

DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

REPORT TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS, PARTNERSHIPS AND FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

21 AUGUST 2026

- A. To approve the funding of staff from Health and Housing funding provided by the Integrated Care Board for fuel poverty work and provide one year's extra funding for the posts from the Corporate Investment Fund.

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To approve the use of the £165,000 funding provided by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) for health and housing to continue to fund work to address fuel poverty as agreed in the letter from the Essex ICB dated 28 April 2026 (Appendix 1). The funding will deliver two roles to undertake this work until at least 31 March 2028.

To agree to a cost pressure to fund the two posts for a further 12 months to 31 March 2029 that provides for the associated activities undertaken by the two posts within the district that in turn allows the new unitary authority the time to consider whether it wishes to continue with the roles beyond 2028/29.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The North East Essex Clinical Commissioning Group which was replaced by the Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board provided £165,000 to deliver work to support health and housing. The funding was accepted by Cabinet on 17 September 2021 [Minutes Template](#) (Item 44).

Having attempted a number of approaches, the Council could not agree a delivery mechanism with the former ICB for the £165k funding before the MoU ran out in 2025. The new Essex ICB has agreed to allocate the funding to staffing to reduce fuel poverty and has written to the Council stating;

Approval for this non-recurrent funding to be used to extend the Fuel Poverty Officer position until 31st May 2029 at which time the funding will end.

Addressing fuel poverty includes identifying the type of fuel and tariffs households are on and seeking to provide more cost effective options and in addition to support the increased uptake of benefits to provide improved levels of income to help afford fuel costs.

Essex ICB have also agreed via an email on 22 July 2026 (Appendix 2) that under the approval it would also be sensible to utilise the funding to extend the Housing Benefits and

Early Intervention Officer with the following comment;

This initiative links nicely into the role of the Housing Benefits and Early Interventions Officer and the MDT approach to the whole household. It would, therefore, be a sensible approach to look at a review of the funding to enable both roles to continue to an agreed time period, thus utilising the remaining fund to support more households.

It is therefore now proposed to allocate the funding to fund the role of the Council's Fuel Poverty Officer and Housing Benefits and Early Intervention Officer up until 31 March 2028 as this will utilise the majority of the funding.

It is further proposed to seek to extend the posts beyond 31 March 2028 ICB funding. Not only will it enable the continuation of these key roles for a further 12 months, it also would ensure the forthcoming unitary council the time and flexibility to consider whether the posts should continue for the longer term. An associated cost pressure is therefore also set out within this report.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships

1 (a) approves the allocation of £165,000 health and housing funding provided by the Essex Integrated Care Board to deliver staffing to address fuel poverty,

1 (b) Subject to the recommendation 2 below, approves a further one year extension to the Fuel Poverty Officer and Housing Benefits and Early Intervention Officer until 31 March 2029; and

It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Governance

2 Subject to recommendation 1(b) above approves the required additional funding of £91,400 to be met from the Corporate Investment Fund (Revenue)

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

Following the Essex ICB coming into existence they wrote to the Council on 28 April 2026 confirming the use of £165,000 of unspent health and housing funding to address issues around fuel poverty.

The Council has a Fuel Poverty Officer who deals with issues around fuel poverty directly and a Housing Benefits and Early Intervention Officer who supports benefits uptake for the most disengaged families and which therefore addresses fuel poverty and the funding will be used to extend these posts. The majority of the funding would be used by 31 March 2028.

A request for funding the posts for an extra year via a cost pressure will help ensure that the posts do not end on 31 March 2028 and will therefore provide the new unitary an opportunity to consider whether it would like to fund the roles for the longer term.

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ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The funding could be allocated to alternative provision and deliver a health and housing outcome, however the Essex ICB, when agreeing the continued use of the funding, requested that the funding be used for issues around fuel poverty and there is identified need across our area in respect of fuel poverty.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

Provision of funding is in line with the Corporate Plan priority of working with partners to improve quality of life to promote safer, healthier well connected and inclusive communities as fuel poverty work will help make residents life safer and healthier as they do not have to deal with excess cold or inadequate resources.

OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT (including with the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other stakeholders where the item concerns proposals relating to the Budget and Policy Framework)

The use of funding for fuel poverty work has been in consultation with the Essex ICB as a health partner and through discussions with the Partnerships Portfolio Holder.

The decision to extend the posts for a further 12 months beyond the ICB funding window has been undertaken in consultation with the Corporate Finance and Governance Portfolio Holder.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)

Is the recommendation a Key Decision (see the criteria stated here)	YES	If Yes, indicate which by which criteria it is a Key Decision	☐ Significant effect on two or more wards ☒ Involves £100,000 expenditure/income ☐ Is otherwise significant for the service budget
		And when was the proposed decision published in the Notice of forthcoming decisions for the Council (must be 28 days at the latest prior to the meeting date)	2 June 2026

The power to allocate funding is provided under the general power of competence within the Localism Act 2011 which give local authorities powers to do anything that individuals can generally do.

There are no adverse subsidy control implications associated with the Council allocating this funding to these two existing posts.

Due to the benefit / advantages of agreeing to extend the posts up until the end of March 2029 now rather than over potentially two separate decisions, it is proposed that the Leader using special urgency powers, as set out in Part 3, Schedule 3 of the Constitution. This sets out that the Leader of the Council may exercise any of the powers delegated to the Cabinet 'in cases of urgency', in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and/or Section 151 Officer. In cases of urgency the decision of the Leader of the Council will be recorded and published in accordance with the Constitution.

It should be noted that any future decisions regarding the continuation of these roles beyond the proposed funding period, together with any associated employment implications or liabilities, will be matters for the successor unitary authority to consider as part of its workforce planning arrangements.

YES	The Monitoring Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:
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Consultation has been achieved through a review of the report and it is noted that whilst the Leader is making the decision outside of the Cabinet cycle for urgency purposes, the decision is not seeking to be exempt from call in.

FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The Essex ICB has written to the Council on 28 April 2026 approving the use of the £165,000 to extend the Fuel Poverty Officer position until 31 May 2029.

Any extension of the current Fuel Poverty Officer and Housing Benefits and Early Intervention Officer role will be in accordance with a Workforce Panel request. The funding can be used to cover any redundancy as well as employment costs.

The costs for the Fuel Poverty Officer have been determined by Finance as £45,700 per year including on costs.

A redundancy cost was determined for this post just over a year ago as £13,000.

The Fuel Poverty Officer is currently in post until 31 August 2026.

To extend the Fuel Poverty Officer up until 31 March 2028 as per the approval from the Essex ICB would cost;

1 September 2026 – 31 August 2027	£45,700
1 September 2027 – 31 March 2028	£26,660

Associated employment liabilities	£23,000
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Total	£95,360
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To extend the Housing Benefits and Early Intervention Officer who is on the same grade as the Fuel Poverty Officer and whose current contract continues until 31 March 2027 would be as follows;

1 April 2027 – 31 March 2028		£45,700
An estimated redundancy cost has been requested but for current purposes an equivalent cost to the Fuel Poverty Officer is included		
Associated employment liabilities	£23,000	
Total	£68,700	
	Overall Total	£164,000
	Total available funding	£165,000
The costs to extend the two posts for a further year (1 April 2028 to 31 March 2029) will be 2 x £45,700 = £91,400. It is proposed to fund this from the Corporate Investment Fund (Revenue) where the costs can be adequately met via the balance currently held in the fund of over £6m.		
From a workforce perspective, any extension of the current fixed-term arrangements will be progressed in accordance with the Council's approved employment procedures and relevant employment legislation.		
☐	The Section 151 Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:	
Although there are no further comments over and above those already set out in the report, it is worth highlighting that the proposals complement the two current two-year financial plan and acknowledge the obligations and support (via the provision of the flexibility enabled by the proposed decision), to the new Unitary Council.		
USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY		
The following are submitted in respect of the indicated use of resources and value for money indicators:		
A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;	The funding for this work is provided by the ICB to be used by 31 May 2029, and it will fund staff already in existence in the Council up until at least 31 March 2028. An extension of both posts for a further year until 31 March 2029 will be submitted as a cost pressure for approval.	
B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including; and	The funding has been provided by the ICB and has been accepted by the Council. It will be used to extend staff contracts for fuel poverty work until at least 31 March 2028. Use of the funding for the roles has been agreed by the Essex ICB. An extension of both posts for a year until 31 March 2029 will be submitted as a cost pressure for approval.	
C) Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.	Allocation of funding to this service will help address unmet need in the area as residents are supported to be able to afford appropriate fuel supplies.	
MILESTONES AND DELIVERY		
If approved, funding will be allocated to extending the Fuel Poverty Officer and Housing		

Benefits and Early Intervention roles until 31 March 2028 using the ICB funding and the contracts further extended until 31 March 2028 using Council funding.

ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION

If the post extensions are not funded, then there will be a reduced level of service for residents in terms of fuel poverty and benefits maximisation for those families most in need.

Advice can be obtained from other providers, but this would not be in a focussed or dedicated way as delivered by current officers.

The original allocation of the funding under the Suffolk and North East Essex ICB was provided as it helped to address the wider determinants of health. The Essex ICB has a greater focus on commissioning of services which are likely to be more clinically based. The outcomes for this work are delivered around the wider determinants for example in respect of increase available income for residents most in need.

Although the Essex ICB could raise about funding and the need to meet clinical outcomes, it is clear from the letter they provided to allocate this funding for fuel poverty work that this is a wider determinants approach.

Extending the posts within one decision rather than two separate decisions (e.g. the allocation of the external grant funding of £165k and then a later decision via the cost pressure process) provides the Council and associated Officers with additional certainty and may prevent disruption if the relevant Officers explored opportunities elsewhere.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

The Fuel Poverty Officer and Housing Benefits Early Intervention Officer provide advice to any resident in need and is generally focussed in the Jaywick and Clacton area where there are the greatest health inequalities.

SOCIAL VALUE

Fuel poverty work by its nature supports those most in need and therefore builds up social capital and resilience.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2030

None

OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OR IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

Crime and Disorder

By supporting those in the greatest need this helps build resilience in individuals and families which will help prevent them being either the victims or perpetrators of crime

Health Inequalities

Fuel poverty focuses on the residents most in need and seeks to help improve their financial stability which directly addresses health inequality.

Subsidy Control (the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and the related Statutory Guidance)	There are no subsidy control implications as the funding will be used to extend existing Council posts.
Area or Ward affected	All, as anyone can access the services although there is a focus in the Jaywick and Clacton area for the posts.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

The North East Essex Clinical Commissioning Group which was superseded by the Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board and subsequently the Essex Integrated Care Board on 1 April 2026, provided the Council with an initial £165,000 of funding to deliver work around health and housing in 2018.

This funding was used to fund mental health nurses to jointly visit appropriate cases with housing and environmental officers to holistically address resident's issues.

The North East Essex Clinical Commissioning Group then provided a further £165,000 again for health and housing and this came with a memorandum of understanding and was accepted by Cabinet in September 2021 [Minutes Template](#).

It was resolved by Cabinet

e) authorises the Assistant Director (Partnerships), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships, to agree the outcomes and spending proposals for each project in conjunction with the Council's Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer, highlighting the implications for each within a published report.

Having attempted a number of approaches, the Council could not agree a delivery mechanism with the former ICB for the £165k funding before the MoU ran out in 2025. The new Essex ICB has agreed to allocate the funding to staffing to reduce fuel poverty.

In respect of the unspent £165,000 the Essex ICB wrote to the Council on 28 April 2026 and agreed the continued use of the funding and stated;

Approval for this non-recurrent funding to be used to extend the Fuel Poverty Officer position until 31st May 2029 at which time the funding will end.

The Essex ICB do not use MoUs and therefore no MoU is associated with this funding.

The Fuel Poverty Officer is currently employed until 31 August 2026.

Funding of the Fuel Poverty Officer until 31 March 2028 including associated employment liability costs is estimated at £95,360.

The Essex ICB provided a further email on 22 July 2026 further clarifying the letter and stated;

Following the letter from Karen Wesson to Lee Healy dated 28th April 2026 which confirms the ICB's approval for the remaining £165k to sustain the Fuel Poverty Officer for an additional 2 years... this initiative links nicely into the role of the Housing Benefits and Early Interventions Officer and the MDT approach to the whole household. It would, therefore, be a sensible approach to look at a review of the funding to enable both roles to continue to an agreed time period, thus utilising the remaining fund to support more households.

Funding for the Housing Benefits and Early Intervention Officer (who is currently in post to 31 March 2027) until 31 March 2028 including associated employment liability costs is estimated at £68,700.

To fund both posts until 31 March 2028 is estimated at £164,000 and is therefore achievable within the current £165,000 budget.

The Fuel Poverty Officer supports residents by undertaking benefits checks and applying for benefits. Over the period since the role started at the end of 2024 through to early 2026 this has resulted in applying for benefits for 115 individuals and has provided access to £530,000 for residents. In addition, £11,000 of food vouchers and separately a further £11,000 of fuel vouchers and £3,500 of shopping vouchers.

The Housing Benefits and Early Intervention Officer is part of a multidisciplinary team within Children's Social Care. When the team provided a 5 year update it was highlighted that they had dealt with 345 referrals of which 91 have avoided care, they had achieved 92% engagement with families who previously had a history of non-engagement with 6 children returned home from care and with ongoing feedback about stronger parents resulting in happier families.

The Housing Benefits and Early Intervention Officer has been in post since 2023 and is integral to providing holistic support to families by contributing advice and support in respect of benefits, housing, income, debt and funding for those families that are in crisis. This role guides clients through complex processes while upholding their rights. This role has contributed support in 73% of the referrals to the multi-disciplinary team.

It is also proposed to extend the post for a further year until 31 March 2029 to ensure the new unitary authority can determine whether it wishes to continue with the roles in the longer term. To achieve this it is proposed to allocate £91,4000 to continue both posts until 31 March 2029 from the Corporate Investment Fund (Revenue).

PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS

[Minutes Template](#)

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Letter from Essex ICB

Appendix 2 Email from Essex ICB

REPORT CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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