



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 7 NOVEMBER 2024
Subject	UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL’S INVOLVEMENT IN AND SUPPORT FOR COST OF LIVING RELATED INITIATIVES
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Claire Bloomer, Cabinet Member for Cost of Living and Inclusion Email: claire.bloomer@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Andy Barge, Director Communities Email: Democratic@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Jacqueline Wright, Business Manager Leisure & Wellbeing Email: Democratic@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To update Cabinet on the Council’s work to support people affected by the cost of living crisis.
Annexes	Annex A – Holiday Activity and Food Programme HAF overview (2023/24) Annex B – Benefits Postcard
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note the Council’s work to support communities with the cost of living.2. Request that the Cost of Living Steering Group continues to consider further opportunities to support communities with the cost of living.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delivering Good Services• Responding to the Climate Emergency• Supporting Communities
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO



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Consultees/ Consultation	Business Manager - Environmental, Welfare & Revenue Service, Assistant Director – Communities Leadership and Management Team, and Citizens Advice Bureau.
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report aims to update on the various initiatives the Council delivers or supports since 2022 to alleviate pressures on local households due to the rise in the cost of living.
- 1.2 The Council's work includes the facilitation and development of the Cotswold Food Network and focussed work on financial inclusion, administering allocations of Household Support Fund provided by Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), delivery of the Holiday Activity and Food programme, The Cotswold Connected Community & Food Programme (CCCFN) and a focus on the cost-of-living element in other areas of work (Active Cotswold, Community Building).
- 1.3 The report also mentions new initiatives that are launching in due course i.e. Advice First Aid and LIFT (Low Income Family Tracker).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting in July 2022 the Council agreed a Motion relating to the Cost of Living Crisis, agreeing to lobby Government for action and to determine how additional support should be provided to those in need, and where the funds could be found to enable it to be delivered. The Council also agreed to "... set up a cross-party working group in response to the motion which would report back, in advance of the budget setting process, with recommendations that Council could take to help address the cost of living crisis."
- 2.2 In September 2022 the Council agreed a Motion, part of which required a cross-party group be set up urgently to implement 'public warm places' and also to look at other ways to help our Cotswold residents most negatively impacted by unaffordable heating and living costs.
- 2.3 A Member led cross party Cost of Living Crisis steering group has been formed and held its first meeting on 3rd October. The Group is meeting every 2 - 3 weeks to oversee progress on assessing what additional support the Council could offer to residents in relation to coping with the cost of living Crisis.
- 2.4 At its meeting on 16th November 2022 Council agreed to allocate £40,000 from the Council Priorities Fund towards establishing a Food Network.
- 2.5 In November 2022 a one-off 'Cotswold Connected Community and Food Programme' (CCCFP) has been launched which complemented the Council's 'Crowdfund Cotswold' initiative and formed part of our asset-based community development approach. It aimed to flexibly support initiatives that can be realised in the near future to increase community resilience during the current cost of living crisis and beyond. The intention of the programme was that the work and funding builds on the assets that are found in the community and mobilises individuals, associations, and institutions to come together to realise and develop their strengths. Existing external funding of £75,000 which the Council received for community-based activity had been identified and the Steering Group has agreed to ringfence the funding for this project.



- 2.6** The Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF) was rolled out to all upper tier local authorities in 2021 following successful pilots between 2018 and 2020. The HAF programme is funded by the Department of Education for those in reception to year 11 who receive income-related free school meals. In Gloucestershire, the programme is coordinated by the County Council and delivered at district level by lead organisations. In Cotswold, HAF is delivered jointly by 'World Jungle' and CDC's Community Wellbeing Team. The programme is funded until spring 2025.
- 2.7** The Council has also been bidding successfully for and distributing allocations of the Government's Household Support Fund (HSF).
- 2.8** This report aims to update Cabinet on the cost-of-living support initiatives listed above.

3. Cost of Living Support

3.1 Cotswold Food Network

3.1.1 Introduction

The Cotswold Food Network's (CFN) ambition is to improve food equity and affordability: that everyone in Cotswold District has access to a range of food options everyday – affordable, good-quality, nutritious and ideally locally sourced. This needs a healthy ecosystem of food providers and other support and delivery agents, to address the requirements of Cotswold's different communities.

CFN seeks to enable legacy change not just to react to immediate crisis, the ambition has always been to look at delivery and intervention that can provide longer term change and is systems based.

CFN's work began effectively in Autumn 2023 and to date, the approach has been to engage with stakeholders (VCSE and statutory organisations, Councillors and communities) across various topic areas and at different scales. A support officer role (30 hours per week, three-year contract) began in December 2023 and an independent contractor are leading the work with management by the Community Wellbeing team. The key work undertaken has included:

- Understanding food related provision, assets, and issues across the district.
- Where feasible, mapping these, using GIS (Geographical Information Systems).
- Collaborating with stakeholders to identify priorities and solutions.
- Supporting the implementation of actions that improve food sustainability.

3.1.2 Engagement and collaboration

CFN has engaged across various scales and topics. In terms of the larger events, it has held five meetings since November 2023, on the following topics:

- Financial Inclusion (3)
- Community Food Growing (1) and



- Food Provision (1).

These larger (half day) stakeholder meetings have been well attended – each having 30 to 40 people and more than 20 organisations. They have all been held centrally in the district (at Northleach), with refreshments, to attract all those we would like to attend.

Throughout these meetings there has been consistent feedback regardless of the theme:

- the benefits of networking.
- ambition for decentralised services.
- complexities of access and servicing more rural/remote areas of the district.
- access to transport and therefore services.
- balance between meetings and discussion and action.

CFN is using a small core group of stakeholders to advise and help co-ordinate the work, comprising colleagues in the Community Wellbeing team, both Cotswold food banks, Citizens Advice and an independent contractor. This group's membership may vary depending on the topic.

The Network has also developed a quite extensive and expanding mailing list, used to engage – to share and seek information and to for example, target invitations to events. It comprises 250 unique contacts and over 100 of these being themed under the Financial Inclusion (cost of living) topic. There are also contact lists for Food Provision and Community Growing.

Collaboration across the different three main work themes, has included;

- Information sharing - including data and mapping, services provided and contact details of stakeholder organisations.
- New information guides - such as on Advice First Aid and Statutory Benefit entitlements.
- Organisational and personal offers to work together - on the priority topics that are emerging through the work.

3.1.3 Mapping data supporting the Food Network

Using a range of public-access and stakeholder organisational data and expertise from Publica's GIS colleagues, Cotswold Food Network is mapping a range of information. Initially Cotswold's main financial inclusion support organisation's locations and services, were mapped on paper and then transposed onto electronic GIS maps using address locations. These points on the map were layered against the Index of Multiple Deprivation for Cotswold showing more and less deprived parts of the district. New data sets were subsequently added. This has been to date, demographic information (such as household types), deprivation/disadvantage information such as the incidence of Free School Meals by



Ward and finally the location of various assets (town/village halls, schools, playgrounds, allotments, playing fields).

The work is at a developmental stage, but the purpose is to provide information enabling organisations and communities, working on food equity in Cotswold, to make better decisions, so benefitting clients and communities – for example potentially the best location for new services like as new food pantries, a mobile food van and advice and support services.

3.1.4 Financial Inclusion

The CFN has identified that to enable greater food equity there must be active support to maximise household incomes. The priority must be to support households to access all the benefits they are entitled to. Alongside this it is vital that communities can access financial advice with the intention of preventing financial crisis and to support sustainable financial planning.

By bringing together the stakeholders both voluntary and statutory to network, discuss and plan a co-produced, collaborative approach it can support the improvement of Financial Inclusion in the Cotswolds.

The main barriers identified through this group that prevent better financial inclusion in our communities are:

- Rurality of the District:
- Access to services – need for greater de centralisation
- Transport links
- Digital exclusion
- Increased costs of living
- The above issues make delivering services more complicated and more expensive and therefore more targeted intervention is required.

The graphic below summarises the key elements of the Cotswold Food Network.

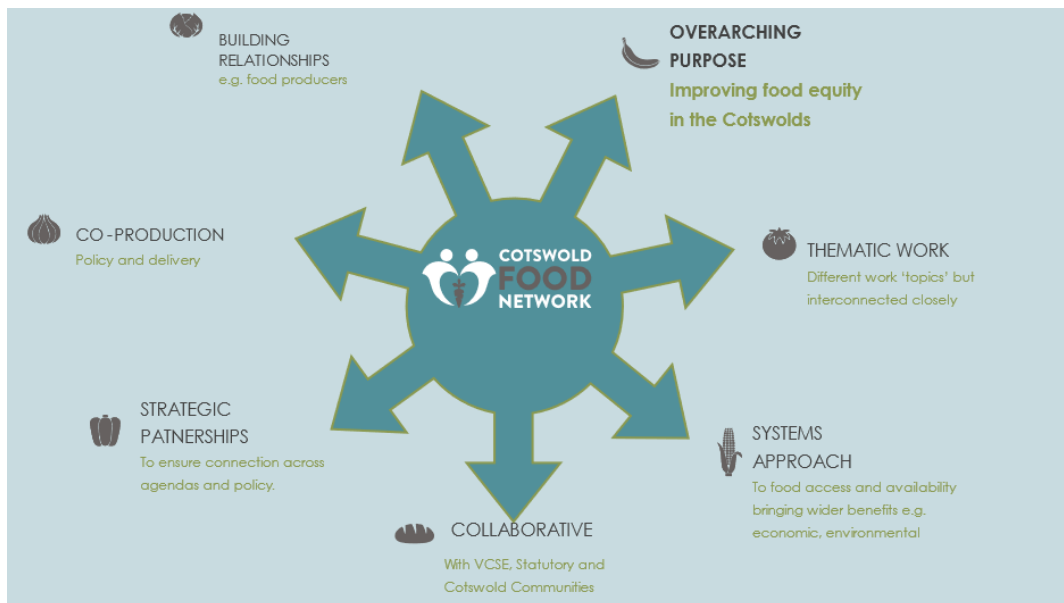


Figure 1: Cotswold Food Network Summary

3.1.5 Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT)- planned to launch in December 2024

LIFT is a product developed and provided by the organisation Policy in Practice. It is a platform that provides insight into low-income families by aggregating local authority and some publicly available datasets, including the Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE). Policy in Practice provide templates to support the data sharing agreements required to work in this way. The aggregated information can be segmented in lots of diverse ways to be used in targeted campaigns to support prevention and take-up.

The LIFT platform enables councils to use their data to identify and target support to people on low incomes by connecting them with benefits and employment support and access to skills and training programs. It is possible to identify the most vulnerable residents and target the limited support available to them before they reach crisis by analysing our existing administrative data. Other councils across the UK are already leading the way and have achieved significant results.

Using this data to decide on where, how and why to intervene is now the guiding factor for all work of the CFN as well as internal Council Services. Following the decision of CDC to adopt the LIFT platform from Policy in Practice this approach can be embedded across delivery. The last meeting the CFN held with the financial inclusion group started to identify priority areas (geographic), themes, cohorts and match organisations with the links and specialism to support the delivery. The CFN will be central to supporting the implementation of LIFT by working across both statutory and voluntary organisations to maximise its impact on the cost-of-living pressures in the Cotswolds.

3.2 The Cotswold Connected Community & Food Programme (CCCFN)



This externally funded programme has supported a wide range of community-led projects. A brief description of the projects and amount awarded can be found below. This funding programme was a one-off rolling programme, which is now closed. The Council is in the process of evaluating the impact of the funded projects.

3.2.1 The Churn Project:

Cooking on a Budget courses project aimed at people who are not economically active, and/or on low incomes; in and around Cirencester these sessions introduce clients to using slow cookers, the most economic way of producing a hot nutritious meal in bulk. Slow cookers provided to those who don't have them to enable them to continue cooking in this way after the course. Awarded: £3660

3.2.2 Bloodhound Education:

2 applications awarded. Bloodhound Family Engineering -a GCC partner delivering activities from their centre open to all families across the county. Funded programmes of a family days outside of HAF periods (in Cotswolds) for low income families including a hot, freshly cooked 2 course meal. Over a 4 hour programme local families designed, built and tested prototype cars and parachutes and sat together for a lunch provide by a local registered caterer and had fruit snacks and hot drinks during the day with nutritional guidance about healthy eating- families were given recipe cards and took part in a design your own meal activity and children all had a grown your own cress seed pack to take away. Awarded 1. £2850 and 2. £2850

3.2.3 Cirencester Food Pantry:

2 applications awarded: a weekly food pantry based in Watermoor Hall to help reduce food waste and make an impact on the 16% food inflation Building a sense of community around caring for our planet as well as well-being of members. It runs as a membership activity to improve health and well-being around reducing food waste and building community and connections through working together. Awarded: 1. £6350 and 2. £5000

3.2.4 Getting Connected Digital Inclusion Course:

An accessible digital inclusion course for older people in Bourton on the Water and surrounding villages to learn how to get online effectively and safely through a series of tutor led sessions covering Digital learning. This will help those not currently online/those who are not confident to navigate the digital world and 'Get connected' which improves their life. A collaboration between CDC Community Wellbeing Team, Lead Bourton Resident, Glos Adult Education and supporting digital organisations Awarded: £730

3.2.5 The Kitchen Club & World Jungle:

Cooking for fun and friendship- aims to use food as a vehicle for building community, creating new connections, learning new skills and celebrating life! It will help people to learn to cook and eat well for life. Four sets of five-week courses where groups of up to 16 will learn to cook a variety of staple recipes at each session to enjoy over lunch with fellow cooks on the course. The shared experience of cooking a nutritious and delicious



meal offers participants the time and space to connect with each other, share experiences, stories and build new friendships and connections. Each course will also culminate in a food celebration event where participants get to share their skills at a community event. The course will run in four separate towns in the Cotswolds (including Cirencester, Tetbury, Moreton & Bourton). The course will open to a variety of groups including Young Parents, Young Adults, newly bereaved people for example. Awarded: £11,100

3.2.6 Henhouse:

A social group for young professional women in the countryside aiming to bring these women together to build connections, make friends, and try their hands at new crafts and hobbies. It promotes inclusivity, personal growth, and an alternative to alcohol-focused social activities commonly found in the area. The group's focus is on fostering a sense of community, empowerment, and mutual support among its members and to reduce loneliness. Awarded: £2000

3.2.7 Black Cat Community Café at Northleach:

For the benefit of the residents of Northleach and the surrounding areas, by associating together the residents and others to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare with the object of improving the conditions of life of the residents and to establish a community café. The Black Cat Cafe operates with the aim to support the local community as a space to conduct community-based activities, offers friendship to the lonely in the community by providing an accessible and a safe welcoming environment and is a vehicle for community involvement, offering new approaches to community problems. The Black Cat Cafe is a centre that offers support to families who are financially in need with low-cost food options, looks to inspire and empower young people to achieve their potential through community activities and will promote racial and gender equality and social justice within the community. Awarded: £16,000

3.2.8 Cirencester Town Council:

Two free, inclusive community events in summer 2024, 1st Event: 'The Big Lunch' - to bring our community together in one central location to share knowledge and encourage people to live more sustainably. Acknowledging the 80th D-Day anniversary and use wartime, homefront initiatives to help families tackle modern day challenges. By applying the 'Dig for Victory', 'Grow your Own', and 'Make Do and Mend' philosophies to encourage self-sufficiency principles and equip the community in combating challenges like the cost of living crisis, whilst promoting environmental awareness, sustainability and developing health and well-being resilience. Clubs, Charities and groups delivering exhibitions, workshops and activities, promoting what can be accessed and encouraging learning around 'green' initiatives.

2nd event: , Self-Care Body & Mind Event – to bring together, a wide range of local organisations and groups, for a free event at Cirencester Market Place and in the Abbey Grounds. Working with key stakeholders including CDC Community Wellbeing Team,



health & support services, charities, local groups, leisure operators, activities & sports clubs etc. to run an event full of information to help supports all individuals. With a focus on self-care and wellbeing we will promote self- esteem coping strategies, resilience skills, relationship building and impart knowledge of available resources and showcase the array of services, support and activities available from organisations and groups in and around Cirencester. Awarded: £6400

3.2.9 TAYCT (Tetbury Area Youth and Community Trust):

Community Transport remains a significant challenge in the area and Tetbury Youth Club offer activities and experiences to young people that aim to develop wellbeing and increased mental health, improved confidence and aspiration, offer a variety of experiences and skills, as well as access to safe spaces and trusted adults. Currently, the lack of available community transport and drivers is limiting young people's access to some of the provision. TAYCT is partnering with Westonbirt Arboretum to offer 13 young people the opportunity to take part in an 8-week after-school programme of supported outdoor, forest-school style activities and In order for TAYCT to hire the school minibuses for this purpose, volunteer drivers and youth workers must complete MIDAS training. Once completed, TAYCT will be able to hire the SWR minibus as required, improving inclusion and access for all young people, and increasing the range of opportunities that we can offer (e.g. different venues outside of Tetbury). Awarded: £1064

3.2.10 The Phoenix Trust:

Community Based Mindfulness and Compassion initiative - an initial pilot in the Cirencester district supported by the local GP surgeries and the Phoenix Trust. It is anticipated that GPs and other primary care staff will be able to signpost individuals into the programme which is Training communities in mindfulness and compassion, an evidence-based approach to enhancing individual and group resilience and can transform lives. The long-term community sustainability is underpinned by the development of champions and ensuring resources are available as a legacy of the programme. Awarded: £8140

3.2.11 Reconnect Gloucestershire:

Stroke Mentor Programme – funding required to recruit volunteer stroke survivor mentors and match them with new stroke survivors across the district. Experiencing a stroke happens so suddenly, often without warning, and the impacts on those who survive are life altering- physically, emotionally, mentally and socially. The Stroke Mentor Programme aligns with the NHS discharge pathway from the NHS's Integrated Community Stroke Service and form part of the package of services a stroke survivor could access when home. The outcomes for this project would include: i) Increased recovery rates through peer support and encouragement, ii) Reduction in stroke survivors and carers' anxiety and depression related to fear of life after stroke, iii) Reduction in reliance on statutory services due to anxiety and isolation, iv) Stroke survivors and carers being more



informed about stroke, recovery and where to access help/ support and advice, v) Carers feeling supported and being informed around carer support pathways, vi) Stroke survivors and carers reconnecting with their support networks and forming new ones in their communities and vii) stroke survivors becoming ambassadors for other stroke survivors and reduce stigma by feeling confident enough to be seen and heard in their communities. Awarded: £8,8565

3.3 Welfare & Revenue Service

The Council's statutory Welfare and Revenue Services have supported households with the following since 2022:

- 3.3.1** Council Tax Rebate Scheme (Energy schemes) - the council received a total of £4,066,800 for this which supported 26,052 households with their energy bills
- 3.3.2** Energy Bill support Scheme (EBSS) the council administered on behalf of Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DHLUC). £199,000 was spent over 675 applications which supported them with their energy bills
- 3.3.3** Council Tax Support Fund: £102,731 which supported 2,397 households with their council tax liabilities
- 3.3.4** Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP): 2022 £71,99; 2023 £71,475; 2024 £71,475
- 3.3.5** Council Tax Hardship £40,000 (since 2023) - just under £35,000 left
- 3.3.6** Benefits Postcard: A postcard (Annex B) will be sent to households in November highlighting the availability of benefits which households may be eligible to claim.

3.4 Holiday Activity & Food Programme (HAF)

The HAF programme's purpose is to make sure children and young people are entertained, active, educated, safe and fed during school holidays. Since 2021 the Council is leading the delivery of the HAF in partnership with 'World Jungle' and supported by many local partners. The programme offers activities and food during the Eastern, Summer and Christmas holidays. Annex A provides detailed information about the sessions provided, number of children attended and feedback during 2023 and 2024. This years' Christmas HAF is currently being planned.

Funding for HAF has come to an end with Christmas 2024 being the last funded HAF programme.

Over the past months work has been undertaken to plan for the time after HAF as this support for children and families is very important and all the effort that has been put into HAF so far, the local partnerships and everything that has been learned should leave a legacy and continue in some form.

A series of theory of change meetings and workshops have taken place to look at what the impact of HAF has been so far, what went well, what can be done differently and to identify priorities for the Cotswold after the HAF funding has finished and plan future collaborative activities.

The main aim of the future partnership: “We will work together to support children, young people and families to achieve their potential, whatever challenges they may face, helping to create resilient thriving communities within our district”.

One of the main drivers and chosen focus for 2025 is ‘supporting the improved food security, health and wellbeing of children, young people and families’. The figure below gives an overview of the 2025 workstream.

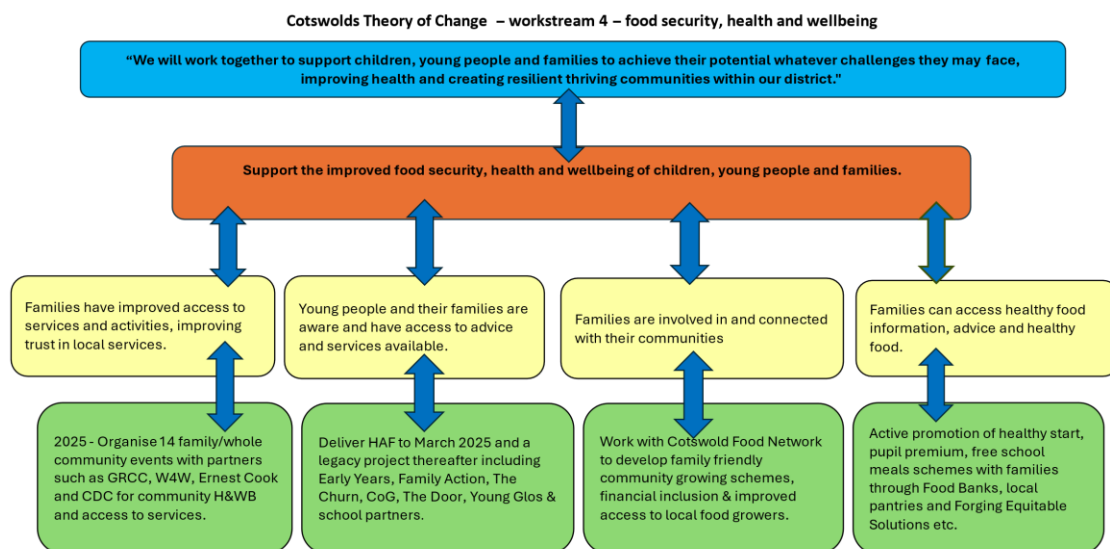


Figure 2: Theory of Change- food security, health and wellbeing

As a result a series of community events are planned for 2025. These will be co-delivered with local partners e.g. Children & Young people's activity providers, statutory & voluntary organisations, CiC's, charities etc. and participants will have free food, activities, advice and support and signposting.

There will be 12/14 events covering each of the holidays to be covered including ½ terms for all age groups:

- February 17th – 21st inclusive 2 events
- April 14th – 25th inclusive (bank holidays 18th & 21st April) 2 events
- May 26th – 30th inclusive (bank holiday 26th May) 2 events
- July 22nd – August 29th inclusive (bank holiday 25th August) 4 events



- October 27th – 31st inclusive 2 events
- December 22nd – 5th January (bank holidays 25th & 26th) 2 events

The work of the CFN as well as LIFT is closely linked with and will support the HAF legacy project.

3.5 Household Support Fund

The Household Support Fund which was launched in October 2021 is intended to alleviate hardship and support those most in need that have been affected by the significant rising in cost of living. It is to meet immediate needs and support those struggling to afford food, energy, water, and utility related essential expenses. Due to significant increases in energy prices, the rising costs of fuel and general cost of living, many households will be adversely affected and placed into financial hardship and therefore there will be a greater emphasis on supporting households with energy bills, food and water bills, and the general cost of living through the Household Support Fund.

The purpose of the Household Support Fund is to support households in the most need with food, energy and water bills and other essential items.

The Fund is made available to Upper Tier Local Authorities. Gloucestershire County Council has invited Gloucestershire District Councils to bid for a district allocation.

At CDC, the biggest share of the allocations were distributed to Citizens Advice to administer the fund on the Council's behalf and to support eligible households with support for energy and water, essential linked to energy and water as well as housing costs. Other support included:

- Supermarket vouchers
- Allocations to North Cotswold Foodbank
- Holistic Family Support Project delivered jointly by the 'Churn Project' and 'The Door' (part of Round 4 and the recent HSF Round 5)
- Cotswold Food Network (CFN) to support the development of the CFN and a feasibility study for a mobile provision for the North Cotswolds (part of the last HSF Round -Round 5)-
- Advice First Aid (part of the last HSF Round -Round 5)- has been developed by local Citizens Advice (CA) offices as a service that provides signposting support to people within community settings, in locations away from a local Citizens Advice office. CA's internal research has shown that people with advice needs often reach out to a trusted local leader first, rather than contact Citizens Advice directly. When someone needs help, if the person they first reach out to in the community is an Advice First Aider, it can reduce the time it takes to access trustworthy information



or make contact with an advice provider and help take early action stop problems snowballing into crisis. Locally the project, which is co-funded by GCC and will run across the whole county, will deliver a two tier approach pilot project as follows:

Level 1: an initial overview for frontline workers

Deliver initial first aid training to staff and volunteers in key community organisations – this is tailored to each district’s particular features. They would learn to identify the advice need that people need support with eg with debt, benefits, housing. The Advice First Aider would be trained to identify the best way for that person to access the information or advice eg signposting to our email or telephone service or the national Citizens Advice website. The Advice First Aid volunteer also learns how they can support people that need it, such as sitting with them while they access the Citizens Advice website.

Level 2: higher level training with a direct referral relationship to a dedicated adviser. This would give Advice First Aiders more in depth training. These volunteers would have access to a dedicated adviser who would manage referrals and support the First Aider.

This project is currently in the preparation phase.

The HSF was set to end at the end of September, causing concern amongst anti-poverty campaigners and councils. The Government decided to extend the HSF until March 2025 and invest £421 million in England with a further £79million made available to devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

GCC has not yet announced their plans for HSF6.

3.6 Additional Support

A. Active Cotswold Programme

Many of the ‘Active Cotswold’ Physical Activity options are low cost or no cost to be as inclusive as possible to our communities.

Cost is a barrier to getting active for many people and this has increased due to the Cost of Living crisis so the council is consciously looking at ways to introduce free and low cost options in accessible locations (as well as increasing options at Leisure Centres) and encouraging residents to make use of the green spaces for activities such as walking.

Community Fit Kit

Community Fit Kits contain some basic exercise equipment, a user manual, nutrition advice, health and wellbeing information. 7 Fit Kits have been donated for free to the Bromford Housing community rooms, over 250 people have access to these. They are in



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low-income areas where people may not be able to afford gym memberships or fitness equipment.

<https://news.cotswold.gov.uk/news/community-fit-kit-launched-for-residents-in-the-cotswolds>

Free events for the community

Active Cotswold ran a live event, there were free activities, including an appearance from Mr Motivator and free fruit smoothies, over 100 people attended. A second event is planned for February 2025 in Bourton-on-the-Water

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9dXpZ8Ot3I>

Free Walk leader training

The programme offers free Ramblers Wellbeing Walk Leader Training, we have trained 34 walk leaders so far, this will hopefully lead to free accessible walks being put on in the district.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bojtooe5RDY>

Free fitness classes in the community

Active Cotswold has funded 10 weeks 'You Can Move' fitness classes in Lechlade and Fairford. These were aimed at getting inactive people out of their homes and giving them the confidence to start moving more and with removing the barrier of cost people who cannot afford classes could attend. The programme also just started funding Chi Chi Fit in Cirencester and Bourton Leisure Centres and people attending don't need to be members either, so it is completely free.

B. Cotswold Community Network (CCN)

Full utilisation of the CCN to promote and share anything happening in the Cotswold District which supports COL. This is bi-weekly virtual meeting for local groups and organisations. Guest Speakers have attended to share information such as Severn Wye energy advisers, Foodbanks, Food Network etc. this helps to raise awareness widely amongst our partners and the wider community about everything related to COL (and many other topics) and is a highly effective ongoing platform.

C. Community Building Work

- Digital Inclusion – fully supported the launch of the 'Getting Connected course' alongside a resident from Bourton on the Water to help older people navigate their way around their devices with confidence. Please see the link below:

<https://www.facebook.com/CotswoldDC/videos/654492996334243>

- Free Getting Connected Community Courses

Bourton on the Water has had 3 successful courses to date since 2022 from which most of the participants and volunteers remain in contact via WhatsApp and a monthly meeting. The whole idea of continued learning and staying in touch has



really made this project sustainable and valuable to all who are involved. 2 courses have run in Tetbury, 1 in Fairford and 2 in Moreton in Marsh. The first course in Stow on the Wold is starting this October. 80 + people have benefitted from this course so far.

Alongside Adult Education, we have worked in partnership with the Police, Digibus, Ability Net, GRCC/DAISI project, Nationwide Banking, Working 4 Wellbeing, P3, Tetbury Town Council, Cotswold Friends and The Good Things Foundation to enable all of the Digital community building work to happen. The use of digital devices contributes to a better and easier way of living and using comparative websites to find cheaper deals such as insurance has really helped with the cost of living along with being able to bank and budget online.

- Cost of living Community Christmas Events

Two free events (Christmas themed) with a free raffle, free food all donated by local businesses and lots of information on the cost of living support with many partner organisations offering information on the day such as the Foodbank and Citizens Advice. Children were entertained for free by World Jungle to encourage families to attend. We had approximately 200 people who benefitted from these events

- Meet Our Community Builder Events

5 engagements to date (CHEQS, Upper Rissington, Chesterton, South Cerney, Lechlade) – 8 partner organisations involved- (Town council, Bromford Housing, Cirencester Foodbank, Salvation Army, Local Schools, Age UK, W4W, PCSO's) 40+ people benefiting – 'Worrying About Money' leaflets were handed out during these sessions and signposting to CAB, P3 and the Foodbanks.

- Bromford housing 55+ accommodation community engagement

7 patches/areas engaged with to date including Cirencester Countess Lillias, Beeches, Moreton in the Marsh - Jameson Court - 35+ residents benefiting - 'Worrying About Money' leaflets were available during these sessions and signposting to CAB, P3 and the Foodbanks

- Community group engagements

Seven groups (Monday Club, Evergreens, Military Base, Mens Shed - Northleach, Tetbury Friendship Café, Barton Club, One Morton, W4W Wellbeing Café, Kingsley House) - 120+ people benefiting - 'Worrying About Money' leaflets were available during these sessions and signposting to CAB, P3 and the Foodbanks

- Free family fun days - Northleach, Bourton on the water, Stow.

Free events organised by the Cotswold Community Connectors for families to engage, connect and find out about all the support that is available to them including COL. Partnership working with all the people who make up the Cotswold



Community Connectors – Community Builder, PCSO's, Parish Warden, Bromford Housing, Bourton and Stow Baptist church, NHS social prescriber link worker and in conjunction with Headspace mental health charity, NHS Bus, Bourton Vale Equestrian, Bourton football, Stow Active youth club, Young Gloucestershire, Cotswold First Aid, Rotary club, Classic Cars, Bourton Primary school, Stow Primary and Northleach primary school. We have hosted 5 events so far, each attracting 100 people so 500 people in all

- 'Grow your own'

Free community courses were designed and set up for 'Grow Your Own' and a new Community Growing Scheme established in collaboration with Cirencester College Adult Education and Roots & Seeds café/restaurant –this was successful and had great feedback and is now an ongoing partnership and community engagement piece of work and is fully connected into the wider Food Network/Growing Network.

Conversations between Community Wellbeing team and a resident about 'growing your own', food pantries and food banks led to lots of ideas, eventually a Facebook page called Free Northleach Gardeners Exchange was formed – sow, grow, share the spare was the motto. It has over 324 members, a passionate group of people who use the church porch to house crops that people in the community can help themselves to.

[FREE NORTHLEACH GARDENERS' EXCHANGE. Sow, grow, share the spare](#) 
[| Facebook](#)

- Black Cat Café – Northleach - warm space and teen café – Sept 22 – May 24

<https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/511lohse/the-old-woolhouse-northleach-warm-space-flyer.pdf>

The Teen café enabled 50 children each week to come and have free toast and cheap drinks and snacks in a warm environment where they could meet friends and socialise. The Warm space during the day provided a warm, safe, welcoming environment for anyone who wanted some company or advice on any problems they were having. There was a regular group of people who came in, approximately 40 people.

- Chesteron primary school project – Cirencester

We had many engagements with the pastoral lead and the head at the primary school and had several conversations with the parents and carers there, signposting to various organisations such as Foodbank, Cirencester College, Adult Education, CAB and P3. We organised the Big Dig Day so that the children could have access to free food and learn about how to grow your own.

- Cirencester Bingham Library Event



CDC Community Builders were joined by the Foodbank, The Churn, Clean Slate and the Big Yellow Bus where we networked and engaged with residents of Cirencester, gave information about COL support, wellbeing and signposted to the various groups and organisations.

- **NHS Wellbeing Roadshow – September – November 2024**
With a focus on COL support for our communities, Community Builders have organised and run an Autumn Cotswold District ‘Roadshow’ and to date have visited 7 different locations using the NHS bus with different partner organisations including the North and South Foodbank, The Churn, Cotswold Friends, CAB, Working 4 Wellbeing and have spoken to nearly 100 people so far and only half way through. We have had advice to give to everyone and have made people aware that there is help out there for those who need it in many topics relating to health and wellbeing with an emphasis on COL support.
- **Table Churooms/Westwoods Centre/Holiday and Intergenerational Open Sessions – 50 people have benefitted from these free sessions**
Table Tennis is a fun sport and is great for everyone to try. The sessions were free in the Church rooms over the school holidays throughout 2022 and then at the Westwoods Centre in 2023 with a donation towards the hire of the hall and then a free Intergenerational session provided by a group of fundraisers in the town in August 2024.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 Not applicable.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report is mainly updating on retrospective activity which means that all activity has been funded already. Any future cost of living related activities/initiatives are either fully funded already or will be presented to Cabinet/Council separately.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no legal implications arising from the report.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

7.1 There are no significant risks associated with the report.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

- 8.1** The recommendations of this report are not expected to differentially impact any groups who may have specific characteristics.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** The Council's work to support communities with the cost of living has no negative implications for the environment.
- 9.2** The Cotswold Food Network aims to reduce food waste and to support the local food and farming industry.
- 9.3** The aim of maximising people's income can support the local economy by increasing household income. This in turn may support households to engage in climate change mitigation measures.
- 9.4** The aim of bringing support services closer to people through mobile provision in rural areas and other initiatives such as Advice First Aid can reduce the need for individuals to travel.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

(END)