

DRAFT

Template Scoping Document

<u>Environment & Economy Select Committee</u>	
<u>Scrutiny Review Title:</u>	Cost of Living Review
<u>Background issues</u> to review – rationale for scrutinising this issue:	When Members considered their work programme for the 2022-23 Municipal Year at its meeting on 23 June 2022 it was agreed to include a review item on the Cost of Living.
Is this issue covered by Corporate Plans?	Not directly.
<u>Focus of the review:</u> (State what the review focus will be)	<p>The Chair has stated that he would like to widen out the discussion on the cost of living and invite some of the Council's partners in the VCSO community to give their take on what is going on, such as Stevenage CAB. This review is not to offer a critique of SBC position, but rather provide some local intelligence gathering to see how the Council and the voluntary sector in Stevenage are working together. All recognise that for some in our community these are very difficult times, but by sharing information and signposting a lot can be achieved locally.</p> <p>In discussion with the Chair and Vice-Chair it has been suggested that there could be a focus on three elements of the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the following areas over three themed meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Residents – exploring the impact on different demographics, impact across the income deciles• Businesses – especially small to medium sized enterprises (SME's). Highlighting energy crisis for businesses, material cost inflation, business rates• Council – stress on services such as Housing, Rents, Customer Service Centre and pressure on staff re heating at home/travel costs

	Depending on what progress is made in the three sessions further consideration could be given to whether the three themes could be revisited in the new municipal year for 2023-24?
Timing issues: Are there any timing constraints to when the review can be carried out?	There is an Executive and Cost of Living Working Party so any work that is undertaken by the E&E Select Committee would need to be may need to be co-ordinated with this group. The review would start in January 2023 and hold a couple of evidence gathering meetings prior to the election period starting in April 2023.
The Committee will meet on (provide dates if known):	Dates: Day/Month/Time/Venue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 January 2023 – Officer presentation and draft scoping document – Focus on impact on residents • 22 February 2023 – Focus on SME Businesses • 23 March 2023 – Focus on the Council (close off review for election period)
SBC Leads (list the Executive Portfolio Holders and SD’s Heads of Service who should appear as witnesses):	<i>Officers have suggested the following people:</i> <u>Regarding the impact on residents</u> <i>Draw on some of the following for input:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ben Threadgold, Interim Head of Policy and Communities • Daryl Jedowski, Corporate Policy and Research Officer • Charlotte Blizzard Welch, Citizens Advice • Sharon Bell, Children’s Centre • Housing Team – what are they finding amongst the Council’s tenants? • Gemma Marret, SBC Senior Play Worker- regarding Warm Spaces <u>Regarding the impact on SME Businesses –</u> <i>Draw on some of the following for input:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mena Caldbeck, Business Relationship Manager • Representatives of SMEs – perhaps a business based at the BTC • Representative of WENTA who have oversight of the BTC • Indoor Market Trader

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Local Chamber of Commerce representative</i> • <i>Herts Growth Hub representative</i> <p><u>Regarding the impact on the Council (corporately and on staff)</u> <i>Draw on some of the following for input:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Clare Fletcher, Strategic Director (CFO)</i> • <i>Brian Moldon, Assistant Director Finance</i> • <i>Kirsten Frew/Clare Davies, HR Manager</i>
Any other witnesses (external persons/critical friend)?:	To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting. <i>Possible options identified by officers:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Allocation of lead Members on specific individual issues/questions: Any other Questions Members wish to cover:	To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting. Members will undertake their own desktop and fact-finding research and ask questions on the following areas (list the issues to address during the interviews): <i>To be identified</i>
Site visits and evidence gathering in the Community	Unless directed by Members, it is not considered that this review would be suitable for site visits.
Equalities and Diversity issues: The review will consider what the relevant equalities and diversity issues are regarding the Scrutiny subject that is being scrutinised	It was agreed that the review would address equalities and diversity issues directly in the review. <u>Equalities & Diversity Issues</u> – Are there any E&D issues to consider in this review? – The review should consider what equality and diversity issues there are for the cost-of-living crisis? Residents who are in receipt of benefits and/or on a low income are experiencing the most acute financial pressures affecting their ability to pay for rent, food, transport, and domestic energy.
Constraints (Issues that have been highlighted at the scoping stage but are too broad/detailed to be covered by the review):	<i>To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting in December 2022</i> (These issues can be captured and dealt with via other means – Briefings/email/officer action etc)

<p><u>Background Documents/data</u> that can be provided to the review</p>	<p><i>As identified by the Committee at the draft scoping meeting in December 2022:</i> Evidence requested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (?)
<p><u>Agreed Milestones and review sign off</u> -To be agreed by Members and officers</p>	<p><i>Formal response from Executive Portfolio Holder (Executives have a Statutory requirement to respond to Scrutiny review recommendations two months after receiving a final report and recommendations of a review: Date Executive Portfolio responses are expected (dependent on the final report & executive portfolio response template publishing date): DD MM YY</i> Date for monitoring implementation of recommendations – final sign off (typically one year from completion of the review): DD MM YY (Close to this date the Select Committee will receive a report at a Committee meeting to agree the final sign off of the review recommendations)</p>