

## **CABINET**

<b>DATE</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> July 2026
<b>REPORT OF</b>	Councillor James Sawkins - Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b>	Katie Brown – Director of Adults, Housing and Communities
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Commissioning of Crisis and Resilience Fund Information and Advice Services
<b>STATUS</b>	Open
<b>FORWARD PLAN REF NO.</b>	CB 06/26/06

### **CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS**

This Crisis and Resilience funded information and advice service will directly support the Council's strategic aims as outlined in the Council Plan; our Vision and Aims by contributing to:

- Stronger Communities: Supporting vulnerable residents to live healthier, safer, and more connected lives.
- Wellbeing and Prevention: Tackling inequalities and improving access to early intervention and support.
- Partnership and Collaboration: Working across sectors to deliver joined-up services that meet complex needs.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Authority seeks to commission accredited and regulated community based information and advice services using the Crisis and Resilience Fund, ending on 31 March 2029. The services will work with voluntary and community organisations, to enable a responsive triage and preventative model that supports financial resilience within individuals and communities.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Approves the commissioning and procurement of crisis and resilience information and advice services.
2. Delegates authority to the Director of Adults, Housing and Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities, to finalise and award such contracts for Crisis and Resilience Fund services.
3. Delegates responsibilities to the Director of Adults, Housing and Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities, to oversee all ancillary matters reasonably arising, including service implementation, mobilisation, and ongoing monitoring.

4. Authorises the Assistant Director Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer) to complete all requisite legal documentation in relation to the award and associated contractual arrangements.

## **REASONS FOR DECISION**

The approval of the commissioning and procurement of Crisis and Resilience Fund Information and Advice Services in North East Lincolnshire is recommended to ensure timely and inclusive access to quality advice and debt support within communities until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2029.

The successful provider or providers will have the expertise to deliver a quality assured responsive community-led service with the ability to build sector capacity. This will enable trusted information that empowers residents and prevents more complex advice and debt cases.

It is anticipated that the commissioning timescales will support an Autumn start date for services positioned to connect with local communities and to link in with wider existing support services.

### **1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES**

- 1.1 The Department for Work and Pensions Crisis and Resilience Fund is a three year grant programme for local authorities, ending on 31 March 2029. The primary objective of The Fund is to both provide a safety net for those on low incomes who encounter a financial shock and to invest in building local financial resilience to enable individuals and communities to better deal with crisis in the long-term, reducing crisis need. The programme has four strands, each enabling initiatives that connect into and support each other, and ensuring a person-centred and trauma informed approach. The four strands are:
  - 1.1.1 Crisis Payment: all year round scheme providing a cash first (not cash only) response for low income households in crisis.
  - 1.1.2 Housing Payment: financial assistance towards housing costs for eligible individuals (previously Discretionary Housing Payment)
  - 1.1.3 Resilience Service: programmes and activities that support building financial resilience for individuals and local communities.
  - 1.1.4 Community Coordination: create a more connected welfare landscape that builds capacity within communities and improve referral pathways.
- 1.2 Funded activities within the Resilience Service strand must meet one or more programme outcomes. Improved access to quality advice services is a key outcome. Guidance states that funded advice services need to be appropriately accredited and regulated, while enabling a no wrong door approach, improving community access to further support services.
- 1.3 The Council already commissions a local accredited advice provider using core revenue budgets. Demand for advice services are high, and there is a need and opportunity to build, embed and coordinate additional information and advice resources within communities.

- 1.4 The provision of an Information and Advice Service via The Crisis and Resilience Fund (through the Resilience Strand), should build sector capacity, provide regulated debt advice, produce quality information and accredited advice while improving connections into wider community-led and statutory provision for the full lifespan of the programme.

## **2. RISKS, OPPORTUNITIES AND EQUALITY ISSUES**

### **2.1 Risks**

- 2.1.1 The top project risks are noted below. During contract mobilisation, a risk log will be created and maintained to ensure operational risks are managed effectively.
  - The specification is focused on accredited advice to ensure quality and impact. This approach may reduce market response as there are few accredited advice organisations with local knowledge operating within the region.
  - Although demand for advice services is high, the provider will need to be proactive and work with other agencies to avoid the risk of low resident uptake.
  - The new service being commissioned via the Crisis and Resilience Fund will work alongside existing advice services in the borough. The procurement process will assess responses to ensure services complement and enhance engagement, without duplication.

### **2.2 Opportunities**

- 2.2.1 The new service will increase access to quality advice, alongside the resources to build wider advice sector capacity within the community.
- 2.2.2 Data and insight from the advice provider will inform new service design and engagement opportunities, enabling targeted preventative measures.

### **2.3 Equalities**

- 2.3.1 The proposed information and advice service has been subject to an equality impact assessment.
- 2.3.2 The service is expected to have a positive impact by reducing barriers to engagement, promoting visible and delivering inclusive advice services. It will advance equality of opportunity for people affected by housing and finance insecurities and related inequalities.
- 2.3.3 The service will support the Councils Public Sector Equality Duty by fostering inclusion, reducing stigma, and ensuring individuals impacted by debt and financial shock are empowered to participate fully in community life.

## **3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 3.1. **Do nothing** – continue to direct residents into existing Advice Services. This would create further service pressures, leading into preventable complex

cases for vulnerable residents. The Crisis and Resilience Fund was established to resource additional advice services and improve financial resilience.

- 3.2. **Short term advice services** - commission 12 month advice services via several community providers. This approach may reduce quality of advice, create delays, as well as inconsistencies across multiple service providers.
- 3.3. **Deliver services in house** – we do not have the skills or expertise within the council to deliver an accredited information and advice service. This would therefore require additional resource and training which would take time to establish. It would also mean reduced funding to organisations who already have the skills to deliver this.
- 3.4. **Recommended option - externally procure information and advice services for the full duration of the Crisis and Resilience Fund** - Quality advice is a key outcome for the Crisis and Resilience Fund and is encouraged to be resourced via the programme. The recommended option is to undertake an open tendering procurement process that is aligned with the requirements of the Fund, while building on the strong foundation and capacity already in place. It provides assurance that the service will meet the programme outcomes and as well as The Council Plan, while maintaining appropriate governance, oversight and monitoring arrangements.

#### **4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1. There are potential positive reputational implications for the Council arising from this decision. The positive implications include recognition that the council is investing in a person-centred information and advice service that's connected into the community. Promoting visibility of the service and connected support opportunities.
- 4.2. An action plan will be agreed with the Council's communications service, covering the following areas:
  - 4.2.1. Statutory communication requirements: ensuring compliance with equality, public health, and transparency duties.
  - 4.2.2. Consultation requirements: providing clear messaging about stakeholder engagement and the rationale for commissioning.
  - 4.2.3. Information requirements: ensuring accurate, accessible information is available about the service, its purpose, and the outcomes it aims to achieve.
  - 4.2.4. Communication channels to be utilised: Council website, press releases, social media, stakeholder briefings, and internal communications to staff and members.

#### **5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 5.1. The cost will be met, in full, from the specific element of the local authority's Crisis and Resilience Fund grant allocation, which has been ringfenced

specifically for advice services. As a result, there will be no financial impact on the Council's core budget.

- 5.2. The total budget allocation for this service within the three year Delivery Plan is £1,500,000. Due to tender timelines, we anticipate the service to be operational from Autumn 2026. The contract value will not exceed £1,500,000, and will be awarded in line with best value principles.

## **6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS**

Equitable access to these services not only benefit the individuals receiving support, but also contributes to the well-being of their families, children, and the wider community.

## **7. CLIMATE CHANGE, NATURE RECOVERY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

This will have no negative effect on climate change, nature recovery and the environment.

## **8. PUBLIC HEALTH, HEALTH INEQUALITIES AND MARMOT IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Crisis and Resilience Fund takes a person-centred and trauma informed approach throughout all elements of the programme. The commissioned Advice Service will support these principles, while connect into wider statutory and community support services.
- 8.2 Improving financial resilience, is a programme objective and viewed as a social determinant of health, closely linked to a household's capacity to withstand income shocks, maintain a healthy standard of living, and maintain health equity. The service will have a direct impact on multiple health inequalities and Marmot. This includes but not limited to:
  - 8.2.1 Adequate and Secure Income: lack of money prevents households from affording basic necessities
  - 8.2.2 Access to Benefits and Financial Advice: Effective and accessible welfare/debt advice services allow households to manage financial distress.
  - 8.2.3 Control Over Life: Individuals maximise their capabilities, have better awareness, and have more control over their daily lives, which reduces vulnerability to health inequalities.

## **9. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY**

The information and advice service is due to be discussed at the Communities Scrutiny Panel on 2 July 2026. Progress with delivery of the Crisis and Resilience Fund is on the 26/27 Scrutiny forward look.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The cost of the crisis and resilience advise service will be met from within the Council's annual grant allocation. There will be no impact on core council budgets. The Council has been advised of 3 years allocation as part of the financial settlement commencing 2026/27

## **11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 The procurement of crisis and resilience information and advice services within North East Lincolnshire is consistent with the stated aims and objectives of the Council underpinning its strategic objectives of Stronger Economy, Stronger Communities.

11.2 The procurement exercise will be conducted so as to comply with the Council's policy and legal obligations, specifically in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Procurement Act 2023, and supported by relevant officers.

11.3 The delegations sought are consistent with an exercise of this nature.

## **12. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

Provider to Provider TUPE may apply, this will need to be passed through usual Employee Relations route to ensure appropriate oversight and advice can be offered.

## **13. WARD IMPLICATIONS**

Residents across all wards will be able to access this information and advice service.

## **14. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

[Crisis and Resilience Fund: Guidance for local authorities in England \(1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029\)](#)

## **15. CONTACT OFFICER(S)**

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