

# Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 1 November 2022

## Response to composite motion - Warm and Welcoming Spaces and Cost of Energy Crisis

Executive/routine Wards Council Commitments	Executive All
---	------------------

### 1. Recommendations

---

- 1.1 Policy and Sustainability Committee is asked to note the draft action plan to promote “Warm and Welcoming” public spaces where citizens can keep warm and comfortable in the coming winter months and where they can receive support and advice to help alleviate food and fuel poverty.

#### Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

Contact: Evelyn Kilmurry, Head of Libraries, Sport and Wellbeing

E-mail: [evelyn.kilmurry@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:evelyn.kilmurry@edinburgh.gov.uk) | Tel: 0131 529 7894

Contact: Andrew Field, Head of Community Empowerment and Engagement

E-mail: [andrew.field@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.field@edinburgh.gov.uk) Tel: 0131 529 3953

## Response to composite motion - Warm and Welcoming Spaces and Cost of Energy Crisis

### 2. Executive Summary

---

- 2.1 This report responds to the motion by Councillor Jenkinson on how the Council will work with partners to promote access to warm and welcoming public spaces this winter and on how access to advice and support will be signposted.

### 3. Background

---

- 3.1 It is well documented that the cost-of-living crisis will affect a high proportion of residents, with estimated costs for energy bills rising significantly over the coming months. The simultaneous increasing costs of food and fuel will serve to maximise the negative impact on people, and it is expected that communities currently experiencing challenging socio-economic conditions will be the hardest hit.
- 3.2 Many local authorities have recognised these challenges, especially that of rising energy bills, and are looking to provide as much support as possible during the winter months. On 25 August 2022, Council agreed a report on Cost of Living Support which noted the substantial actions undertaken by the Council to address the cost of living crisis.
- 3.3 Also on [25 August 2022](#), the Council also approved a composite motion by Councillor Jenkinson, seconded by Councillor Hyslop on the promotion of access to warm and welcoming public spaces. The approved motion was as follows - Council:
- 3.3.1 Acknowledges that the cost-of-living crisis is currently hitting thousands of Edinburgh households and that this crisis is only expected to worsen with the Bank of England currently projecting inflation could climb as high as 15% in Q4 2022;
- 3.3.2 Notes that the average price of household energy bills increased by 54% in April and are projected to rise again in October by upwards of 70% pushing thousands more of our residents into fuel poverty;
- 3.3.3 Acknowledges that the impact of rising domestic energy and food price inflation will very likely adversely affect the health and well-being of many of our citizens, with unfortunately some having to choose between heating their

homes or eating this winter and the real threat to life this poses in our communities;

- 3.3.4 Recognises that local authorities have a duty of care to their citizens, to promote and protect their well-being and to do what they can to prevent any avoidable harm; and
- 3.3.5 Requests the development of a deliverable plan presented to the Policy & Sustainability Committee on 1 November which will set out how the Council will work with city partners to promote access to free of charge 'Warm and Welcoming' public spaces where Edinburgh citizens can keep warm and comfortable this coming winter and where they can receive support and advice services to help alleviate food and fuel poverty.

## 4. Main report

---

### **Draft Action Plan**

- 4.1 As recognised within the approved motion, there is a network of partners who are providing warm and welcoming spaces, support and advice to citizens across the city.
- 4.2 The draft action plan (Appendix 1) seeks to build the work of the Council, partners, the third sector and voluntary organisations into a comprehensive and co-ordinated guide to the support available for citizens.
- 4.3 It also recognises that these services should be available locally to mitigate against travelling costs by providing access to necessary support, including warm and welcoming spaces, within local communities.
- 4.4 The action plan has four key themes:
  - 4.4.1 Partnership Working;
  - 4.4.2 Warm and Welcoming Spaces;
  - 4.4.3 Resources, Information and Awareness; and
  - 4.4.4 Communications.

### **Partnership Working**

- 4.5 Conversations with partners and other service providers are focused on how best to work together to maximise the impact of existing provision in order to better address the needs of those struggling with rising costs.
- 4.6 It is recognised that there are areas of work across these organisations which will overlap with the work being taken forward to address the cost of living crisis, and links have already been made to develop a more integrated approach, where appropriate.
- 4.7 Initial conversations have focussed on the need to share information on the range of existing provision across networks to better ensure that services are meeting the needs of citizens locally.

- 4.8 The Cost of Living Campaign work, which has been undertaken by the Income Maximisation and Poverty Group alongside the Scottish Government's campaign, has included the development of a Cost of Living webpage which can be accessed from the Council's website homepage <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/cost-living>. There will be a promotions campaign to highlight this online information to citizens, with bespoke training to be delivered for Council staff in warm and welcoming spaces to make them aware of the resource.

### **Warm and Welcoming Spaces**

- 4.9 In addition to promoting existing resources, work has started on identifying existing spaces that can be reshaped or new spaces created to provide places for people to comfortably dwell within public buildings. For the Council, these will include libraries, some community centres, museums and galleries and neighbourhood offices.
- 4.10 It is also hoped to include details of community spaces in buildings owned and run by churches, community hubs, third sector and voluntary organisations as an essential part of the network of spaces.
- 4.11 Recognising the importance of ensuring that people feel comfortable spending time in public spaces, as well as creating spaces which people feel welcomed, officers are also investigating the opportunities to 'activate' spaces so that people are encouraged to participate while there. For example, to attend an activity or event of interest, rather than to solely focus on the provision of a heated space.

### **Access to Resources, Information and Advice**

- 4.12 There is a significant amount of guidance and advice available, both for independent learning and through advice and support services.
- 4.13 As part of the action plan, officers will work closely with partners to share information on services and resources which can be promoted widely across the network.
- 4.14 Specific information resources aimed at supporting people through the winter months will be distributed across wider networks e.g. the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership (EHSCP) "Getting Ready for Winter" booklet will be distributed to individuals and made available within the Council's public buildings and to partners.
- 4.11 A programme of training to increase awareness of the impact of poverty and of the range of support available for frontline staff is being developed. This will ensure that those who are supporting citizens within the Council's warm and welcoming public spaces have a shared understanding of how best to support and signpost people accessing services without stigmatisation.

### **Communications**

- 4.12 A Communications Strategy will support the action plan by promoting warm and welcoming spaces and signposting to support and advice available across the city.

- 4.13 This will be delivered in tandem with national campaigns and the work of partner agencies, most notably The Scottish Government's Cost of Living Campaign. Other notable national campaigns include [National Stress Awareness Day](#) (2 November), [Talk Money Week](#) (7-11 November), and [National Self Care Week](#) (14-20 November).
- 4.13 It is intended to build on existing communication channels and networks to engage citizens in the services and spaces available.

## **5. Next Steps**

---

- 5.1 A series of meetings have and are being arranged with a range of third sector and community organisations to both inform them about Council proposals and to discuss with them their potential involvement in delivering the action plan.
- 5.2 Delivery of the action plan will be co-ordinated by a dedicated Project Manager and will be supported by individual service areas ensuring they have appropriate delivery arrangements in place and by external organisations.
- 5.3 The Service Director for Culture and Wellbeing will oversee the implementation of the actions and Policy and Sustainability Committee members will be updated on progress in January and April 2023.

## **6. Financial impact**

---

- 6.1 The Council contribution to the actions outlined in this report will be implemented within existing agreed budgets.
- 6.2 The current action plan is based on the delivery of services within existing opening hours. Any increase to that offer would incur additional costs for staffing, heating, lighting and materials.

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

---

- 7.1 The report summarises how the Council will work in partnership with local partners and key stakeholders this winter to promote warm and welcoming public spaces and access to advice and support for citizens experiencing challenges as a result of the cost of living crisis.
- 7.2 UNISON have raised concerns about potential health and safety impacts in participating community centres. The Council's Health and Safety team have provided general advice on COVID safe arrangements for all workplaces and are developing an updated risk assessment to reflect current guidance and practice. Potential impacts will be monitored throughout the length of the initiative and action taken to address any identified issues.

## **8. Background reading/external references**

---

8.1 None.

## **9. Appendices**

---

9.1 Appendix 1: Warm and Welcoming Public Spaces Action Plan 2022/23

## Warm and Welcoming Public Spaces - Action Plan 2022/23

Item	Action	Council Lead	When	Status
<b>1.</b>	<b>Partnership Working</b>			
1.1	Continue to work with partners, including Community Centre Management Committees, to identify public spaces where citizens can feel warm and welcome this winter.	Head of Community Empowerment	On-going	Initial discussions have taken place and further meetings planned.
1.2	Confirm all support and advice services available throughout the city to support citizens to alleviate food and fuel poverty.	Poverty Prevention and Innovation Lead	By end October 2022	Details of Council advice services collated.
1.3	Engage with Scottish Government's Cost of Living Campaign to ensure consistency and to enable joined up working/promotion of key messages.	Project Manager	TBC	TBC
1.4	Co-ordinate on-going support and activities throughout the winter and promote these through existing partner networks.	Project Manager	On-going	Initial discussions have taken place and further meetings planned
<b>2.</b>	<b>Warm and Welcoming Public Spaces</b>			
2.1	Map the identified warm and welcoming spaces geographically and review the provision	Project Manager	November 2022	Underway

# Warm and Welcoming Public Spaces - Action Plan 2022/23

Item	Action	Council Lead	When	Status
2.2	Reshape or create spaces in public buildings where people can comfortably dwell	Head of Libraries, Sport and Wellbeing	November 2022	Underway
2.3	Build on existing programmes of activities and events to encourage citizens to spend time in public buildings	Head of Libraries, Sport and Wellbeing	On-going	Underway
<b>3.</b>	<b>Resources, Information and Awareness</b>			
3.1	Use existing networks to share information about getting ready for winter and make information available in public buildings	Project Manager	October 2022	'Getting Ready for Winter Leaflet developed for distribution by EHSCP
3.2	Promote information in libraries and other public buildings on alleviating fuel and food poverty and on 'self-help' and sign-post to support available	Project Manager	October 2022	Materials ordered for libraries
3.3	Roll-out programme of training for customer facing Council staff to support citizens seeking information	Poverty Prevention and Innovation Lead	November 2022	TBC
<b>4.</b>	<b>Communications</b>			
4.1	Implement a communications plan to promote all warm and welcoming public spaces across the city	Communications Team	November 2022	On-going



## Warm and Welcoming Public Spaces - Action Plan 2022/23

Item	Action	Council Lead	When	Status
4.2	Create a dedicated space on the Council website, including the map of spaces, to direct citizens to both advice and support and to spaces.	ICT Team	November 2022	This will be kept updated throughout the winter with information, advice and signposting
4.3	Actively work with local and national partners to promote advice and support services, guidance and warm and welcoming spaces across the city, using existing communication channels	Communications Team	On-going	On-going