

NEWS RELEASE

Borough Council of
King's Lynn &
West Norfolk



14 October 2022

Cost-of-living support initiatives introduced for west Norfolk households

As the cost of living continues to cause concern, the borough council has been identifying ways it can help its residents as winter approaches.

The following schemes either already in place or being put in place are designed to complement each other and county and national initiatives to provide a broad base of support. Further initiatives are currently under consideration and will be announced in the near future.

£75 credit applied to over 2,000 known low-income residents' council tax bills.

A scheme that has already been applied is a £75 credit to eligible council tax bills. This scheme was funded by central Government Covid 19 Hardship Support. The borough council has been able to use the £185,000 remaining from the original funding to provide these significant credits.

Cllr Sam Sandell, Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk Cabinet Member for People and Communities, said: "I am pleased that not only are we able to continue with this hardship grant, but we have been able to apply it promptly to eligible council tax accounts, which will help those residents on the very lowest incomes before the energy bill increases really hit home."

Discretionary Housing Payment for over 65s

£38k of Household Support Grant, which is specifically for people aged over 65 has been added to the council's Discretionary Housing Payment Scheme. This will mean that the council will be able to top up Housing Benefit or Universal Credit Payments if a resident has a shortfall in their rent and their income is less than their allowed expenses.

Community Hot Spots

The Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk has provided an additional £50K to supplement a Norfolk County Council scheme being managed by the Norfolk Community Foundation that enables community groups to apply for funding for activities or events that will help people keep warm and well this winter. By significantly 'topping up the pot' for west Norfolk, more will be available for funding such schemes right across the borough. Applications must be submitted through the Norfolk Community Foundation website (<https://www.norfolkfoundation.com/funding-support/grants/groups/community-hot-spot-fund/>).

Cllr Stuart Dark, MBE, Leader of the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk, said: "This kind of grass roots funding is vital, as local community leaders and community groups understand what their area needs. This funding should make a real difference."

Autumn/Winter of Play

The borough council is supporting Alive West Norfolk to extend its popular 'Summer of Play' initiative to the October and February half-term holidays and over the Christmas break. When budgets are tight, opportunities to enjoy those leisure activities that can be so important for health and wellbeing are often reduced. This scheme will fund free and low-cost activities for young people at sports facilities across the borough, with some including a free meal for those on concession cards.

Concession cards

Normally, the charge for an Alive West Norfolk concession card is £10. The concession card reduces the cost of activities at Alive West Norfolk venues. This fee is being removed so that any resident eligible for a concession card can obtain it for free, enabling them to access the cheapest possible rates.

Eligibility for concession cards is State Pension Age (66 years of age and over), NHS Tax Credit Exemption, Income Support Claimant, Job Seekers Allowance, Housing Benefit Claimant, Incapacity Benefit Claimant/Employment Support Allowance, Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payment/Attendance Allowance, Full time student over 18 years of age, Children living with and dependent of anyone in the above categories (excluding State Pension Age) and Pupil Premium.

Help and guidance

Through the LILY service, the Food4Thought programme is already providing advice and practical tips for cooking on a budget and healthy nutrition.

Beat Your Bills roadshows have taken place in King's Lynn, Downham Market and Hunstanton to help people look at options that may help them reduce their energy bills in the long term, as well as reduce their environmental impact.

Cllr Dark added: "It is the role of central government to put in place key measures to help. However, we are acutely aware of how the current situation is causing hardship for local residents and we are intent on doing what we can to help. These are the measures we have introduced so far. Our initiatives combined with the Government's support, totals around £1m already coming into west Norfolk to help local people. But this is just the start. We are exploring other ways in which we can put in place more support through the forthcoming months and will be announcing these over the coming days and weeks."

The council is also reminding residents that if they are experiencing difficulties in paying their council tax bill, they should get in touch as soon as possible to discuss the matter.

Information about Government support is available on the Gov.uk website at <https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/>.