

Title of Report:	Warm Welcome Spaces
Committee Report Submitted To:	The Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	20 December 2022
For Decision or For Information	For Information

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-2025)	
Strategic Theme	Healthy, Active and Engaged Communities
Outcome	The Borough comprises cohesive and stable communities which work collaboratively with a range of stakeholders to address issues and deliver on opportunities
Lead Officer	Head of Community & Culture Community Development Manager

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	N/A
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
Capital/Revenue	
Code	33201
Staffing Costs	n/a

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update for Elected Members on a Warm Welcome Spaces campaign that Council is undertaking along with partners on the Anti-poverty Stakeholder Steering Group and the community and voluntary sector, as part of its wider initiatives to alleviate the cost of living pressures.

2.0 Introduction

In light of the cost of living pressures facing many residents, Council is working with community, voluntary and statutory sector partners, building on the response to the pandemic, to create a network of warm and welcome spaces across Causeway Coast and Glens where residents can attend activities or just drop in for a cuppa and some company. These include libraries, community centres, church halls, sports clubs and other places promising a warm welcome over the winter months.

The Council's intention is to create a directory of all the spaces available and to ensure this information is clearly available so everyone knows where they can go to connect, enjoy some company and keep active, all the while keeping warm. Support will be provided to organisations that wish to create a warm space or to extend their existing activities.

3.0 Background

Energy bills have increased dramatically, and record levels of inflation are making essentials like food and fuel unaffordable. The situation only looks likely to get worse in the coming months. New research predicts that by April 2023, 72.4% of households in Northern Ireland will be living in fuel poverty ie. spending more than 10% of their net income on fuel after housing costs¹. The households most likely to be in fuel poverty will be larger families with children and lone-parent families with two or more children. While government proposals for assistance for those struggling to pay energy bills are still to be realised, the stark reality is that many homes in Causeway Coast and Glens will not be able to afford food or fuel this winter.

Council facilitates an Anti-Poverty Stakeholder Steering Group (APSSG) which brings together voluntary organisations that are directly addressing poverty including the 4 main established foodbanks, Community Advice Causeway, St Vincent DePaul, Salvation Army, Coleraine and Limavady Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership Board representatives along with relevant statutory bodies. The APSSG has developed an action plan and delivered several initiatives including a 'Where to Turn' campaign to promote awareness of support services that are available for people who find themselves struggling financially. An information hub has been created on Council's website with details of foodbanks, advice centres, fuel support, energy efficiency, social supermarkets, community cupboards and fridges, wellbeing support and regional organisations.

The concept of Warm Space has gathered momentum with local authorities across the UK as efforts are made to put in place a raft of measures to support people through the winter months. Warm Spaces are places where people can gather for free in a warm, safe, welcoming place and enjoy a hot drink and some company and maybe participate in activities and access advice and other services.

Warm spaces are of course not a remedy for fuel poverty, not everyone will be able to get to warm spaces, not everyone will want to access them, and people will still need to heat their homes, but they are still a measure that can help in some way to support people, particularly those most vulnerable, over the winter months. Council will continue to engage through the APSSG with local partners to promote the range of other services that are available.

¹ Source: <https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-Poverty-173-rising-fuel-poverty.pdf>

4.0 Warm Spaces in Causeway Coast and Glens

Local communities have stepped up in many ways to support their neighbours through the cost of living crisis just as they did through the Covid pandemic. Many local organisations continue to provide a wide range of activities in their community venues, some organisations are considering being open for longer or widening their offer and many are striving to extend a welcome to a wider audience. Many organisations are focusing on the activities that they are offering in the space rather than the fact that they'll be held in a warm room. There are already a number of newly created warm space initiatives operating in the borough and several of these involve a co-ordinated community response between a number of organisations in the community such as in Dungiven and Garvagh.

Libraries NI are promoting a range of drop in activities in their 10 libraries across CCG with activities ranging from Tea and Newspapers to Knit and Knatter and Lego Clubs.

Council's Flowerfield and Roe Valley Arts Centres are offering a 'Warm Space' for everyone this wintertime. People are invited to come along and enjoy the designated Warm Spaces in both centres, where they'll find books, newspapers, tea/coffee, board games and drawing materials for children in a warm and welcoming environment. The Warm Spaces are comfortable rooms set aside every Wednesday and Thursday from 1-4pm, 7-9pm and Saturdays 10am-1pm.

Council has created an online registration form for organisations to register their Warm Welcome Space. A call has gone out to community and voluntary organisations to register their venue and activities through this online form. The form can be accessed at the following link <https://arcq.is/zfHr9>

The venues that register are being plotted on a map by Council's Digital Services team and listed on the website for residents to easily access information about activities or venues that they would drop into in a certain area on any given day.

5.0 Support for Warm Welcome Spaces

As soon as an organisation registers their venue, a member of the Community Development team will get in touch to discuss any support that they can offer. They have collated some useful resources, toolkits and information about funding for warm spaces that can be accessed on Councils website <https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk/live/community-services/community-development/warm-spaces>

A new Social Connections Grant is due to be launched with Councils annual grant programmes on 12th December. Mindful of the growing levels of loneliness and social isolation, the pressures of the cost of living crisis and the impact this has on physical and mental health, Council is collaborating with the Northern Health & Social Care Trust through the Causeway Coast and Glens Loneliness as well as the Causeway GP Federation Multi-Disciplinary Team and Limavady GP Multi-Disciplinary Team to deliver the grant which replaces the Social Inclusion Grant. The grant will open for applications on a rolling basis from 11th January and organisations operating warm spaces schemes will be able to apply to this grant for support with costs such as venue hire, refreshments and activities.

For organisations that are co-ordinating with others in an area to promote use of shared spaces there may also be some support available through Council's Good Relations Programme and the Community Development team will discuss these opportunities with organisations when they register.