a network of community provisions that can offer people a safe and warm local facility, where they can gather for free and possibly enjoy refreshments and activities. Huntingdonshire District Council have worked with local communities to provide and promote a network of Warm Spaces across the district. An offer of guidance, financial support, and training was developed to ensure anyone using a Warm Space (volunteer or resident) is safe and well supported.

The Huntingdonshire network of Warm Spaces also provides an opportunity to engage and support residents before they get into crisis. Working with a wide range of internal HDC services and external partners, a prevention pathway of support was developed and a series of Social Solutions training was rolled out to Warm Spaces volunteers and professionals over December and January.

Building on the impact and model of community support provided by Warm Space, the intention from HDC is to continue to develop and grow this network, allowing local communities to meet the needs of their local residents in the most appropriate way.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The Overview and Scrutiny Panel is invited to comment on the development of Warm Spaces in response to the cost-of-living crisis. A presentation will be made to the Panel at the meeting and a report has been produced with further information.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to update on the approach to support Huntingdonshire residents during the winter, through a network of safe and warm community facilities (Warm Spaces). Recognising that local community groups are best placed to identify the specific needs of their local residents and are able to respond quickly and appropriately, the District Council's role is to coordinate, support and promote the initiative rather than to directly deliver the provision.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The COVID pandemic identified a number of strengths across local communities, namely that they were best placed to respond to the immediate needs of their residents quickly and appropriately. The strong desire and ability for community enablement was evoked after the summer of 2022, recognising that many people will find themselves in significant financial hardships during winter, where the cost of everyday essentials (bills, food, etc), would increase faster than household incomes.
- 2.2. Although the data to support the cost-of-living crisis on local residents did not demonstrate a significant impact, the District Council chose not to wait until people were in crisis. As a response to the expected cost-of-living pressures, HDC along with many other Local Authorities, investigated how to support their local residents through a network of Warm Spaces.
- 2.3. Warm Spaces are commonly described as **'places where people can gather for free in a warm, safe, welcoming place and maybe enjoy a hot drink and some company'**
- 2.4. The model for a Warm Space was to utilise a community facility to offer drinks and/or food for local residents during specific timed sessions. They are predominantly run by volunteers, possibly with activities available to encourage residents to attend and to provide a focus for the time they are there. Community providers such as town and parish councils, churches, village hall committees and third sector providers are commonly the types of organisations offering Warm Spaces in their local areas.

## 3. WARM SPACES IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE

- 3.1. Huntingdonshire District Council is committed to supporting local communities to identify, address and respond to the needs of their local residents ie: with local people, by local people, for local people.
- 3.2. The model for Warm Spaces across the district places the District Council as the enabler and promoter of the provision rather than to directly deliver the facilities and volunteers. The HDC model allowed local communities to respond in the most appropriate way and also builds community sustainability, allowing groups to continue their local offers for as long as they are needed. This reduces the risk and limitation of being wholly and directly funded by HDC. As we begin to move out of winter we see a number of the Huntingdonshire Warm Spaces perpetuating beyond the initial crisis of cold weather.

- 3.3. Communities who identified a need for a Warm Space were responsible for leading the set up and running of the provision. While support from HDC was available it was at the discretion of the individual organisations about how to scale their Warm Space depending on the number of local residents attending. If the uptake was low the community would decide whether it was viable to continue.

There were three phases of delivery for Warm Spaces:

- 3.4. **Network of locations.** Community groups offering a Warm Space were required to complete a registration form (**Appendix 1**) to assure HDC they had the necessary controls in place to ensure the safety of all those attending the Warm Space ie: both volunteers and residents. Organisations are also required to detail their facilities along with the times and activities they offer.
- 3.5. Details of the Warm Spaces were published and promoted on the HDC [Warm Spaces website page](#). The current number of Warm Spaces listed across the district is 43.
- 3.6. **Support for the provision.** Organisations wishing to apply for funding were directed to the established grant application process of the [Community Chest Fund](#). The Community Chest funding panel agreed a cap of up to £500 per Warm Space to support with any additional overheads incurred. In addition, the panel agreed to meet more frequently than the current 4-week cycle to be able to manage the number of applications for Warm Spaces funding in a timelier way.
- 3.7. A programme of training was offered to support the volunteers in Warm Spaces. A range of short online training sessions were circulated to organisations ([suicide training](#), [safeguarding training](#)) with an offer of longer and more in-depth training being made available if/when volunteers identify a requirement in their provision based on the needs of the local residents.
- 3.8. **Prevention and Early Intervention.** Warm Spaces offer a unique opportunity to support residents who have emerging needs before they fall into crisis.
- 3.9. Building on a previously successful HDC project to identify key changes and life events that can trigger a crisis (a project funded by Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) in 2020/21), a prevention pathway of support was co-produced by working with a number of colleagues across a range of partner agencies and community groups (**Appendix 2**).
- 3.10. A training programme 'Social Solutions Training' was run over December and January to support professionals and volunteers working in Warm Spaces. The training combined Making Every Contact Count training (techniques on how to positively engage with residents) with a presentation of the prevention pathway of support. Attendees were trained on a wealth of information available via the [We Are Huntingdonshire](#) website and how to send a referral to the HDC Residents Advice and Information (RAI) team, on behalf of the resident. Once the referral was received the RAI team were able to provide more individual support and importantly spend time understanding and addressing the root causes of the presenting needs e.g.: a need for warm clothes for the children may be due to a sudden change in employability. The RAI team are trained to not only support with the immediate need (vouchers for clothes) but also the

longer term needs, building resilience and independence in the person (e.g.: employability skills and training).

- 3.11. To date the Social Solutions training has been delivered to 42 individuals, including volunteers in community groups, library staff, social prescribers and health care coordinators.
- 3.12. To date the Residents Advice and Information team have received 32 referrals with issues being identified as predominantly lack of food/finances. Residents have been supported with a range of offers including Household Support Fund (bed, oven, fridge freezer), claiming Personal Independence Payments, advice and claims for benefits, fuel vouchers and respite care.
- 3.13. Building on the success and impact of the Warm Spaces in Huntingdonshire the intention from HDC is to continue to provide promotion of their location and offers, offer regular support and advice/guidance to volunteers and to continue to roll out the Social Solutions training to more volunteers and professionals.

#### **4. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN/COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

- 4.1 The model used to deliver Warm Spaces directly supports activity that will deliver **Priority 1 – Improving quality of life for local people** of the HDC Corporate Plan 2023/26, across all levels:

##### **Improving the quality of life and well-being of the general population**

We want the highest possible quality of life for the people of Huntingdonshire. It will be a place which attracts employers and visitors, and that residents are proud to call home. We will be evidence-based, responsive and support the foundations of a good life, such as 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.

#### **CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The development of Warm Spaces has multi-agency support providing key stakeholders ie: members of community groups, Town and Parish Councillors, Hunts Forum, Think Communities, Health services and a range of internal HDC services, the opportunity to inform and influence the model.
- 5.2 The model remains iterative and will be continually evaluated to reflect the support provided by the organisations offering Warm Spaces, the partners supporting and the needs of the local residents.

- 5.3 HDC has established a network of colleagues working to deliver Warm Spaces across the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. This has supported the transparency of offers from each district, shared learning and good practice and to support residents who live along district borders.

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no direct legal implications from this report

## **6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There is current project support resource in place to maintain the administration of Warm Space. It is anticipated an additional project management resource will be required to develop the prevention pathway support HDC is able to offer to the local communities. The suggested funding for this would be through the use of earmarked reserve funding to support vulnerable residents.

## **7. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 To brief Overview and Scrutiny Panel members on the district's offer of Warm Space support for our residents as a response to the cost-of-living crisis.

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

APPENDIX 1: WARM SPACES REGISTRATION FORM

APPENDIX 2: PREVENTION PATHWAY OF SUPPORT TO RESIDENTS

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

Community (Transition) Strategy 2021-23

<https://applications.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s117477/5.%20Community%20Transition%20Strategy%202021%202023%20Covering%20Report.pdf>

## **CONTACT OFFICERS:**

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# APPENDIX 1 – Registration form for Warm Spaces

## SECTION 1

These are the details we will publish to the residents of Huntingdonshire about your Warm Space

Name of Organisation:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Location of your Warm Space (please include postcode to help people to find you):

Click or tap here to enter text.

Email address for enquiries:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Phone number for enquiries:

Choose an item.

Social media links for updates on Warm Spaces:

Click or tap here to enter text.

List of facilities available:

- Accessible toilets
- Accessible access in and out of the building
- Fully accessible access throughout the building
- Changing facilities
- Car park
- Free wi-fi access
- Available power sockets for people to use
- Kitchen
- Facilities to make hot food/ drink e.g.: kettle/ microwave
- Secure building
- Hearing loop
- Screen or television
- Access to free activities e.g.: board games, jigsaws, drawing and colouring resources

Other (please specify)

Click or tap here to enter text.

Will your Warm Space be staffed?

Choose an item.

How many people can you accommodate in your Warm Space (including volunteers)

Click or tap here to enter text.

## SECTION 2

Please tick to confirm you have these in place to ensure the safety of those attending your Warm Space. *By ticking the box your organisation is accountable for ensuring these can be presented if requested:*

### **ESSENTIAL – these must be in place for HDC to publicise your Warm Space on their website**

- Public liability insurance
- Gas testing for the facility - in date certification
- Fixed wire test records - in date certificate(s)
- Fire Risk Assessment - in date certificate
- First aid kit - available and in date
- Buildings risk assessment - in date

If you are an organisation that currently provides food, we will display your Food Hygiene Rating as published on the Scores on the Doors website [Scores on the Doors : Huntingdon](#)

DESIRABLE – these do not need to be in place for HDC to publicise your Warm Space on their website, but are recommended good practice

- Employers Liability Insurance
- Legionella risk assessment - in date (where appropriate)
- Asbestos risk assessment - in date (where appropriate)
- DBS Checked staff (where staff have regular unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable adults)
- Safeguarding trained staff (where staff have regular contact with children or vulnerable adults)
- First Aid trained staff

Information useful for organisations offering Warm Spaces

- You can check where the nearest defibrillator is located on the Defib finder website [Defib finder – find the defibrillators nearest you.](#)
- You should make sure there are no personal details for individuals displayed in your Warm Space unless you have consent to do so
- the priority services register for UKPN this allows users that are at risk to receive priority service in the event of a power cut <https://www.ukpowernetworks.co.uk/power-cut/priority-services/about-the-priority-services-register>
- If you are needing additional funding to cover **costs up to £500** for setting up or running your Warm Space you can check your [eligibility here](#) and then apply for a grant here [Community Chest Fund – Application Form \(huntingdonshire.gov.uk\)](#)



### SECTION 3

Please provide details of your Warm Space opening times along with any organised activities you are running

Day	Time	Activity	Costs
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

### SECTION 4

Please confirm contact details for communication between HDC and your organisation (**these details will not be published on the website to residents**)

Contact name:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Contact email address:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Contact phone number:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Many thanks for completing and returning your registration form. Once we have received your details we will publish your Warm Space on the district map here [Warm Spaces - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk](https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/warm-spaces) and add to the list of locations here [Warm Spaces Locations - Huntingdonshire.gov.uk](https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/warm-spaces-locations)

Please allow 5 working days for your details to be live on the HDC website.

Thank you again for offering support to our residents at such a challenging time and we will use the contact details listed under Section 4 to provide updates and ideas to support your local community over the coming months.

# APPENDIX 2 – Prevention pathway of support

## Warm Spaces Proposed decision tree for support

