

RESPONSES BY TOWN, PARISH AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS TO THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS

Below is a summary of responses to the cost of living crisis, received to date, from Town, Parish and Community Councils.

The Council recently received confirmation of the criteria for the use of the funding they will be receiving from MKCC. Thankfully the criteria is such that it will allow them to work in a flexible way to address different needs across the Parish area. They will be appointing a working group at their Council meeting to move the initiative forward in a timely way. In the first instance they will look to link with other groups that are already working in the Parish area to see if we can fund additional sessions, they will also look at setting up new sessions and services as a direct consequence of receiving the funding.

A further update will be provided at the end of the month.

Campbell Park Parish Council

Fairfields Community Council have not been able to do anything to address the cost of living crisis as they have no facilities to hold meetings or offer a warm place to meet, take part in a food bank system or provide advice.

They only thing the Council have been able to do is put the main council posters in their notice board to advertise what is available in Milton Keynes.

Fairfields Community Council

Newport Pagnell Town Council are looking at providing warm spaces. They have two possible venues in mind and are just finalising details. They will both serve warm food too.

Newport Pagnell Town Council

The Council recently agreed to hold three drop-in sessions hosted by MK Citizens Advice for our residents.

Old Woughton Parish Council

Olney Town Council are opening The Olney Centre, as a “Warm Place” for residents.

The centre will be open 9-5pm with hot drinks available, the library is in the same building, and there will be jigsaws, games and a piano. Any further activities will be considered as requested.

Olney Town Council

Simpson and Ashland Parish Council are considering opening both Simpson Village Hall and Ashland Meeting Place for a few hours a week as warm spaces with free hot drinks. They are also looking at helping other local groups to extend their opening times, such as a local coffee morning group.

The ideas are in the process of being finalised as the grant funding from MKCC has only just been confirmed.

Simpson and Ashland Parish Council

Stony Stratford Town Council have applied for a grant from MKCC to provide assistance in the cost of living crisis and to utilise these funds, they are investigating the provision of the following services to help residents:

- Funding towards the MK Springers Bridge Project to to enable children and young people, from low-income families, to benefit from a year’s fully funded gymnastics at the Club.
- Funding for minibus to help with accessibility to services
- Funding for free Breakfast at schools (or to extend existing provision)
- Food parcels for over 65’s
- Food bank/Community larder.
- Debt/Money advice sessions (to complement existing Citizen’s Advice)
- Community Warm hubs – extending Stony Stratford Library opening hours to include Saturday afternoons and Sundays; working with our partners MKCC to extend the Rowans Centre opening hours on Fullers Slade.
- Community Warm hubs, Coffee mornings – thanks very much to Friends of Stony Stratford Library who have agreed to help with this initiative by initially setting up a coffee morning once a month in the new Council Meeting Room, Stony Stratford Library. We are hoping that this can be a once a week initiative.
- Community Allotment facility
- Other cost of living crisis uses identified which will emerge over the coming months

The Council have also set up a page on the website with links to MKCC Cost of Living Page and other information on services already available such as help with utility bills.

Stony Stratford Town Council

Update to be provided at the end of November.

Walton Community Council

At the recent Town Council meeting it was agreed that the library would be used as a 'warm hub' in agreement with MK Library Service. The Council will be providing volunteers to offer hot drinks, unfortunately there is no facility to cook hot meals but they hope it can be a social centre for those who would struggle to afford to heat their homes all day.

WSTC also support a local charity, Poor's Coal Charity, which gives grants to pay for heating. The grants are means tested and are paid directly to the energy provider. The Trustees of the charity include WSTC Councillors, but it is not run by the council. The Council have been helping with the promotion and administration of this charity for many years, sadly the number of people applying for assistance this year has increased hugely.

Woburn Sands Town Council

An update to be provided after the Town Council meeting (22 November 2022)

Wolverton & Greenleys Town Council

The 'Cost of Living' crisis is not new to many in Woughton, so many of the activities that other places are considering are already being delivered:

- Community Fridge and Larder. Providing opportunities to help reduce food costs, reduce food waste and, at times, get to try some different food stuffs. With the fridge focused on preventing food waste, over the past 2 years, almost 100 tonnes of food have been redistributed at the Coffee Hall fridge. This is now complemented by the larder, a food subscription service that provides low cost food for subscribers.
- Community Café. Utilising some of the food that comes through the two schemes above, the community café provides regular opportunities for people to come together, socialise, eat a variety of food in a warm and friendly environment. This is an area that we intend to expand over the coming months, taking the successful model and replicating in other venues. This has already happened with WCC supporting local Resident groups to deliver

similar activities, with both Tinkers Bridge and Eaglestone offering cafes and access to food (either fridge or larder or both).

- ‘Bolt ons’ bring added value to these activities, with quizzes, craft groups, Job Club, etc. also offered space within the cafes. These mean that they are more than simply somewhere to come and keep warm but are social spaces where new friendships and support networks are created – again, this is the aim for any additional provision over the coming months.
- Youth services across the parish have, for many years, provided refuge for young people against the weather as well as providing a range of educational and social activities. The vast majority of our services also include food of some description – the community fridge originated with donations being made towards the youth service and grew from there.

Other activities include:

- a regular ‘games night’ – a couple of hours every fortnight where a community centre is opened, hot drinks and a selection of games are available. This is growing each time with more and more participants.
- ‘Film nights’ – as they sound, a room, a film, some chairs, and popcorn. These can become expensive, depending on the film, as licensing costs are considerable.
- Open Mic nights – again, the description explains. A mic and mixing desk, people with a range of talents and some quick and easy food (jacket spud, toastie, etc.). Fun and encouraging for participants and attendees.

The plans for the coming months include continuing and building upon these activities, replicating in other areas of the parish, and aiming to extend opening times where this is seen to help. As with so much, timings will be crucial and working with our officer team, councillors and volunteers, alongside other community groups, we are in the process of creating an additional programme that covers the essential parts of the day. Whilst we have seen other parishes looking at afternoon sessions, evenings and weekends are often the times where there is nowhere else to be. We hope to be able to build upon the successful foundation already in place, to extend the games nights, social aspects and hot food provision that already helps so many within the parish.

Woughton Community Council
