SCHape Panel Review Cost of Living Crisis - Action Plan

Recommendation	Benefits to SCH and customers		Action and progress	Deadline
Money Advice				
1.Financial investment Financial investment in the team to increase the number of advisors - consideration to be given to prioritise some additional funding, potentially from reserves.	• More of the most vulnerable residents would be able to access the service • Potentially reduce arrears and other tenancy failure • Mitigate some cases of poor mental health		Due to the current financial position of SCH and the pressure on budgets, additional resources are not currently an option. We will continue to review this.	Ongoing
2.Staff Contracts Provide permanent contracts to staff rather than fixed term where possible	• More successful recruitment & retention • Reduce repeat training costs and other investment in staff • Provide continuity of service		The existing fixed term posts in Money Advice were made permanent in December 2022 to provide stability to both the individuals and the team.	Completed December 2022
3.Upskilling of staff Upskill existing staff from other teams to carry out less specialist activity such as signposting and basic assessments	• Creates a larger pool of staff that can assist residents with low level issues • Frees up more specialist officers to support more complex cases		**Recommendation agreed** We can utilise staff from Housing Options and Neighbourhood Services that may have previous experience in Rent Arrears/Benefits etc. Possibly acting as COL champions. Housing Options staff now complete financial statements when customers move into Homeless accommodation.	Completed March 2023

4. Admin support Assess the viability of providing additional admin support to the team from across the organisation to free up the team to focus on providing specialist support	• Utilises staff better, so freeing up specialist staff to support customers		We are exploring whether there is any additional funding for things like Housing Benefit assessments. It would help to free up capacity if we had a trained officer to work on Temporary Accommodation caseloads. Staff have been trained to use a budget calculator, freeing up specialist staff.	Completed March 2023
5. Volunteers Explore the viability of training a pool of volunteers to deliver low level referral and signposting advice	• Increased capacity • Free up specialist staff for more complex cases		We are starting to explore this and look at all options but it may take longer as our Employment and Skills Officer has left. SCH unable to pursue as we no longer have an employment & skills post.	SCH unable to pursue as we no longer have an employment & skills post.
6. Pre tenancy work Provide more in-depth pre-tenancy work around budgeting	• Giving new tenants budgeting skills will help with rent arrears in the long term • Reduce the demand on the service		We complete budgeting with new tenants as part of the pre-tenancy work which includes maximising the person's income to ensure they are receiving all the welfare benefits they are entitled to. Staff also use a budget calculator to look at their income and expenditure to ensure the property is affordable to them. We have also developed visual tenancy modules to supplement the pre tenancy work with those customers that have never held a tenancy.	Completed March 2023

			New process in place.	
7. Targeted information Target information to reach groups that are more at risk	• Identifies customers at an earlier stage so could prevent them reaching crisis • Reduces demand on specialist services		We identify new tenants on low income including those that have been living in temporary accommodation and make applications for white goods etc We also refer customers at an early stage to relevant support agencies or our Money Advice Team if appropriate. We contact people who have received the Household Support Fund to see if they need any further assistance. We also look at where vulnerable customers have been helped via Discretionary Housing Payments which may prevent an escalation of debt action. New processes in place.	Completed March 2023
Mental Health Support				
8. Financial investment Financial investment to increase the resource that the mental health advisor has - consideration to be given to prioritise some additional funding, potentially from reserves.	• More of the most vulnerable residents would be able to access the service • Potentially reduce tenancy failure • Mitigate cases of poor mental health		Due to the current financial position of SCH and the pressure on budgets, additional resources are not currently an option. We will continue to monitor volumes of referrals. We will continue to review this.	Ongoing

9.Upskilling of staff Upskill existing staff from other teams to carry out less specialist activity such as signposting	• Give staff the confidence & tools so they can identify issues and assist customers • Frees up mental health advisor to support more complex cases • Increased capacity • Reduction in poor mental health		Mental Health Training sessions have been rolled out across a number of the teams within SCH. The aim has been to raise awareness, increase understanding and overall promote best practice when supporting customers. Additionally, joint visits to customers are carried out by the Mental Health officer and other officers across the business to support customers who may need additional support.	Completed March 2023
10.Training Provide awareness training across the whole organisation	• Well informed staff will be able to identify customers who need support		**Recommendation agreed** Underway and ongoing.	Completed March 2023
11. External services Promote other specialist services more widely and frequently	• Raise awareness to the services available • Provide choices for customers		**Recommendation agreed** The mental health booklet is a user-friendly guide with key contact details for a range of different mental services. This is given out regularly.	Completed March 2023
Employment and skills				

12. Budgeting sessions Deliver group budgeting sessions at pre-tenancy stage	• Giving new tenants budgeting skills will help with rent arrears in the long term • Reduce the demand on the service		We can't do this in group sessions as new tenancies start every week. We have a module which is shared with new tenants to help individuals plan budgets pre-tenancy. Tenancy Sustainment then carry out individual budgeting at pre-tenancy stage. Tenancy Sustainment support new tenants for three months.	Continue to provide budgeting & support. Continue to review service.
13. Volunteers Train volunteers to provide money advice signposting	• Increased capacity • Free up specialist staff for more complex cases		Currently discussing what the requirements are for this with the Money Advice team and if viable it will be included in the overall volunteering strategy.	SCH unable to pursue as we no longer have an employment & skills post.
14. Apprentices Develop admin-based apprentices to have the confidence to undertake low level calls to residents at high risk of CoL impact	• Improves their skills • Increases capacity		**Recommendation agreed** New Administration Level 2 Apprentice is in post. These calls have been taking place.	Completed March 2023
15. Digital Offer Develop a more prominent digital presence for residents to access employment, skills and training advice, support and activities	• More accessible information for residents		**Recommendation agreed** Section set up on the website. Good on-line resources with information and access to all current opportunities in Solihull available and updated regularly. We will share any information and then promote proactively across social media.	Completed March 2023

Furniture Project				
16. Resource Assess the viability of developing a network of volunteers to support the initiative	• Increase resources to support more donations		Incorporated within the overall on-going volunteering framework. Currently no resource capacity to recruit / manage in house but continued engagement with external community groups where there is an existing volunteer network.	SCH is no longer providing a furniture project due to changes to structure.
17. Voids Review the void process to support the recycling of useable goods (also referenced in void SCHape review)	• Bigger supply of goods for donating • Reduce void costs by reducing storage and disposal costs		Agreement to train appropriate staff to identify and communicate if suitable items are available but still developing a workable formal process. We continue to work with external community groups when items identified	Completed March 2023
18. Premises Explore options for bigger premises - through partners, unused garages etc as an interim measure	• Ability to facilitate more donations		Investigate viability.	Not currently an option
Partnership Working				
19. Pop up sessions Host a series of pop-up sessions across the borough in places where residents frequent or can easily frequent, to raise awareness of the support available to residents	• Raise awareness • Support residents in need • Direct communication with residents • Raise profile of SCH		**Recommendation agreed** **Progress** Sessions held at: The Core (central Solihull)	Complete/ongoing

	• Deliver information more effectively		Chelmsley Library (Chelmsley Wood) Connection Café (Kingshurst) Seeds of Hope (Kingshurst) Marston Green Library (Marston Green) Auckland Hall (Smiths Wood) St Marys Church Hall (Olton) Further sessions being arranged for February.	
20. Communications Ensure there is a strong comms plan in place that uses a variety of ways to get the message out (See comms section)	See comms section		**Recommendation agreed** See recommendation 24 in comms section	Complete/ongoing
21. Targeted Support Provide targeted support to residents most at risk of impact from the CoL crisis. Via wellbeing calls and communications. Tailor the right type of information to the particular group or demographic.	• Identifies customers at an earlier stage so could prevent them reaching crisis		**Recommendation agreed** **Progress:** Residents identified and calls are currently being made.	Completed March 2023
Communications				
22. Outreach surgeries Implement a programme of outreach surgeries (in conjunction with or as an alternative to the pop-ups). In conjunction with MAT, SCH mental health advisor and external partners.	• Provides opportunities to start conversations with customers & offer advice and assistance • Reduces the number of residents reaching crisis		As per recommendation 19	Now delivered at the Family Hubs

Consider upskilling other staff to support the surgeries.	• Well informed staff will provide a knowledgeable service			
23. High rise communications Trial TV screens in high rises	• Provides information to customers who may not usually engage		**Recommendation agreed** **Progress** Funding secured for two screens. Due for installation in February. Trialled but the technology needed within the high rises was too expensive but we have developed a robust high rise comms plan.	Not currently an option
24. Communications Ensure there is a strong comms plan in place that uses a variety of ways to get the message out	• Reaches more customers, including those who aren't online or may be illiterate		**Recommendation agreed** Comms plan in place to provide information from Solihull Council's "Here to Help" website. Actions so far include: • Article in newsletter • Regular social media posts • Updated website (CoL section)	Completed March 2023
25. Targeted calls Make targeted phone calls to capture customers who never contact	• May identify issues that would otherwise go undetected		We have been making calls to people who never report repairs (and also report too many repairs). We are also making calls as part of the Everyone Matters campaign. The Every Contact Counts project will identify residents who have had no	Completed March 2023

			contact in the preceding 12 months and ensure a visit is made	
26. Top tips Provide top tips and signposting to help residents make their money go further	• Help residents make their money go further		We now share information from the council and Government with residents.	Completed March 2023
Asset Management				
27. Targeted calls Make targeted phone calls/written communication to residents with a low EPC rating	• Provide tailored support to those most at risk of CoL and damp and mould		We have been making calls to these properties to offer advice and support.	Completed March 2023
28. Damp and mould communications Increase communications around the prevention of damp and mould	• Reduce damp and mould cases		**Recommendation agreed** Additional communications on social media and in the Newsletter. Raised in satisfaction surveys, and will be included in the Every Contact Counts project	Completed March 2023
29. Drying facilities Assess the provision of drying facilities in high and low rise so residents can mitigate the risk of damp and mould	• Reduce damp and mould cases		The drying areas are now open.	Completed March 2024