

A group of approximately 20 people are seated in a circle in a room with large windows. They appear to be engaged in a discussion or meeting. The room has a wooden floor and white walls. A fire extinguisher is visible on the wall. The text 'Wandsworth Cost of Living Commission' is overlaid on the top right of the image.

Wandsworth Cost of Living Commission

**Final Report - Summary
November 2023**

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Joint Chairs Foreword

Last year we were invited to co-chair the Independent Wandsworth Cost-of-Living Commission in response to what was conceived at the time as a moment of crisis, requiring understanding and appropriate action. What we have learned over the last year from listening to community organisations and individuals is that we are facing something better described as a chronic situation which recent political and social circumstances have exacerbated.

These recent circumstances have both worsened existing destitution and caused more people in our Borough and across the UK to face financial hardship. Over the work of our Commission, we have constantly been made aware that the increasing costs of housing, energy, food, and transport are affecting more and more people across the whole of society. An increasing number of households are struggling with life's basics and are becoming part of the "have nots". We have been in conversation with people from all sectors of our community and have been heartened by the emergence of a sense of solidarity and mutual responsibility, which transcends social, cultural, and political boundaries.

This report summarises our place-based approach and the qualitative and quantitative evidence we gathered from across the borough during the past year, before introducing the Commission's recommendations for both local and national remedial policies.

We are hugely indebted to all our fellow commissioners who contributed an enormous range of expertise, and our Commission secretariat along with all our partners from within the community who shared their experience and their wisdom.

We hope that rather than an end of a process the publication of this report will mark a new phase in the conversation within Wandsworth. We have used the phrase 'A Single Conversation' to describe what we hope we have started and will continue as partnerships of all kinds, supported by the council, work together across our borough to help all our communities to flourish. This we believe will require commitment, effort, coherent planning, patience, plus further reflection, and time.



Dorian Leatham
Joint Chair



Ian Tattum
Joint Chair

1 Final recommendations



The following list outlines the key action from each recommendation, categorised by their theme, and who they are aimed at, provided here to give an overview of the Commission's final recommendations. However, for more detail and specific actions for implementation for each recommendation, please see the full list of recommendations at the end of each themed chapter.

We acknowledge the good work already in progress throughout Wandsworth, and some of our recommendations aim to build on this work, whilst some suggest new areas of action.

System and cross-cutting issues

Wandsworth Council

- 1 Build a Single Conversation approach to improve partnership working across Wandsworth
- 2 Maximise income in Wandsworth
- 3 Use commissioning and procurement as a lever to build wealth
- 4 Create a London Living Wage Borough across Wandsworth
- 5 Take action to support those facing debt issues
- 6 Increase availability of affordable childcare
- 7 Deliver joined up action for the development of Roehampton

Wandsworth System

- 8 Build a Single Conversation approach to improve partnership working across Wandsworth
- 9 Deliver joined up action for the development of Roehampton
- 10 Communication: take a whole system approach to sharing support available (both council and local support)
- 11 Data sharing: Improve data sharing between local organisations and the council
- 12 Build a joined-up response with all Wandsworth partners to solving the issues facing those in poverty and struggling with the Cost of Living crisis: housing and benefits, health, employment

Regional and central government

- 13 Lobby Central Government to improve its data-sharing
- 14 Lobby Central Government to review Benefits legislation with the aim of maximising household income

Housing

Wandsworth Council

- 15 Wandsworth Council must be ambitious on Housing, to deliver more alternative forms of affordable housing and ensure decent housing in all tenures
- 16 Increase local housing supply
- 17 Improve conditions for those in temporary accommodation and experiencing homelessness

Wandsworth System

- 18 More collaborative working with Housing Associations and with private sector landlords and developers to deliver affordable and good quality housing

Regional and central government

- 19 Lobby for an increase in supply of genuinely affordable housing
- 20 Resolve the key issues facing those in the Private Rented Sector
- 21 Lobby for smart regulation of the short let market to increase housing supply
- 22 Lobby for the unfreezing of Local Housing Allowance rates
- 23 Seek options for implementing targeted rent controls to deal with excessive rent rises across London

Food

Wandsworth Council

- 24 Tackle child food poverty through targeted campaigns in relation to school food

Wandsworth System

- 25 Build an effective and sustainable Wandsworth Food System

Regional and central government

- 26 Tackle food deserts

Energy

Wandsworth Council

- 27 Deliver Improved enforcement and regulation in the social housing & private sector

Wandsworth System

- 28 Encourage and facilitate learning for green skills
- 29 Deliver effective social prescribing

Regional and central government

- 30 Lobby Central Government to develop a Green Skills strategy
- 31 Lobby Government to deliver a social tariff for energy bills for low-income households

Transport

Wandsworth Council

- 32 Consider delivering financial support for travel to those most in need
- 33 Deliver action to facilitate walking and cycling in Wandsworth

Wandsworth System

- 34 Establish a Disability Working Group on Transport and Infrastructure

Regional and central government

- 35 Lobby for means-tested discretionary fares

2 Our commission journey



Introduction

In response to the Cost of Living crisis, which began towards the end of the COVID-19 pandemic and continues to be the new normal, Wandsworth Council decided to establish an independent Cost of Living Commission.

The group of independent Commissioners was brought together to listen to residents and local organisations, examine relevant data and research and identify potential actions that the council, its partners, the wider community, and regional and national government may be able to take to address the underlying causes of the Cost of Living crisis.

Launched in November 2022, the Commission has now been running for a year, gathering evidence with the aim of capturing the impact of this crisis on the people of Wandsworth, and thinking of effective, long-term solutions. We have heard directly from a range of different people in engaging and innovative workshops, honest and open evidence gathering sessions, and through powerful focus groups, calls for evidence and surveys. This consultation, research, and discussion has formed our evidence base, which we have drawn upon to develop our final recommendations made in this report.

We, as Commissioners, have listened deeply to the evidence presented to us and have felt compelled by what we have heard that action is urgently needed. We hope these recommendations provide Wandsworth Council, its partners, and regional and national government with a clear direction for positive change in recovering from the Cost of Living crisis.



Background

There are fifteen independent Cost of Living Commissioners who bring a range of expertise and perspectives to the Commission's work. We all are connected to Wandsworth, and are from a range of backgrounds including academia, business representation, local leaders, and subject matter experts. This mix of skills and experience ensured we were able to contribute local context, knowledge and understanding to the work and findings of the Commission.

The scope of the Commission focused on what it sees as the four key elements of the Cost of Living crisis: Housing, Food, Energy and Transport. The Commission's core task was to collect evidence on the impact of the Cost of Living crisis and use this to develop long-term solutions, with a systemic perspective, on the Cost of Living crisis, taking a holistic look at the wider Wandsworth system and all its intricate aspects.

We set out to achieve the following objectives

- To examine and define the multiple factors which are driving the Cost of Living crisis in Wandsworth.
- To review a national and local evidence base of literature, studies and Commissions looking at the causes and impacts of the Cost of Living crisis.
- To engage with local Wandsworth communities using a Place based approach to gather views, information, and solutions at a community level.
- To consider the whole system drivers and impacts and develop system-based solution.
- To develop a series of long- and medium-term recommendations which can be used to inform systemic changes in Wandsworth.
- Where appropriate, to use these recommendations as the basis for representations to regional and national government policy and civil society measures and interventions which would support Wandsworth citizens impacted by the Cost of Living crisis.

Our Approach

We focused throughout our work on the impact of the Cost of Living crisis on Wandsworth, adopting a 'Place Based' approach. This means that the Commission has specifically focused on hearing from the Wandsworth community to identify the Cost of Living issues that are particularly affecting Wandsworth residents.

The Commission has also focused on the importance of robust evidence throughout its work, gathering lived-experience testimonies from residents as well as quantitative data which demonstrates the impact of Cost of Living issues on a local, regional and national level. This has resulted in a real reflection of the challenges facing our communities, and ideas for solutions to combat them.



Our Engagement

As a Commission focused on the Wandsworth community, we prioritised an engaging approach to gathering evidence. This involved:

- A series of six open evidence gathering sessions in community settings each with a different theme and/or geographic focus. These have been held right across the borough in Battersea, Roehampton, Tooting, Earlsfield, Balham and Putney.
- Commission meetings which brought the Commissioners together in a collaborative space to consider evidence, review any additional online submissions, and develop initial ideas for recommendations.
- Desktop research and intermediary meetings.

Throughout these activities, we heard evidence from over ninety witnesses across the past year.

As part of the Place Based approach, we also conducted more direct engagement, which involved:

- Two calls for evidence throughout spring and summer 2023, which included an online survey, an option to provide longer feedback via email, and a specific format for Wandsworth organisations to give strategic responses.
- A local public survey where the Commission heard from Wandsworth residents on the biggest impacts of the crisis, what they had changed because of financial challenges, and their ideas on solutions that could help address these challenges and support residents.

From this engagement, the Commission received over seventy responses adding valuable evidence to our evidence base and ideas for recommendations.

In addition, a series of six independently facilitated focus groups were held in community venues across the borough. Attendees included residents from Wandsworth Older Peoples Forum, Wandsworth Youth Groups, Mushkil Aasaan Centre and Wandsworth Care Alliance, Wandsworth Carers, CARAS (Community Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers), and SW15 Women's Group in Roehampton. These sessions involved around 85 participants and allowed the Commission to go further in hearing from the residents in our community who are most impacted by the crisis and who may not otherwise be heard from via more public methods of engagement.

The evidence heard and submitted via these engagement activities has been considered by the Commission and collated with the wider evidence into a set of identified key issues for each theme. These issues have then directly informed the final recommendations.

Place Based approach

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Our Interim Report

In June, we published an Interim Report which outlined our work so far at the halfway point. This report also, importantly, outlined a range of interim short and emerging ideas for potential longer-term recommendations for the council and its partners.

The council responded to all short-term recommendations, detailing how they were being taken forward including projects to utilise the Low-Income Family Tracker to improve benefits take-up, funding for crisis support such as fuel poverty relief measures, and initiating the development of a Wandsworth Food Strategy.

3 The Cost of Living Crisis & its impact



The Cost of Living crisis describes the recent period where the cost of everyday essentials such as food and household bills has been increasing faster than average household income. This has created a fall in the amount of income households have to spend, after tax, which is known as our disposable income.

Inflation, which is the average change in the price of goods and services over 12 months, has increased over this period making everyday essentials more expensive across the UK. The annual rate of inflation reached 11.1% in October 2022, a 41-year high, before then steadily easing to 6.7% in August 2023. However, the current pattern of inflation still means prices are continuing to rise, just more slowly than before, and not that prices are falling. Prices are still on average much higher than in previous years particularly impacting those on lower incomes, due to higher inflation rates on housing, heating and food. This means that people are getting less for their money, as the amount of real household disposable income is decreasing.

The causes of the increased Cost of Living come from a range of sources including:

- 1 Economic shock factors throughout the COVID-19 pandemic which have had long term effects, such as the impact of increased global demand for consumer goods.
- 2 The consequential impacts from the war in Ukraine including increasing fuel costs and the price of grain.
- 3 The impact of Brexit on supply chains.
- 4 Changes in the international energy market.

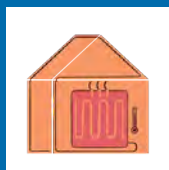
Which prices are changing?



Food costs

Food prices have been rising sharply over the past year and were 19.2% higher in March 2023 compared with a year before, a 45-year high. In August, food inflation had lowered to 13.6% higher than the year before. To put this into context, the Food Foundation estimate that for a reasonably costed, adequately nutritious diet since April 2022:

- the woman's basket of food has increased in price by **23.9%**, now costing **£50.76** per week.
- the male basket has increased by **27.5%** and currently costs **£55.49** per week.



Energy costs

Energy prices are another significant area of increased cost, with household energy tariffs and road fuel costs increasing.



Housing costs

The increasing cost of housing particularly in the private rented sector continues to be a major issue. Rightmove statistics indicate that the average asking rent for properties new to the market increased by 19.3% in Inner London between Summer 2021 and Summer 2022. House prices in Wandsworth are the 7th most expensive nationally and regionally and in general, rental prices for Wandsworth properties are in the top 10 London boroughs.

4 Our findings



4.1 System and cross cutting issues



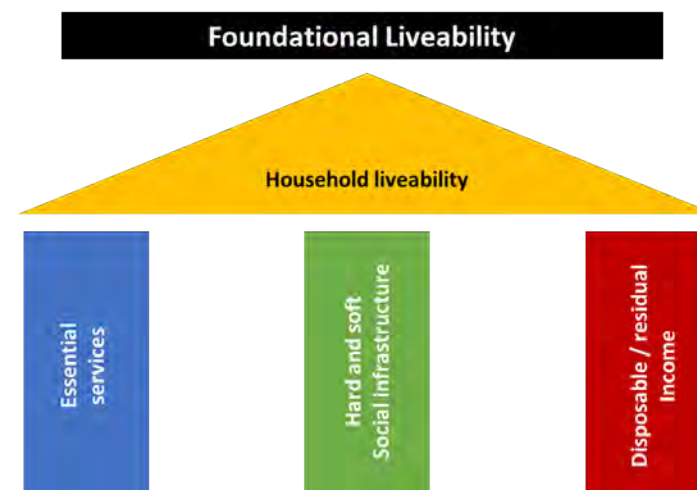
In the following pages, we explore the key Cost of Living issues identified from the evidence we have collected over the past year and outline our associated recommendations. We have also produced an expanded version of this report which provides more detail on who we collected evidence from, what they told us, and the regional and national data we considered to come to our concluding recommendations. The expanded version can be found here.

System and cross cutting issues

As a Commission, the evidence, and testimonies we have heard have demonstrated that this is not a temporary crisis. We believe that, for many people, the sustained increase in the Cost of Living has become the norm, and that this therefore requires new approaches to support Wandsworth residents who are struggling. These new approaches, also, have the potential to protect residents from future shocks, building resilience throughout our community.

The evidence we have heard is also backed up by an assertion from the Institute for Government that Real Household Disposable Incomes per person, a measure of living standards, is not predicted to return to its 2021/22 level until 2027/28 at the earliest.

A key theme we heard from across the evidence sources was around the insufficiency of household income, which was particularly emphasised by the work of academics from the University of Manchester and Queen Mary's (London). They drew on the concept of Foundational Liveability which looks at the degree to which a place is suitable or good for living based on three factors: adequate funding for essential services, funding for social infrastructure and household income.



By systemic issues, we mean a problem that affects everyone in the Wandsworth system, including residents, and public, third and private sector organisations. These issues are often caused by the structure of the system, and usually can only be resolved when the all the people in the system work together.

Maximising Household income

From a household income perspective, the Commission has looked at:

- Ways of getting more money into households to counteract the increased costs of housing, food, energy, and transport. These included encouraging Wandsworth organisations to pay the London living wage as a minimum and targeted support to improve skills and employability.
- Ensuring that people are getting the benefits and support they are entitled to, and that are essential to their quality of life, was another big area of discussion for the Commission with concerns around the complexity in the benefits system and access to information.
- Wandsworth families also face additional cost pressures particularly in relation to food, school uniforms, and access to affordable childcare.

The Wandsworth system

Wandsworth organisations and residents also commented on some of the issues they have encountered when working in the Wandsworth system.

- A regular concern raised by local community organisations is that the approaches and support provided are not joined up across the system, with a disparate range of initiatives and support being developed and not enough focus on the residents in need of support.
- There are significant resource, capacity, and skills gaps across the Wandsworth system particularly in the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)

- There is no clear shared vision for Wandsworth which could help to address the Cost of Living and future shocks for our residents. This could take the form of a framework to respond to the compound impact of the Cost of Living crisis, which involves empowering communities. There was evidence that the system as it currently works in Wandsworth lacks a stakeholder with a strong convenor role.
- In a number of the evidence gathering sessions commissioners heard how the Roehampton area was one of the hardest hit by the Cost of Living as a result of previous unjoined approaches and underdevelopment .
- Wandsworth community organisations were also very vocal in their desire to improve information to ensure that local knowledge and resources are being utilised and shared to deliver the most effective impact.
- There is a need for better communication and data-sharing across the system regarding both users and providers knowing the support available.
- There is evidence of emerging issues around the impact on declining physical and mental health as a result of the Cost of Living pressures facing Wandsworth residents. Healthwatch Wandsworth conducted a small local survey which found that 80% of people who took part reported that their health and well-being were impacted by the Cost of Living crisis. Residents reported to Healthwatch about the stresses impacting mental health including feeling anxious about their illnesses, paying for food, rent, transport, and paying their energy bills.

Recommendations

To address these issues of household income, liveability, and failings in the Wandsworth system we recommend the following:

The theme of building a Single Conversation runs throughout many of the Commission's recommendations as an over-arching theme. The aim of these recommendations is to create positive steps towards improved partnership, collaboration, and joint working in Wandsworth, to help realise the potential of communities and build resilience against system shocks, and to positively transform the lives of Wandsworth residents.

Wandsworth Council

The Commission recognises that some of the specific recommendations below represent work that is already underway as part of the council's Cost of Living Programme and associated council and partner initiatives, however, we note that these programmes may need additional resources and collaborative working to achieve the Commission's end goals.

1 Build a Single Conversation approach to improve partnership working across Wandsworth

- With the council as a convenor, work with local partners using a single conversation approach to reduce silos and improve coordination across systems through creating a multi-faceted partnership, sharing resources, and developing mutual objectives and approaches with those involved. The key partners are council teams, the local voluntary and community sector, businesses, educational providers, the NHS, the police, transport providers.

- Identify the most impacted areas in Wandsworth and develop a pilot project, which is community led, looking at the utilisation of public and private sector spaces in the area to build on the Family Hubs (Community Hubs) approach, with the aim of empowering the local community and bringing together a range of partners in one stop shops.

2 Maximise income in Wandsworth

The council should implement auto-enrolment where legal and possible as a system solution at the local level, making it easier for Wandsworth residents to receive the support they are entitled to.

- This would involve piloting a range of auto-enrol options to ensure that Wandsworth citizens are all receiving the full range of benefits and support that they are entitled to. Options include benefits, water, free school meals, healthy start vouchers, pension credits, disability benefits and support packages.

3 Use commissioning and procurement as a lever to build wealth

Building on the current work of Supply Wandsworth, delivered by Wandsworth Economic Development Office, Wandsworth Council should prioritise locally focused procurement practices, embracing the social value in every process possible.

This could include:

- Creating a local stakeholder partnership with Wandsworth public and private sector organisations focused on supporting them through procurement processes, strong information sharing and support to enhance local supply chains, thus building local wealth and maximising income.

- Acting as a change leader, ensuring that strategic policies, practices, and procedures relating to localised procurement and social value are embedded, managed, and monitored.

4 **Create a London Living Wage Borough across Wandsworth**

Building on the current Living Wage commitments, work with employers around wages and encourage employer support for employees in relation to travel costs and childcare (i.e., flexible working patterns and provision of affordable/co-operative childcare settings).

5 **Take action to support those facing debt issues**

Look into the feasibility of working with organisations such as Fair4All Finance, piloting a fair finance product to provide (underwritten) credit for citizens who are not able to access low-cost finance in the market.

6 **Increase availability of affordable childcare**

Examine approaches to piloting new affordable community based childcare settings in areas of the borough where the greatest need exists, based on an audit of the childcare provision in the borough.



7 **Deliver joined up action for the development of Roehampton**

In line with the single conversation theme, key stakeholders from Roehampton and wider Wandsworth should collaborate to develop a joined-up strategy for improving access to essential services, support, and the overall development of the Roehampton area.

- Access to support, services, and improved social infrastructure:
 - As part of the Family Hubs approach (recommendation 1), focus on Roehampton as a particularly impacted area in Wandsworth to deliver one stop shop models providing holistic support around access to eligible benefits, housing support, childcare support, wellbeing support and assistance to our refugee and asylum-seeking communities.
 - Flourishing/liveable communities- Looking longer term the council should incorporate considerations of liveable local areas into its planning and infrastructure policy and plans associated with Roehampton. This should include considering what type of infrastructure and social provision the area would need to reduce the demand on residents to travel further distances and spend more to access essentials. Other infrastructure could be open workspaces, designated childcare facilities, and economic development strategies to attract businesses to the area.
 - The council and its partners should look to maximise the use of assets to support social infrastructure and civic capacity initiatives.

- Access to affordable and healthy food:
 - Within the development of the Food Strategy (recommendation 32), include a focus on improving food availability in Roehampton. This could be done through piloting pop-up food markets and community-led food provision models, possibly through council-funded grants to local organisations.
 - Review the tools available to influence planning processes to encourage increased provision of affordable food in Roehampton. For example, this could involve a strategy to support the development of a budget-friendly large supermarket in an accessible area of Roehampton to reduce the need for residents to travel further for food or purchase from more expensive options such as corner shops and higher-end supermarkets.
- Access to Transport:
 - The council should work with partners to increase the reliability, frequency, and safety of the bus routes in and out of Roehampton. In addition, whilst the closure of Hammersmith bridge is also affecting transport routes in Roehampton, the council should consider ways to provide an additional transport service to Roehampton, either through a bus route or via community travel options.

The Wandsworth System

8 Build a Single Conversation approach to improve partnership working across Wandsworth

The Wandsworth system, including anchor institutions, the voluntary and community sector, local businesses, and residents, should be a key part of this conversation (see recommendation 1), and work with the council as equal, strategic partners to deliver on the areas referenced in recommendation 1.

9 Deliver joined up action for the development of Roehampton

In line with the single conversation theme, key stakeholders from Roehampton and wider Wandsworth should collaborate to develop a joined-up strategy for improving access to essential services, support, and the overall development of the Roehampton area, as referenced in recommendation 7.

10 Communication: take a whole system approach to sharing support available (both council and local support)

- Design a centralised information hub to increase awareness of available support and benefits, equipping local organisations with knowledge of the support available and citizens with knowledge of what they are eligible for.
- This will contribute to a 'make every contact count' approach whereby everyone who interacts with residents, starting with front line council staff, is provided with the knowledge on support available to take a holistic approach to supporting residents.
- This involves improving the accessibility of information, both internally across staff channels and externally through websites and networks for external partners (taking into consideration digital exclusion and non-digital methods of information-sharing).

11 Data sharing: Improve data sharing between local organisations and the council

- Expand reciprocal data-sharing partnerships between the council and local partners to better enable all partners to deliver more specialised services. This could for example be done through new data-sharing pilot projects that evaluate and tackle the health and life expectancy impacts of the Cost of Living within the borough.
- Using the available data to create a narrative shift which focuses more on identifying the most vulnerable residents within the borough and communicates to relevant stakeholders which areas are most at risk of crisis, and target services and support (building on the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) approach).

12 Build a joined-up response with all Wandsworth partners to solving the issues facing those in poverty and struggling with the Cost of Living crisis: housing and benefits, health, employment

- Carry out a short and quick feasibility study into potential models and approaches that could be adopted and trialled, such as the Foundational Liveability model or Hilary Cottam collaborative practice model. This would be delivered with the aim of safeguarding against poverty and focusing on liveability, with the ambition of supporting and encouraging flourishing communities in all areas and communities in Wandsworth.
- Examine the opportunity to work with organisations associated with these models to develop and pilot new approaches to supporting communities and those most impacted by the Cost of Living in Wandsworth.

Regional and Central Government

13 Lobby Central Government to improve its data-sharing

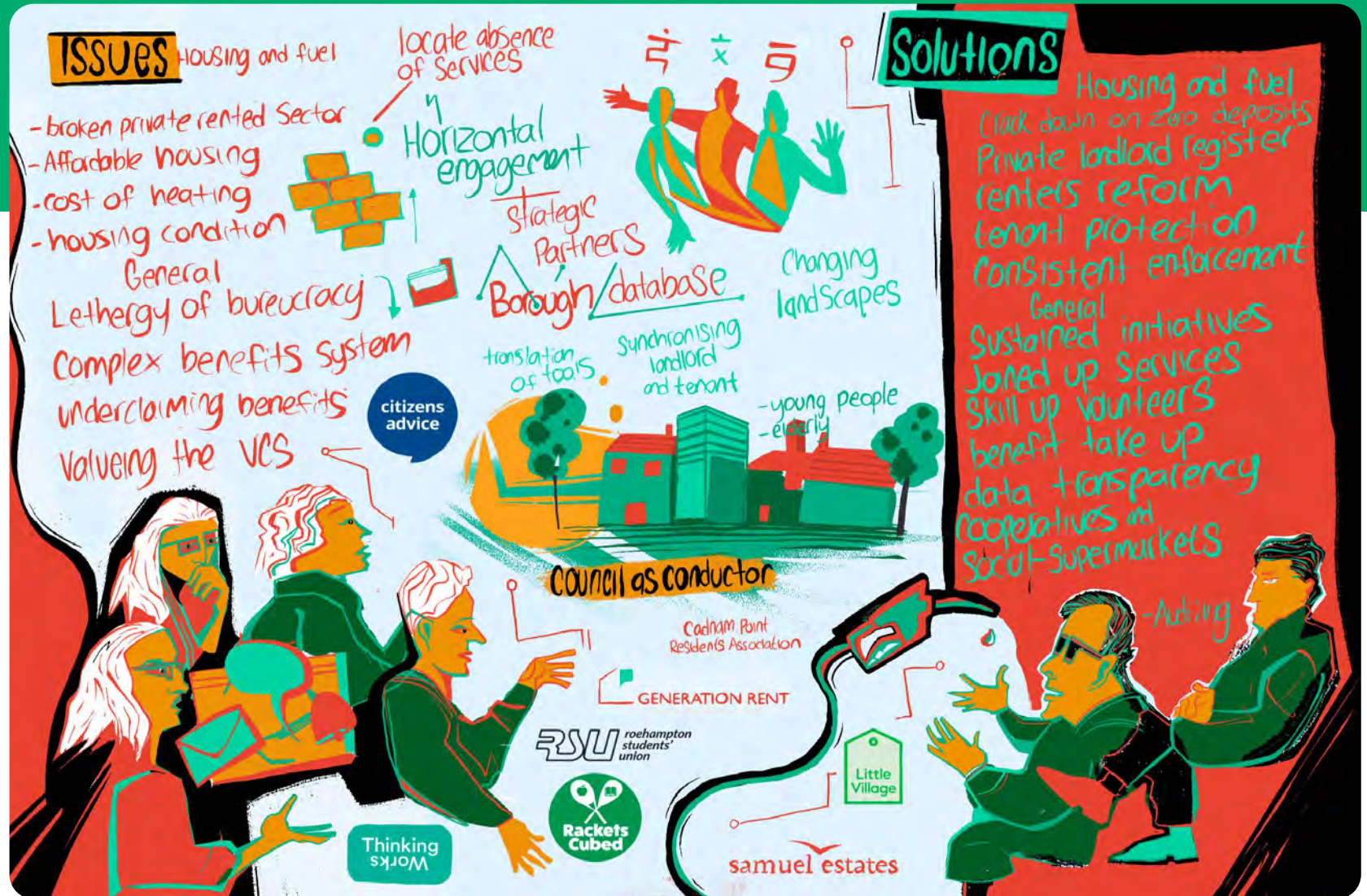
Lobby the government on improved approaches to data-sharing, including the Department for Work and Pensions around data on benefits uptake and auto-enrolment. Additionally, Wandsworth Council should offer themselves for a pilot scheme to implement this data-sharing.

14 Lobby Central Government to review benefits legislation with the aim of maximising household income

Work with other London councils to develop a lobby position to central government on:

- A benefits offer which advocates for a minimum income guarantee model and a floor mechanism for Universal Credit (drawing from the Essentials Guarantee policy position developed by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Trussell Trust).
- The minimum income guarantee could have an examination of sustainable diet rather than the bare minimum diet, so that families in poverty are able to afford fresh fruit and veg, rather than cheaper poorer quality food.
- An examination of the criteria for deductions from benefits for people suffering hardship (i.e., previous overpayments, and arrears).
- Auto-enrolment of all forms of benefits support.

4.2 Housing



Based on the evidence, we see the high cost of housing as the key Cost of Living challenge which is most impacting people in Wandsworth. We heard that homes in London are very expensive to buy or rent, and that this causes financial stress for many, coupled with insecure tenure and unsafe homes which can impact on people's physical and mental health.

Key issues

Based on the evidence we heard, we have identified the following key issues in relation to housing:

The Commission was warned that many of the solutions for unaffordable housing cannot be devised at a local level. This is due to historical circumstances and policies in the housing sector, which have led to significant increases in the value of housing in London and the Southeast of England over many years. Wandsworth organisations, and particularly the council, do however have some policy levers that can be used to have an impact on the provision of housing and housing support in the area. These include:

- Local housing targets.
- The planning system and developer contributions.
- Its lobby position to government on support for particular housing tenures and residents.

The impact of the high cost of housing in Wandsworth affects different tenures in different ways, often relating to demographics and income levels, but all impact on household disposable income.

Households owning with mortgage

For these households the high market prices for properties in the borough, and the corresponding larger loans required, increases their susceptibility to changes in interest rates. Average mortgage repayments in London increased by over 50% between December 2021 and December 2022, reducing household disposable income.

Private rented sector

Rental prices for Wandsworth are all significantly higher than the London average cost per month, with many local private tenants spending over half of their income on rent. Multiple factors have impacted on reducing supply in the private rented sector, including the economic impact of COVID-19, the proliferation of short lets and the legislative environment.

The Commission heard that some of the key factors causing this position are:

- The introduction of more restrictive legislation which has had the impact of deterring landlords from remaining in the market.
- The impact of significant cost increases in services charges for leaseholder landlords.
- Economic impact of the post COVID-19 market churn.
- Issues around managing tenancies including cost and eviction issues.
- In addition, the difficulty of obtaining a mortgage for first time buyers means that many are staying longer in the private rented sector.
- Potential impact of new EPC regulations also causing concern and uncertainty in the market.

Social renting sector

In Wandsworth this sector equates to 19% of dwellings, fewer than the London average of 23%. Wandsworth Council is the largest social housing provider with a number of large national providers also operating in the area. The London Tenants Federation commented the cost increase from rent rises and food is creating a huge pressure on household budgets and that there is a need to ensure homes are well maintained.

Housing Recommendations

Based on these key issues, we recommend

Wandsworth Council

15 Wandsworth Council must be ambitious on Housing to deliver more alternative forms of affordable housing and ensure decent housing in all tenures

It is vital that the council shows ambition in relation to housing. In particular:

- The Commission supports the council's commitment to seeking social rent tenures on future planning applications where possible. The Commission also support the council's commitment to using policies and practices to improve conditions for tenants in the private rented sector.
- The council should actively explore innovative ways to increase the social housing supply in Wandsworth to support resident's needs. Ideas that could be explored are:
 - Consider acquisition as an alternative and additional fast way to increase social housing supply.

- Using affordable housing grants working with major property portfolio holders (purchasing property portfolios which may have significant retrofitting requirements in the future, providing additional stock in the next 3/5 years).
- Consider running behavioural campaigns, giving people the opportunity to downsize, allied to a review to speed up and simplify current approaches to managing under occupation.

16 Increase local housing supply:

Look into creative solutions for increasing supply in different tenures and demographics across Wandsworth communities.

17 Improve conditions for those in temporary accommodation and experiencing homelessness:

Develop innovative approaches to reducing the number of households in temporary accommodation and provide homelessness support to people who are experiencing severe hardship. This could include:

- Examine options for increasing the supply of temporary accommodation in the area which could be through more council owned locations.
- Review the eligibility criteria and simplify the process of applying for support for people moving into settled accommodation settings.
- Commit to only placing homeless residents in temporary accommodation that is equipped with essential items.
- Provide more support to clients who are not likely to obtain social housing with other housing options such as mutual exchange and mobility schemes.

Wandsworth System

18 More collaborative working with Housing Associations with private sector landlords and developers to deliver affordable and good quality housing

Develop collaborative relationships with local Housing Associations to create and implement programmes and initiatives to support tenants. Within this, build a coalition for Wandsworth of tenants, the council as landlord, Housing Associations and Homes England to provide a strong lobby voice for Wandsworth.

Regional and central government

19 Lobby for an increase in supply of affordable housing

Develop a lobby/campaign position to encourage the government to invest in increasing the supply of truly affordable homes to rent and buy. Lobby the government to cease the right to buy schemes for local authorities and housing associations until a longer-term solution for the housing crisis in London has been developed.

20 Resolve the key issues facing those in the Private Rented Sector

Work with the GLA, LGA and London councils to review the systemic issues in the London housing market which are impacting on the private rented sector and use the findings to lobby government for legislative and regulatory changes to address these challenges.

21 Lobby for regulation of the short-let market to increase housing supply

Lobby the government to consider and review options for regulating the short-let market with the aim of increasing supply locally in the PRS.

22 Lobby for the unfreezing of Local Housing Allowance rates:

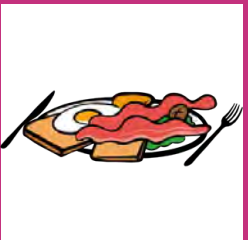
Lobby to ensure households are receiving adequate income to afford increasing housing costs.

23 Seek options for implementing targeted rent controls to deal with excessive rent rises across London

Work with the Mayor of London to develop a regulatory model which would aim to cap the rate for rents in the PRS and lobby for a development of the emerging provisions in the Renters Reform Bill.



4.3 Food



EVIDENCE

Short AND LONG TERM SOLUTIONS

FOOD - ECONOMY STORAGE

RESEARCH

DATA RELIABLE CONSISTENCY Severity IMPACT

SHARE ANALYTICS FOOD HOUSING FUEL TRANSPORT

Cross generational Fresh food Supplements

WITNESSES

THE WONKI COLLECTIVE

MEALS WHEELS

FOOD BANKS

WANDSWORTH FOOD Partnership

Old Persons forum

SHARING INFORMATION

BETTER JOINED UP WORKING

WORST AFFECTED

- SINGLE PARENT HOUSEHOLDS
- PRIVATE RENTERS
- YOUNG PEOPLE
- disabled.

COMMUNITY DIETICIAN

IMPROVING COMMUNICATION

WORKING WITH THE LGA

BMI/WEIGHT LOSS

COHESION INTEGRATION COORDINATION

VOUCHERS

- Better quality food for cheaper
- Educate and Maximise usage
- Streamline bureaucracy

JOB/ENTERPRISE

PROPOSITIONS

- Reform System
- One off payments
- Connect institutions
- Campaigns - Roshford
- Map food desert

Barriers to Access

- Stigma
- Shame
- Awareness

WANDSWORTH COMMISSION

Volunteering

Neighborhood groups brainstorming/debating Sector burnout

COMMUNITY KITCHEN

IMPROVED COMMUNICATION

From our evidence gathering activities, the Commission heard consistently about the challenges that the rising cost of food was causing for residents.

This issue was reinforced by national data, which reveals the significant increase in food insecurity and the need for food banks across the UK, with 14% of all UK adults experiencing food insecurity in the last year. Food insecurity is when a person is without reliable access to enough affordable, nutritious, healthy food. For one of the least deprived London boroughs, Wandsworth has relatively high levels of food insecurity (estimated at 14.2% of adults).

Key Issues

Based on the evidence we heard, we have identified the following key issues in relation to food

Food insecurity is a symptom of a wider problem people do not have enough income to afford essentials and food consumption is one of the first essential needs to be reduced when budgets are squeezed.

Income in both the form of wages and benefits has not kept up with recent inflation, meaning people are struggling to afford all their household costs. 1 in 3 people on Universal Credit are unable to afford adequate food. Nearly half (47%) of all households experiencing food insecurity include children under the age of 16. The Low-Income Family Tracker revealed that in Wandsworth there are many households with a monthly cash shortfall, which combined with rising food prices, strains their capacity to buy adequate food for their household.



Wandsworth Foodbank submitted their recent research report to the Commissions evidence base. This report showed that low income was the primary reason for referrals to Wandsworth Foodbank, accounting for 60% of all referrals.

They found that benefit payments being too low to cover essential costs was by far the most common cause of low income leading to food bank referral, selected by almost 9 in 10 referrers (85%). This reflects the impact of rising essential costs on incomes from low-paid work and/or frozen benefits levels.

Food price inflation has overtaken overall price inflation with a compound impact on low-income households.

Prices of food and non-alcoholic beverages rose by 13.6% in the year to August 2023. Nearly half of adults across the UK report spending more than usual to get what they normally buy when food shopping. Via our survey, residents reported their behaviour changes to save money: not buying fish or meat, buying the cheapest and low-quality food, avoiding buying fresh veg and fruit, turning to food banks and vouchers. The Commission found that, in Wandsworth, which has a mix of affluent and lower income households, people on low incomes were having to cut back on food because it is a flexible item in household budgets. Research done for this Commission through the focus groups found that people who are experienced at living on a small income are now constantly re-budgeting. They face precarious financial situations, which impact on overall health, stress, and anxiety.

Any small financial cushion has been stripped away and people's income is spent largely on rent and bills and so food costs are where they cut back.

The need to move away from a norm of over-reliance on foodbanks to a more sustainable local food provision system.

Between 2017/18 and 2022/23 the number of parcels distributed by food banks in the Trussell Trust network rose by 120%, demonstrating the depth of food insecurity in the UK.

We heard from local Foodbank representatives about how food banks should not be the answer to food insecurity because they are a short-term, unsustainable solution for a larger crisis and people should be afforded the dignity to choose their own food.

The lead commissioner for the food theme, Tim Lang, suggested that evidence from his own study for a report on civil resilience and preparedness implies that there is an argument for turning food banks into social catering settings. In addition, research supports wider thinking about how to develop shorter supply chains, with less profit taking by unnecessary value-adding and how to use the efficiencies of mass catering.

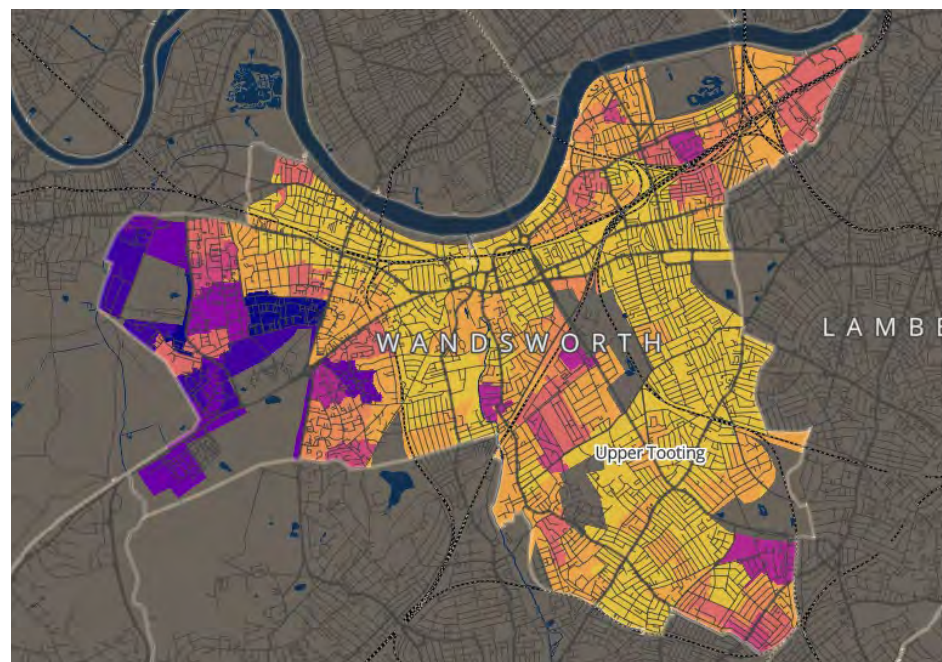
Food deserts: There is a lack of affordable, healthy food choices in some areas in the borough.

Food deserts are prevalent across the UK, and many coincide with areas of poverty and deprivation, where residents struggle with limited access to larger supermarkets with affordable, fresh, and healthy food. In Wandsworth, it is estimated that around 35,787 people potentially live in food deserts, the area's most at risk of being affected are Roehampton and some areas in West Putney and West Hill.

Food insecurity and food choices are impacting on diets and long-term health for Wandsworth communities.

It is estimated that 28% of UK consumers are eating less healthily due to the cost of healthier options. Local community dieticians, student's representative, and local foodbanks told us of their clients facing health issues such as malnutrition. Many are eating more ready meals and processed foods, cooking less from scratch, and reducing food consumption all together.

Food insecurity also has an impact on mental health. Wandsworth Foodbank's research highlighted that poorer mental health was identified as the most common impact of hardship by almost all food bank referrers (90%), as well as suicidality (23%). More than half of food bank guests surveyed (55%) reported that they had experienced poorer mental health during the previous month.



Consumer Data Research Centre E Food Desert index for Wandsworth

Food recommendations

Based on these issues, we recommend

Wandsworth Council

24 Tackle child food poverty through targeted campaigns in relation to school food

Develop options and pilot projects to test the impact and value of approaches to providing additional ongoing support for low-income families in relation to school food. (i.e., expanding FSM or additional cash payments to low-income secondary parents/pre and post school food clubs etc).

Wandsworth System

25 Build an effective and sustainable Wandsworth Food System

Develop the emerging Wandsworth Food Strategy with Wandsworth communities and organisations to create a whole system strategy using the sustainable food places or a similar model. The aim being to create a sustainable food system in Wandsworth.

- To support this work, pilot the establishment of governance models including a food committee or food council to provide

a focus on longer term objectives and effective mechanisms to objectively assess the impact of specific projects and initiatives.

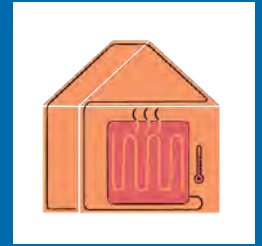
- Within the emerging Food Strategy for Wandsworth include a clear ambition to support the transformation of local food banks into more sustainable and equitable food provision services, such as Affordable Food Clubs. This could range from social supermarkets and pantries to food buses and larders, and local food cooperatives with a focus on providing a range of specialist financial advice and guidance in addition to the food offer.
- Support local community food initiatives, such as facilitating community growing sites, supporting local sustainable food entrepreneurs and food waste use initiatives.

Regional and central government

26 Tackle food deserts

Work with London partners (GLA/London Councils, the Centre for London) and the Consumer Data Research Centre at UCL to develop a model for mapping the affordability and availability of food in the area which could be piloted in Wandsworth (linking to recommendation 7, Roehampton is a potential area meeting this criteria). Use the data and insights to direct action on pilot options for sustainable food provision considering the locations, clients, targeted need, and the differing socio-cultural demographic profiles and employing the council planning system tools to influence provision where possible.

4.4 Energy



WANDSWORTH COL COMMISSION 5TH SESSION:



The price of fuel for household energy consumption has increased dramatically since the pandemic, as changes to the energy price cap saw households paying double their bills from previous years. The significance of these costs on households influenced the Commission to ensure this was a key area of focus.

Key issues

From our evidence gathering with a range of experts, residents, and campaign organisations, we have identified the following key issues in relation to fuel/energy:

Rising energy prices causing fuel poverty (households that cannot meet their energy needs at a reasonable cost)

There are an estimated 7.5 million households in fuel poverty across the UK.

In Wandsworth, an estimated 13,521 households are in fuel poverty, with higher concentrations in Tooting, Furzedown and Roehampton.

From local advice services, we heard of residents forced to choose not to heat their homes, even if they have children or are facing illness and 72% of respondents in our survey said they had experienced difficulties in meeting energy costs in the last six months to a year.

Low EPC ratings in households across the borough which causes higher energy bills and struggling residents unable to pay.

Households living in the least energy efficient homes are shown to pay significantly more per year on energy bills, and often these are the homes of low-income households.

We heard from local energy assessors about the issues with EPC ratings and the poor quality of installation which can mask issues; and from crisis support organisations about residents not being able to heat their homes due to high costs.

Rising energy prices causing fuel poverty, which impacts a range of correlated issues such as physical and mental health.

Campaigning organisation End Fuel poverty estimate that there are 7,409 average winter deaths caused by cold homes.

From our survey, and case studies from Citizens Advice Wandsworth, we heard of residents not turning on their heating, despite needing to for health reasons, such as receiving chemotherapy. Issues with damp and mould, due to inadequate heating of homes, is also exacerbating health problems.

Lack of availability of adequate providers for energy efficiency installations & predicted employment gap in this sector, which threatens the ability to supply the incoming demand.

Energy efficiency measures reduce the amount of energy needed to adequately heat homes, and therefore more energy efficient homes are cheaper to heat. However, evidence submitted to the Commission indicates there is a significant shortage of workers to install these measures across Wandsworth and the country.

It is estimated that insulating homes in Britain and installing heat pumps could benefit the economy by £7bn a year and create 140,000 new jobs by 2030.

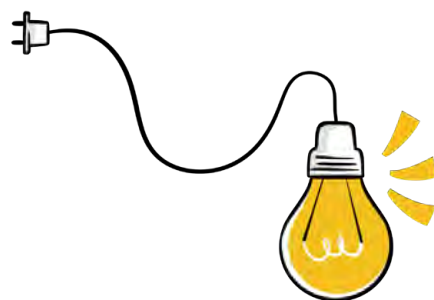
Energy recommendations

Based on these issues, we recommend

Wandsworth Council

27 Deliver improved enforcement and regulation in the social housing & private sector

- The council are recommended to deliver more stringent and thorough enforcement of the Domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEEES) Regulations and quality checking on the installation of energy efficiency measures in the area. This should include thorough quality checking on the procurement process and delivery of these contracts, and the recruitment of more Environmental Health officers to enforce minimum standards.
- Secondly, the council in partnership with the Borough's private rented sector should deliver a dedicated engagement strategy with the Borough's private landlords which provides detailed information and support on how the private sector can implement energy efficiency tools in housing using schemes available and ensuring this is done to a good standard. This could involve projects such as producing a retrofit toolkit for private rented sector landlords and opening up the tool Supply Wandsworth for better procurement processes.
- To look at ways of reducing bureaucracy and simplifying processes for delivering green solutions to mitigate the impact of the increased cost of household energy.



Wandsworth System

28 Encourage and facilitate learning for green skills

Work with education providers, particularly South Thames College and Roehampton University on creating attractive routes into green skills, such as via funding of apprenticeships. Deliver this alongside a targeted campaign via social media to raise awareness of green skills opportunities locally.

29 Deliver effective social prescribing

The council are recommended to build a partnership with local health organisations to deliver a social prescribing service for those with health issues, which are linked to or exacerbated by cold homes and lack of heating, and who live in energy inefficient households (an EPC rating of D or below). This requires collaborative working between anchor institutions in order to support residents, including effective cooperation between local government departments such as public health, adult social care, housing teams, local community support organisations, GPs, and local hospitals to ensure those suffering health problems as a result of fuel poverty are supported in a holistic way. For example, through:

- A scheme to fund the installation of boilers and/or heat pumps which will increase public health through prevention and create NHS savings.
- Deliver financial support to pay for heating on prescription, which has been shown to increase health, reduce stress and limit demand on health services.

Regional and central government

30 Lobby Government to develop a Green Skills strategy

The council should develop a lobbying position that advocates for a central government led strategy on preparation for the increase in green skills which are predicted to be required in coming years. This includes lobbying for more funding for green skills which is then linked to government funded employment schemes such as apprenticeships associated with delivering schemes like the Green Homes Grant, providing clear pathways for young people in this sector.

31 Lobby Government to deliver a social tariff for energy bills for low-income households

The council are recommended to lobby the government to introduce a new social tariff to lower the cost of bills for lower income households. It would be a government mandated, targeted 50% discount for qualifying consumers, which would provide more targeted support which could be evidenced to be more progressive and more cost-effective in the longer term.



4.5 Transport



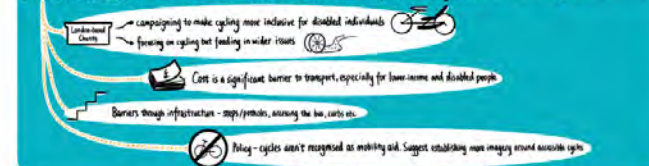
JOINT CHAIRS -- Welcome ✨



LAUREN JAMES, COMMISSIONER -- Introduction & Context



MARK BROWN, INCLUSIVE CYCLE MANAGER -- Wheels for Wellbeing Statement (road by Lauren James)



MICHAEL BARRET, CONSTRUCTION ADVISORY INNOVATIONS MANAGER -- Transport for London Statement (road by Lauren James)



JOSH COTTELL, CENTRE FOR LONDON -- Research in transport accessibility, affordability & future solutions



4 WAYS THAT TRAVEL INCREASES COST OF LIVING

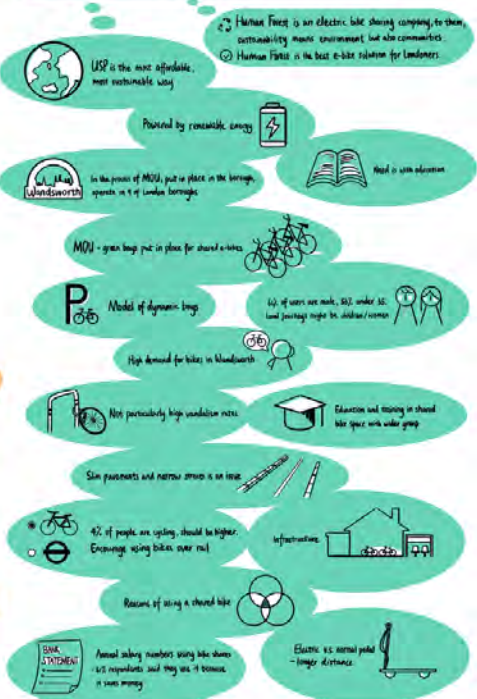


4 THINGS FOR TRANSPORT TO LOOK LIKE

- Reduce cost of travel, particularly public transport
- Improve connectivity and transport options, especially disabled
- Reduce time it takes to travel
- Reduce air pollution from travel

CFL acknowledges these are not new recommendations but will be significant in improving transport.

LAURA ELMS, HUMAN FOREST -- Sustainable Transport



The cost of transport, transport options and the accessibility of transport all have significant influence over people's ability to utilise economic and social opportunities. As a Commission, we felt this was a significant Cost of Living issue, given the recent increases in public transport fares which particularly impact residents.

Key Issues

Upon speaking to a range of national, regional, and local stakeholders, the following issues came out as the most significant:

Roehampton: Low public transport accessibility levels in Roehampton and other areas of high multiple of indices deprivation. This subsequently limits opportunities for education, employment, and socialising.

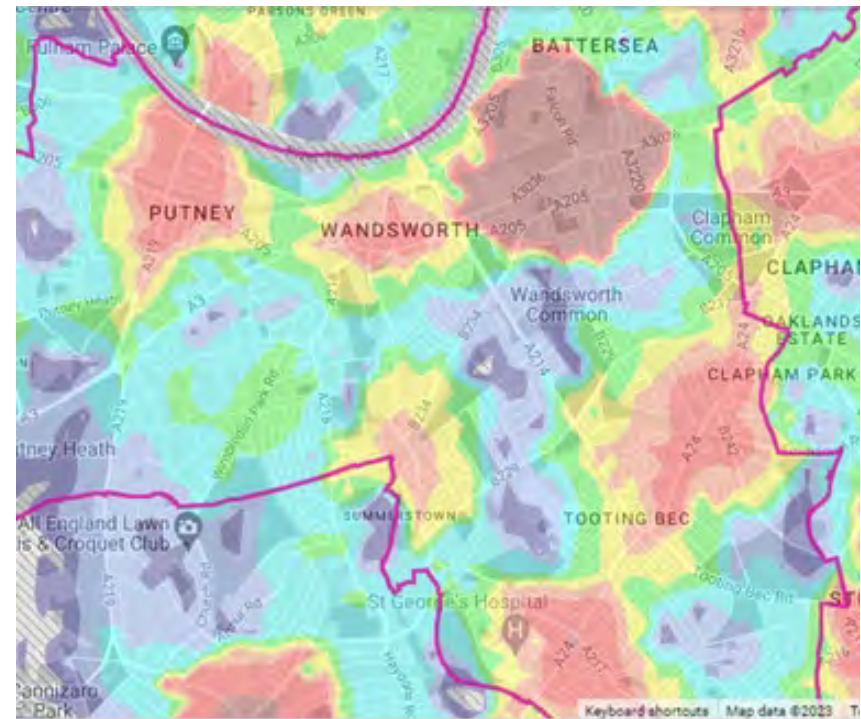
Public Transport Accessibility Levels (PTALs) show that Roehampton, Furzedown and parts of West Hill are the least accessible in Wandsworth.

Roehampton is also among the areas with the highest income deprivation. Low access to transport impacts on employment options, access to essential goods and services, and is particularly challenging for those that can only travel via public transport.

Increased cost of public transport.

Rail, tube, and bus prices have all increased, straining people's ability to stretch budgets to cover essential needs as well as transport, including to and from employment.

Additionally, lower income employment is often associated with unsociable hours, which means there are reduced transport options for people working these hours, and often these options can be expensive.



Disabled people can often face barriers to transport, including extra cost due to specific needs, physical barriers to active travel etc.

We heard from organisations, residents and policy experts on challenges facing disabled people, who are often on lower incomes or unable to work and struggle with the cost of transport.

The compound impact of lower incomes and barriers to transport in relation to disabilities means that accessing transport is made more difficult, where cheaper options such as public transport may be physically inaccessible to residents, specialised disability cycles are more expensive and private transport is too great a cost on already strained incomes.

Transport recommendations

Based on these issues, we recommend

Wandsworth Council

32 Consider delivering financial support for travel to those most in need

- Review the feasibility of delivering support schemes for travel to those in low-income households.

33 Deliver action to facilitate walking and cycling in Wandsworth:

- Deliver a project to facilitate community cycle hubs, providing community bikes/discounted bikes and cycle training in identified areas of need. This could be piloted initially in Roehampton.
- Consider tariffs for bike hangars in identified areas of low Public Transport Accessibility Levels (PTALs) in Wandsworth and invest into the delivery of more bike hangars in the borough to allow space for this more affordable travel option.
- Invest into wider provision of cargo bikes to become more available in the borough.
- Implement infrastructure improvements as outlined in the new Wandsworth walking & cycling strategy with associated public realm improvements in line with healthy streets indicators to encourage walking a natural, cheaper, and inclusive choice.



Wandsworth System

34 Establish a Disability Working Group on Transport and Infrastructure

To ensure the continued inclusion of disability consideration in all policy, the council should work in partnership with local communities to support the establishment of a Disability Working Group which reviews and advises on the design and planning process of new infrastructure within the borough.

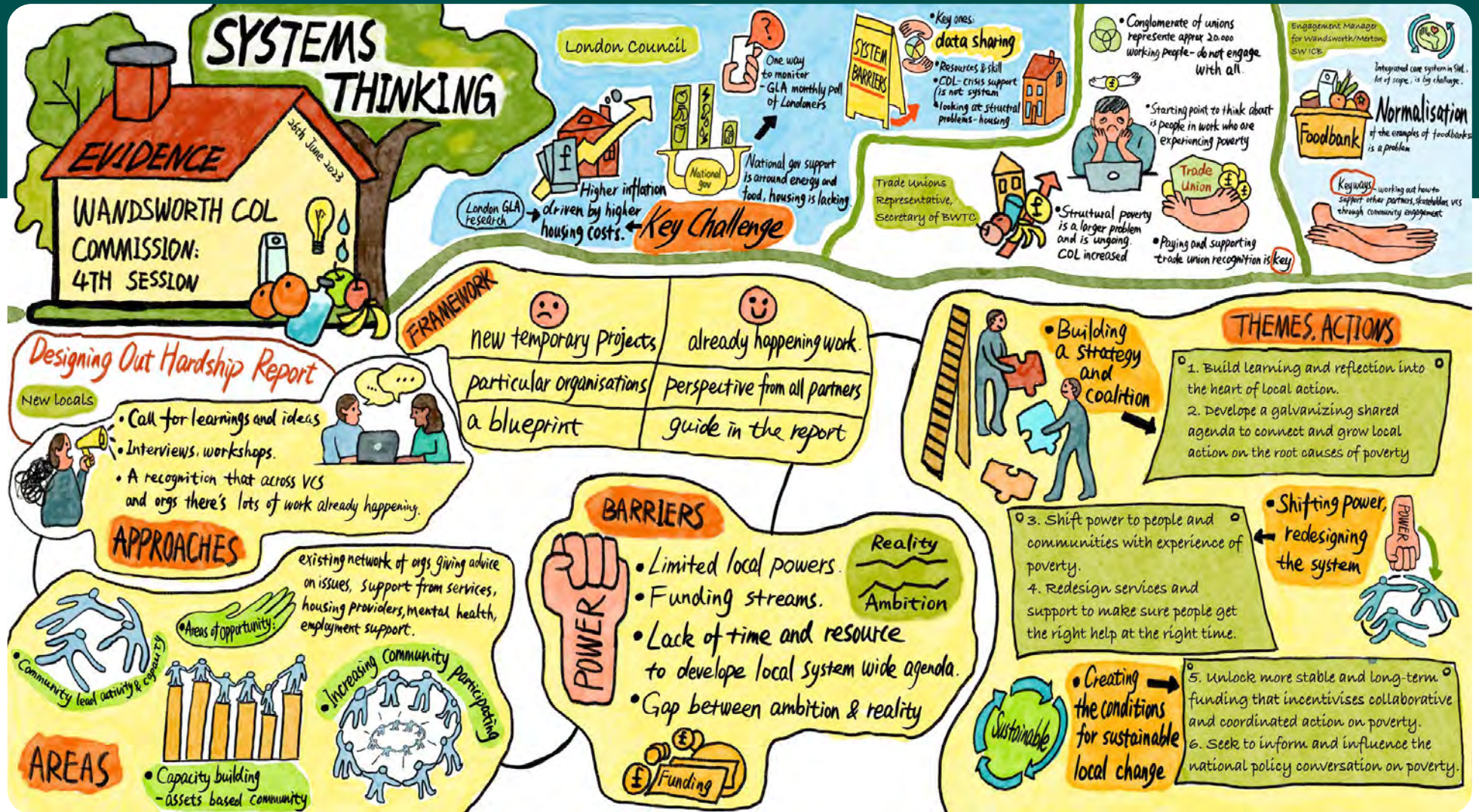
- This group should be independent from the council, however work closely with relevant officers to ensure those with disabilities and different needs are considered in transport and planning policy. This will have many positive impacts, including the long-term effect of making Wandsworth more easily accessible to walk and wheel by those with disabilities, meaning our residents can reduce spending on public transport due to more accessible active travel options. The group may look to support interventions to make walking and wheeling easier and other cycling interventions.

Regional and central government

35 Lobby for means-tested discretionary fares

- Develop a lobby position on changes to discretionary fares which uses benefits data to automatically passport households into receiving a discretionary fare. This should include a question around if services, and discretionary fares, are meeting the needs of people who need them most.

To conclude, a call for action...



We see this report and its recommendations as an opportunity for the council and local partners to deliver positive change in the borough. The recommendations strive to respond directly to the systemic challenges faced by Wandsworth residents which have contributed to, and worsened, their experiences of the Cost of Living crisis.

We commend the single conversation approach to public, voluntary and community, and private sector organisations in the borough. This approach could be a catalyst for developing new localised approaches, building a Wandsworth system that is resident and community focused. Expanding on the existing social and structural partnerships, the Wandsworth system has the power to create a culture of collaboration, partnership and information-sharing which involves all of Wandsworth, its local authority, health institutions, education providers, voluntary and community sector, private and business sector, and its residents.

Our recommendations allow space to build on existing programmes of work, create new initiatives for change and join up our available resources and expertise across the system to deliver shared outcomes for Wandsworth.



We as the Commissioners of the Wandsworth Cost of Living Commission, are passionate about developing the legacy from this work, building on the evidence we have gathered and the relationships and connections made across Wandsworth, London and with national organisations, local government, and campaigning organisations through the delivery of the ideas and actions included in our recommendations .

Finally, we hope to see Wandsworth flourish in delivering on the recommendations to deliver positive change for its residents.

Appendices

WANDSWORTH COST OF LIVING COMMISSION

WANDSWORTH TOWN HALL 23 AUGUST 2023

DEVELOPING OPTIONS FOR THE FOOD THEME

UNDERSTANDING THE WANDSWORTH SYSTEM & HOW IT IMPACTS ON COL SOLUTIONS

ILLUSTRATED BY JIAZHEN CAI

WANDSWORTH SYSTEM



MAKING THINGS WORK AT LOCAL LEVEL: THE PUZZLE OF WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO DO IT

FOUNDATIONAL LIVEABILITY FOCUSES ON HOUSEHOLDS AS A PRACTICAL MEASURE
LIVEABILITY DEPENDS ON 3 THINGS WITHIN A HOUSEHOLD

- RESIDUAL INCOME
- ESSENTIAL SERVICES
- SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE, PLACES & ACTIVITIES

HOW CAN WANDSWORTH GET MORE LOCAL SOCIAL INNOVATION?



BRING SENIOR COUNCIL OFFICERS & INTERMEDIARY REPS TO BUILD SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF LIVEABILITY OBJECTIVES



WANDSWORTH HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME THE CONVENER OF LOCAL SOCIAL INNOVATION AND MANY KINDS OF ORGANISATIONS CAN ACT AS CONVENER

SHORT RUN PROJECTS WITHIN POWER MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE



FOUNDATIONAL LIVEABILITY AND ITS OVERLAP WITH INTERIM REPORT

COMMISSION INTERIM REPORT

THE FOCUS ON HOUSING, FOOD, ENERGY, TRANSPORT, ESSENTIAL COSTS IS AN EFFECTIVE WAY OF FOCUSING ACTIONS. HOWEVER, THE FOUNDATIONAL LIVEABILITY APPROACH ADDS PILLARS OF PUBLIC SERVICES AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE.

- DISCUSSION POINTS
- IDENTIFY LOCAL ISSUES & BUDGETARY PARTNERSHIPS
 - CONSIDER ISSUE OF TALK OF RETURN HOME AND TIME
 - BUILD THE ROAD AS WE GO ALONG
 - ISSUE OF GENERATIONAL EFFECTS OF TIME & MONEY CONSTRAINTS
 - STATE TOP-DOWN COMPETITIVENESS NEEDS

POVERTY & HEALTH IMPACTS OF COL

UNDER SEVERE PRESSURE EVERYDAY

INCREASED LONG-TERM ILLNESSES, EXAGGERATED BY COST ISSUES

INCREASED LEVELS OF MENTAL ILLNESS, CORRELATION OR CAUSALITY ON PAYING BILLS

UTILISING STRATEGIC ROLE OF HEALTH AS ANCHOR INSTITUTION

PREPARE FOR WINTER COMMUNICATIONS
STAFF AS A HUGE RESOURCE

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS



WANDSWORTH WORKS WELL AS SYSTEM IN PARTNER AGENCIES. AND WANDSWORTH DOES HAVE COHESION OF THE WILLING

SYSTEM



IMPROVE DATA SHARING & INTELLIGENCE



DIRECTION OF DEVELOPMENT OF NHS AND MECHANISMS



THE MOST RESONANT TASK IS DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK TO RESPOND TO COMPOUND IMPACT OF COST OF LIVING CRISIS



CONSIDER UNMET NEEDS IN THE COMMUNITY
BUREAUCRACY

SHORT-TERM COMMUNITY BASED PROJECTS - SMALL CHANGES WITH ALTERNATIVE 1% IMPROVEMENTS

STRATEGY



CHALLENGES TO COL

- ACROSS CHANNELS
- HOUSING IN LONDON
- CRISIS AS THE NEW NORMAL
- PUBLIC SPENDING
- LONDON COUNCILS
- INFLUENCE ON CHANGE

FINANCIAL HARDSHIP



MORE FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE MODELS

- FOOD CO-OPS BRIDGE THE GAP
- LONDON FOOD LINK - COMMUNITY FOOD ENTERPRISES
- MOVE AWAY FROM RELIANCE ON SURPLUS FOOD AND INCREASE BUYING POWER
- IMPROVE DEVELOPING WRAP AROUND SUPPORT AND CASH FIRST APPROACHES - FIT IN EMERGENCIES
- SCHOOL MEALS



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The Commission

Commissioner Profiles

Meet the Cost of Living Commissioners:

Ian Tattum, Joint chair

Ian is the Vicar of St Barnabas Church in Southfields and Chair of Governors at Riversdale Primary School. He has recently stepped down as Area Dean of Wandsworth, gaining extensive knowledge of and building strong networks within the community in Wandsworth.

Dorian Leatham, Joint chair

Dorian is a people-orientated senior executive leader with extensive experience in the local government sector, working to address some of the most fundamental issues such as diversity, equality and housing provision.

Councillor Kemi Akinola, Vice chair

Kemi Akinola is Deputy leader of Wandsworth Council and cabinet member for the Voluntary Sector, Business and Culture. She is the founder of the charity Be Enriched and a Director of Brixton People's Kitchen.

Dame Cathy Warwick

Cathy has lived in Wandsworth for forty-three years. She was Chief Executive of the Royal College of Midwives, has recently ended her term as Non-Executive Director on the Board of Kingston Hospital and is the Chair of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service.

Gillian Norton

After an executive career in local government, Gillian was appointed Chairman of St Georges University Hospital in April 2017. She is also a Member of the Government Commission on COVID Commemoration.

Tylor-Maria Johnson

Tylor-Maria is a Senior Policy and Data Analyst at Policy in Practice. She is leading Policy in Practice's current analysis of how the Cost of Living crisis is affecting low income households across the UK and has published three blogs featuring her work.

Lauren James

Lauren is a Senior Consultant at MP Smarter Travel, a sustainable transport consultancy based in London. Lauren has a particular interest in working with disadvantaged groups within communities, or those that are often under-represented in active travel.

Toby Costin

Toby is one of the Directors at Crew Energy, a local community benefit society which has been running energy advice and fuel poverty assistance services since 2017.

Alex Colás

Alex is a Professor of International Relations at the Department of Politics in Birkbeck College, University of London where he directs the MSc in Food, Politics and Society and the MSc in International Security and Global Governance.

Arshad Daud

Arshad is Chair of Balham Mosque & Tooting Islamic Centre, Chair of Balham and Tooting Community Association and Trustee at Al Risalah Education Trust. He is a Community Leader & Board level professional based in South London.

Tim Lang

Tim Lang has been Professor of Food Policy at City University's Centre for Food Policy since 2002. He has extensive experience as an advisor to various bodies, including the World Health Organisation, four House of Commons Select Committee inquiries, and the Mayor of London.

Youth Council Representatives & Keziah Gordon

Keziah Gordon is the Childrens Services Participation Lead & Wandsworth Youth Council Facilitator at Wandsworth Council. Keziah has regularly discussed the cost-of-living crisis with local youth groups and shared their views through feedback to the Commission. The Commission has also worked directly with Wandsworth Youth Council, a group of 30 young people who work together to ensure young people's voices are heard by politicians and decision makers.

Kath McDonnell

As an employee of Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Union Council, Kath represents around 25,000 trade union members who live and work within the borough. One of their aims is to improve generally the economic and social conditions of all working people.

Beverley Corson

Beverley is the CEO of Wandsworth Chamber of Commerce alongside running her own business. Having lived in Wandsworth most of her life, she is passionate about the Borough and works to help SME business leaders to maximise their potential, achieve business growth and fulfil their ambitions

Liz Moreton

Liz was a Commissioner from November 2022 to April 2023. She was the Director of Creativity and Social Change, Battersea Arts Centre and delivered an extensive range of arts and cultural projects, including projects supporting young people across Wandsworth.

Witnesses to the Wandsworth Cost of Living Commission & Evidence Sources

Government Organisations and Anchor Institutions

Local Government Association (LGA)
London Councils
Greater London Authority (GLA)
Integrated Care System Engagement (Wandsworth)
Southwest London Integrated Care Board
Battersea and Wandsworth Trade Union Council
Wandsworth Council

Policy, Research and Think Tank Organisations

Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Centre for London
Foundational Economy Research Ltd
Policy in Practice
New Local
Poverty Strategy Commission
Poverty Truth Network
Wandsworth Data & Analytics team

Housing

Generation Rent
London Tenants Federation
National Residential Landlord Association
Shelter
Centrepont
Samuel Estates
Cadnam Point Residents Association
Wandsworth Council Housing Department
Private Sector Housing Lead Officer: Regulatory Services Partnership

Food

Trussell Trust
Feeding Britain
Food Foundation
Sustain
London Food Board
Independent Food Aid Network
Sustainable Food Places Network
Kantar (Data insights company)
Wandsworth Food Bank

Community Dieticians St Georges / Queen Marys Hospitals
Wandsworth Food Partnership
Earlsfield Foodbank
Wandsworth Older People Forum
The Wonki Collective
Waste not Want not
Home Community Café
Wandsworth Public Health

Energy

Fuel Poverty Action
End Fuel Poverty
National Energy Action
Association of Local Energy Officers
Wandsworth Climate Change Team
Thinking Works
CREW
London Rebuilding Society
Wandsworth Climate Change

Transport

Transport for London
TfL Independent Disability Advisory Group
Centre for London – Transport Policy
Human Forest
Wandsworth Cycle Campaign

Wheels for Wellbeing
Sustrans
Wandsworth Community Transport
Wandsworth Transport Strategy

Additional Voluntary and Community Sector

Citizens Advice Wandsworth
Wandsworth Youth Groups
Wandsworth Youth Council
Katherine Low Settlement
Home Community Cafe
Wandsworth Older Peoples Forum
Bounce Theatre
Wandsworth Care Alliance
Roehampton University Students Union
Community Box, Rackets Cubed
Little Village
Battersea Alliance
Community Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers
SW15 Women's Group
Roehampton
Wandsworth Carers
Mushkil Aasaan Centre
Healthwatch Wandsworth
Wandsworth Community Empowerment Network

Wandsworth Cost of Living Commission Survey Results

The survey was used to collect resident responses around a set of questions, looking at both the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and peoples thoughts and insights on solutions that the Commission could consider. The survey ran from March to April 2023. There were 56 responses in total to the consultation. Of those surveyed, over half reported experiencing difficulties in meeting the costs of Housing (53%), Food (62%), Energy (72%) and 37% in meeting the cost of Transport in the last six months to a year. Respondents shared a range of behavioural changes that they have made since increased costs have put pressure on budgets. These include reducing heating in homes (despite serious health conditions), avoiding cooking and showering, cutting down on food and buying cheaper more processed foods, using food banks, picking up more work, not seeing friends and family and reducing participation in sport, socialising and leisure activities. When asked about ideas for solutions, suggestions included continuing government support, caps in the private rented sector, more information and joined-up working and direct support to low-income families.

Wandsworth Cost of Living Commission Call for Evidence Summary

The Commission also carried out two calls for evidence, circulating a range of questions to different organisations from local community groups to policy experts, think tanks, and regional and central government peers. The responses outlined the three key areas of the crisis; housing costs, energy costs and food costs. Financial and social challenges for young people, older people and disadvantaged families were cited as the main groups affected. Solutions suggested involved lobbying government to improve benefits take-up via autoenrollment, creating a Borough food strategy, improving insulation in homes, focus on building the supply chain for retrofit, building more affordable and social housing, and focus on improving food access in Roehampton. The responses received have been considered by the Commission and informed the development of their recommendations.

Specific evidence submitted to the Commission

Action on Empty Homes- Wandsworth Housing Vacancies Report

Consumer Data Centre: Data sets on food insecurity and food deserts

Cost of Living research (February and October 2023)

Healthwatch Wandsworth

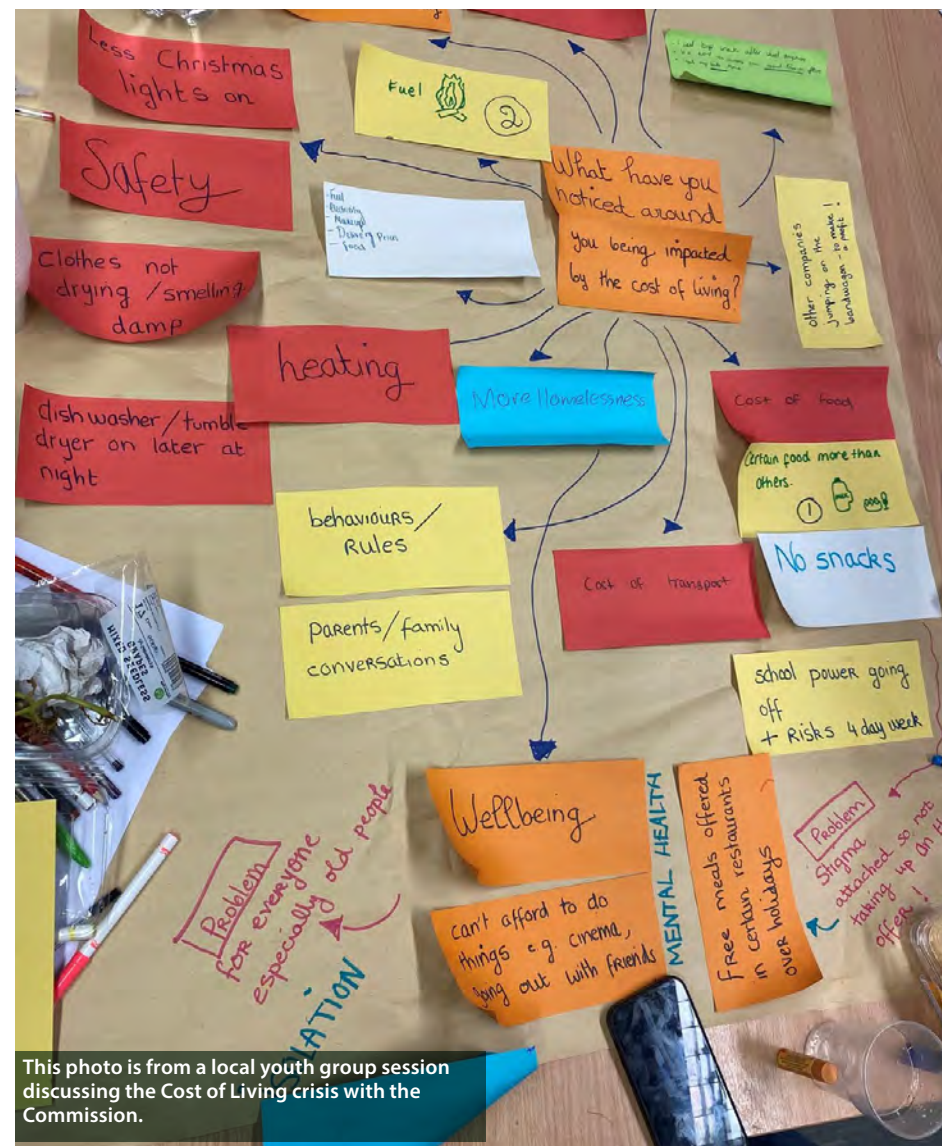
Wandsworth Cost of Living Commission Focus Groups Summary

Members and service users of six Wandsworth community groups and organisations (SW15 Women's Network, in Roehampton, Youth Forum members and individual young adults in Battersea, Wandsworth Carers Centre, in Balham, Wandsworth Older People's Forum in Earlsfield, Wandsworth Community Empowerment Network (WCEN) at the Mushkil Aasaan Centre, Tooting, Community Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (CARAS) in Tooting) were invited to take part in workshops between June and September 2023. Each session consisted of 12-15 people who were invited to talk about their own experiences and/or those of people that they know and to consider possible solutions for the council, working in partnership with public sector partners, community, cultural and faith groups.

The independent facilitator of the focus groups, after completing the sessions, reported the discussions to the Commission. The focus groups emphasised that the Cost-of-Living crisis has exacerbated existing hardship. People who are experienced at living on a small income are now constantly re-budgeting. The precarity of their financial situation is having an impact on many people's mental health, causing depression and panic attacks not previously experienced. Any small financial cushion has been stripped away. People's income is mostly going on rent and bills and, therefore, food and transport costs are where they cut back.

The organisations and their people want to work with the council and partners to address changes in communication, how information is shared and to collaborate on solutions. They also would like to support the council to lobby and advocate for solutions that need to be delivered by central government, businesses and national agencies. There was a focus on identifying under-represented voices and the people most vulnerable during the cost-of-living crisis.

The evidence from the focus groups complemented the Commission's approaches to evidence gathering including the community-based evidence gathering sessions, Commission meetings the citizen survey and formal calls for evidence.



Wandsworth Cost of Living Commission: Reading list

| Title and publication date | Authors | Organisation |
|--|---|---|
| Destitution in the UK 2023 (October 2023) | Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Glen Bramley, Morag Treanor, Janice Blenkinsopp, Jill McIntyre, Sarah Johnsen, Lynne McMordie. | Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Herriot Watt university and I sphere |
| Supply of Private Rented Sector Accommodation in London(July 2023) | Christine Whitehead, Kath Scanlon and Ellie Benton (LSE); and Abigail Davies, Jacqui Daly, Will Holford and Lucy Brown (Savills). | LSE consulting and Savills for London Councils |
| Policy priorities for transport in London (September 2023) | Klara Blazek, Josh Cottell, Millie Mitchell, Oriane Nermond, Claire Harding | Centre for London |
| Homes fit for Londoners: London's homes today (August 2023) | Claire Harding, Josh Cottell, Jon Tabbush, Zarin Mahmud | Centre for London |
| Licence to let: How property licencing could better protect private renters (May 2023) | Zarin Mahmud, Jon Tabbush | Centre for London |
| A new Framework for tackling poverty (September 2023) | Chaired by Baroness Philippa Stroud | The interim report of the Poverty Strategy Commission |
| UK Residential Market Survey (September 2023) | | Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors |
| Unlocking the potential of Big Local partnerships | Julian Dobson, Tony Gore, Kim Graham and Kate Swade | Sheffield Hallam University /Centre for Regional Economic and Social research |
| The Plan (July 2021) | Chaired by Henry Dimpleby | National Food Strategy |
| Designing out the most severe forms of hardship in local areas | Grace Pollard and Imran Hashmi | New Local and Joseph Rowntree Foundation |
| Co-creating Urban Transformation | | Agirre Lehendakaria Centrer for social and political studies |
| Food insecurity in London (April 2023) | Chair Hina Bakhari AM | Economy committee London Assembly |
| Housing in London 2022 (October 2022) | | GLA Housing and land |

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|--|---|---|
| Unable to escape persistent hardship: JRF's Cost of Living tracker, Summer 2023 | Rachelle Earwaker, Senior Economist Maudie Johnson-Hunter, Economist | Joseph Rowntree Foundation |
| Fifty years of benefit uprating, JRF | Peter Matejic, Deputy Director of Evidence and Impact | Joseph Rowntree Foundation |
| A minimum income standard for London 2022 (July 2023) | Matt Padley, Abigail Davis, Chloe Blackwell, Claire Shepherd and Juliet Stone | Centre for Research in Social Policy, Loughborough university |
| Improving the health of people living in Temporary Accommodation in London (September 2023) | | A Groundswell project funded by Trust for London |
| Breaking Point : The Cost of Living crisis in London and what can be done about it October 2023 | Tianne Haggar, Kirstie Hewlett, Suzanne Hall, Hannah Piggott, Zara Regan, Rachel Hesketh, Marta Wojciechowska and Rod Dacombe | The Policy Institute at Kings College London |
| The Mayor of London Food Strategy for London 2018 | | GLA |
| Rising Cost of Living in the UK September 2022 | Brigid Francis-Devine, Paul Bolton, Matthew Keep, Daniel Harari | House of Commons library |
| Not Heating, eating or meeting bills: managing the cost-of-living crisis on a low income | Katie Schmuecker Principal Policy Adviser Rachelle Earwaker Senior Economist | Joseph Rowntree Foundation |
| Hard Up: How rising cost are hitting different places, and how they can respond September 2022 | | Centre for Progressive Policy |
| Cost of Living: Impact of rising costs on disabled people | Thomas Weston | House of Lords Library |
| Trust for London: Various articles Cost of Living Tracker London rent as a percentage of gross pay | | Trust for London |
| The true Cost of Living | Rory Weal, Senior Policy and Public Affairs Manager, the Trussell Trust | Trussell Trust |
| Green Alliance, Closing the UK's green skills gap | Sam Alvis, James Fotherby, Helena Bennett, Zoe Avison and Joseph Evans | Green Alliance |
| When nothing works: From Cost of Living to foundational liveability, 2023 | Luca Calafati, Julie Froud, Colin Haslam, Sukhdev Johal and Karel Williams | Foundational Liveability Research Ltd |
| Radical Help, 2018 | Hilary Cottam | |

Wandsworth Cost of Living Commission

Final Report - Summary
November 2023