

Leaders' Committee

Cost of Living

Item no: 6

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| Summary | This report provides a summary update of progress on London Councils' ongoing work on the Cost of Living, including the proposed Cost of Living Dashboard and Pan-London Pension Credit Campaign. |
| Recommendations | Leaders' Committee is asked to note and discuss the contents of the report. |

Cost of Living Impact in London

1.1 The increasing Cost of Living continues to be an issue of significant concern for Londoners and London boroughs alike. The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rose

by 10.1% in the 12 months to September 2022, up from 9.9% in August and returning to July's recent high.

1.2 The latest analysis by the Greater London Authority shows that Londoners are experiencing higher inflation for local goods and services than the average across the UK. London rental prices are a major factor. Rents for new rentals in London are growing faster than anywhere else in the UK at over 17 per cent.

1.3 The 2022 Survey of Londoners found four in five (77%) Londoners believe cost of living to be an important issue facing the capital, the highest level of concern for any issue ever recorded on this question in any previous survey of Londoners, and an increase of 15% points since last year.

1.4 In the November London Cost of Living YouGov survey, 19 per cent of Londoners reported that they were financially struggling, rising to 31 per cent for those earning less than £20,000 pa. Almost 50 per cent of Londoners reported falling behind or struggling with bills and 48 per cent were struggling with their rent or mortgage payments.

1.5 Rising local food costs is one of the key pressures pushing the capital's underlying inflation above the national average. This will affect Londoners on the lowest incomes as they spend a larger proportion of their income on food.

2. London Councils' Working Group

2.1 London's Leaders and Chief Executives met on 22 September 2022 to discuss the impacts of rising inflationary pressures on residents, businesses, and local government. The Chair of London Councils recommended that a Member and Officer working group should be established to take forward work to share emerging practice and identify opportunities for collaborative action, and that this group should be chaired by the Executive member for Communities (Cllr Claire Holland - Lambeth).

2.2 The working group is being established with the aim of adding value to borough work in supporting residents and businesses with cost-of-living pressures through a co-ordinated approach to sharing practice and coordinating collaborative actions. Its core objectives are to:

- identify and raise awareness of emerging practice that supports residents and businesses with cost-of-living pressures (work through existing professional networks, e.g., Heads of Communications, to share emerging practice)

- identify opportunities for boroughs to collaborate on activity and campaigns, where a multi-borough or pan-London approach would add value
- assess the latest intelligence and data on the impacts of inflationary pressures and policy interventions.

2.3 At its first meeting it will agree a time-limited work plan, that identifies themes, resources, methods of communication/implementation, to deliver the groups objectives and determine the short, medium and long-term aims that the group's activity will support. The group will provide progress reports on the delivery of its work plan to London Councils' Executive.

2.4 Members include London Councils Executive members and Shadow Executive members for Communities, and for Skills and Employment, and the Shadow Executive Member Business, Economy and Culture. The CELC leads for Economy, and Welfare, the Co-Chair of the LRB Robust Safety Net Mission. Housing Directors Network and the London Community Engagement Network are also represented.

3. Cost of living dashboard

3.1 A paper setting out a proposal for a London Cost of Living dashboard was discussed by CELC in October where it was agreed this would be taken forward. London Councils and the London Office of Technology and Innovation held a workshop with 21 borough representatives on 18th November to consider in more detail the scope and practicalities of delivering the dashboard.

3.2 Having considered borough input and the workshop discussion London Councils have identified two main use cases for the dashboard to take forward:

- An aggregate of non-borough London data sets broken down at a borough level on Cost of Living as a resource for borough analysts to produce reports and insights.
- Collated borough data to understand the impact on borough finance and services to allow boroughs to benchmark, identify the potential for pan-London solutions to shared problems and support lobbying and communications work for additional resources.

3.3 London Councils and the London Office of Technology and Innovation are working with boroughs to identify data sets for inclusion in the first proposal with the aim of rapidly draw together a useable product in the short-term (December/January). Proposed data sets include a borough level break down of the Citizens Advice Cost of Living data, which is not currently available to boroughs.

3.4 A borough working group is being established to give oversight and input into developing the second proposal with an aim to deliver a minimum viable product by March.

4. Pan-London Pension Credit Campaign

4.1 This campaign is part of the London Recovery Board's Robust Safety Net Mission. The campaign is funded by the GLA and delivered in partnership with London Councils. It intends to use council administrative data to identify households entitled to Pension Credit who are not yet claiming it.

4.2 Households will be written to too encourage them to apply and targeted with follow up phone calls and support. Age UK have agreed to support the campaign. All boroughs were invited to participate in the campaign and 20 boroughs have applied to do so. The campaign is due to commence in January and could deliver up to an estimated £10m in financial benefits for low-income pensioners. If the campaign proves successful the same model could be used to drive take up for additional financial benefits

5. Key Milestones

5.1 Key deliverables in the coming month include:

- December 2022: First meeting of the London Councils Cost of Living Working Group.
- December 2022: Initial iteration of London Cost of Living Dashboard (subject to the availability of necessary data).
- January 2022: Pension Credit take up campaign commences with first letters issued.

Financial Implications for London Councils

While most of the work on the data dashboard is being undertaken in-house using data that is already accessible (with assistance from the GLA), there may be a need to pay for some data sets that are not otherwise available to boroughs and engage consultancy services to help design a product that is easy to use and maintain.

Data sets would only be purchased where there is a demonstrable utility to boroughs and clear economies of scale from meeting the cost at a pan-London level. In that case, a proposal for funding would be submitted to the Shared Ambitions Impact Fund.

Legal Implications for London Councils

There are no legal implications for London Councils

Equalities Implications for London Councils

There are no equalities implications for London Councils