

East Suffolk Community Partnership Board

Report from the Tackling Inequalities Task and Finish Group

September 5, 2022

Introduction and Background

1. At the December 2021 Board meeting, it was agreed that the Board should maintain its focus on its three priorities - Social Isolation and Loneliness, Sustainable Transport and Travel and Mental Health and Wellbeing - and establish a new Task and Finish Group focussing on 'Tackling Inequalities'.
2. The Tackling Inequalities Group was tasked to focus on four key areas - Young People, Ageing Population, Income Deprivation (all age groups) and Groups left behind in the recovery from Covid-19. At the first meeting it was agreed that the initial focus of the group would be on the Income Deprivation priority, specifically reducing the impact of the emerging and deepening Cost of Living crisis in East Suffolk.

Cost of Living increases

3. The 'cost of living' is the average amount of money that individuals need to be able to cover basic living expenses, such as food and housing. The cost of living is rising across the board – housing costs, energy and water costs, fuel and food have all risen rapidly in price over recent months.
4. The impact of these rises, combined with the residual impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, rising inflation, and the consequences of the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, is likely to hit hard particularly as we move into the Autumn and Winter. Suffolk County Council has produced a Cost of Living Profile which can be found at: [Making-ends-meet-the-cost-of-living-suffolk.pdf \(healthysuffolk.org.uk\)](https://www.healthysuffolk.org.uk/making-ends-meet-the-cost-of-living-suffolk.pdf) which is accompanied by an interactive dashboard which will be updated as more information becomes available and is therefore a good source of data about local impacts and trends.

Tackling Inequalities Task and Finish Group

5. The Task and Finish Group, supported by staff in the Communities Team at East Suffolk Council, developed an outcome proposal for consideration by the Board at its June meeting. This outcome proposal focussed on the four key areas for action identified through an initial workshop held to scope the programme - Money, Food and Essentials, Energy and Fuel and Housing - and requested £100,000 of funding to be allocated to the programme.

6. The Task and Finish Group has established the key challenges in relation to each of these four themes, identified existing activity to address these themes and proposed innovative ideas for action. A partner workshop was held in May at Halesworth Golf Club to enable co-design of the emerging programme and provide an opportunity for wider discussion and prioritisation. The workshop included representatives from Access Community Trust, Citizens Advice East Suffolk, East Suffolk Council, Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG, Lowestoft Rising, Suffolk Community Foundation, Suffolk County Council and MP Peter Aldous. The outcomes of this workshop session were fed into the outcome proposal that was agreed at the June Board meeting.
7. The priority projects, identified through voting at the end of the workshop sessions and the June Board meeting are:
 - a. Network of 'Warm Rooms' (E3)
 - b. Food Network Co-ordinator (F1)
 - c. Community Pantries (F3)
 - d. Handyperson project (E9)
 - e. 'Cooking on a Budget' classes (F7)
 - f. Microwaves, Hobs and Slow Cookers (F11/15)
 - g. Comfort Food – hot meals and drinks (F5)
 - h. ID document fund (M8)
 - i. Field to Fork projects (F8)
 - j. Winter Warmth packs (
 - k. Digital and Phone projects (M5)
 - l. Clothes Banks (including uniform and interview) (F14)
8. At that meeting it was confirmed that more than £300,000 of funding had already been secured for specific elements of the programme. Additional funding has since been secured bringing the total confirmed funding available currently to £551,401. Specific projects within the programme have now been included in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund bid for East Suffolk under the Communities and Places theme. If the UKSP bid is approved in October 2022 and a proposal for £50,000 of funding from the ESC Business Rates Equalisation Reserve is also supported, the total available will be £829,501. Less the ESC funding already allocated for the Financial Inclusion Officers this leaves £633,501 for project activity.

Outcome Proposal – Tackling the Rising Cost of Living in East Suffolk

9. The Stage 2 Outcome Proposal, developed following the Board meeting in June and signed off by the Chair of the Board last month, is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. Project leads in the Communities and Housing Teams of East Suffolk Council have developed each priority project (12 of the 70+ identified, plus a campaign and roadshows) and completed a scoping template. Although the Task and Finish Group has not met to consider these following the deadline of 19th August given the difficulties of diaries over the summer period, they have been circulated to all members of the group for their consideration and comments.

10. More detail about the proposed approach and funding allocation for each of the key projects will be presented at the Board meeting, plus an update on other associated activities as part of the East Suffolk Ease the Squeeze programme, including a roadshow visiting each town in the district in September and October. It is also proposed to hold short, virtual briefing sessions for key partners including businesses and Town and Parish Councils about the programme.

11. All eight Communities Partnerships, particularly those who have identified tackling the rising cost of living within their revised priorities are invited to consider whether they wish to supplement the funding available at District level with funding from their budget to enable additional activity in their Community Partnership area.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board:

- 1) Note progress in relation to developing the priority projects in the 'Ease the Squeeze' programme to tackle the rising cost of living in East Suffolk**
- 2) Consider whether their organisation/partnership could provide support for the programme in any way**
- 3) Receive a report on progress at the meeting to be held in December 2022, including about take up of and demand for the various projects.**

Nicole Rickard, Head of Communities

East Suffolk Council, on behalf of the Task and Finish Group