

MINUTES OF URGENT DECISIONS MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 17TH NOVEMBER, 2021, 10.30 - 10.40 AM

PRESENT: Councillor Peray Ahmet, Leader of the Council.

In attendance: Thomas Skeen, Assistant Director of Finance; Edward Ashcroft, Policy and Equalities Officer; and Fiona Rae, Principal Committee Co-ordinator.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND IN HARINGEY

The Leader considered the report which sought approval to allocate the remaining funds in the Household Support Fund, in line with the grant conditions, and as set out in the Household Support Fund Scheme Policy.

It was noted that the government announced £500 million of new grant funding in October 2021 through the 'Household Support Fund' to help vulnerable people to access essentials over the winter as the recovery from the pandemic continued and the cost of living increased. The funding would enable the Council to provide support to families with children and other vulnerable residents from 6 October 2021 until 31 March 2022. Haringey's allocation of this fund was £2,406,671.72.

Cabinet had already approved – by Urgent Decision – the allocation of up to £1 million for the continued provision of food support for families with children eligible for Free School Meals during school holidays. This report now sought a further decision to allocate the remaining funds, in line with the grant conditions, and as set out in the policy document at Appendix 1 of the report.

The Leader RESOLVED

1. To approve the additional funding allocation from the Government in the sum of around £1.4 million to support low-income families and residents most in need and in financial hardship and to be delivered through the Council and partners.
2. To approve the updated Household Support Fund Scheme Policy [November 2021] at Appendix 1 of the report, which sets out the Council's allocations and arrangement for administering the funding provided by the government.

3. To delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Finance, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to amend this policy to give effect to changes in legislation, statutory or non-statutory guidance, or directives or instructions of a similar character issued by the government.
4. To agree that this policy is subject to the availability of government funding and will terminate on 31 March 2022 unless terminated earlier or extended beyond this date by Cabinet or Cabinet Member decision.

Reasons for decision

The Government, through the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), has provided funding to local authorities to provide and administer the Household Support Fund. The objective of the Fund is to provide support to households who would otherwise struggle to buy food or pay essential bills or meet other essential living costs or housing costs (in exceptional cases of genuine emergency) this winter as the economy recovers from Covid-19. It is acknowledged that local authorities have the local ties and knowledge and are best placed to allocate funding according to local need.

The scheme provides for local authorities to determine eligibility in their area and target support to those most in need within the scope of conditions set by DWP. This report and the policy at Appendix 1 explains how the Council will do this.

The Household Support Fund payments are expected to support households over the grant period and for funding to be spent between 6 October 2021 and 31 March 2022.

There is a need for an urgent decision to be taken on the recommendation in order to ensure that payments are made to support vulnerable people within the allotted time.

Alternative options considered

The alternative option considered was not to develop a Haringey Support Fund Policy. This was discounted as it would not have made use of potential support to Haringey residents and would have necessitated a return of the funds to central government.

Please be advised that the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny has agreed that the call-in procedure shall not apply to this urgent decision. This is because the decision is urgent and any delay in implementation caused by the call-in procedure would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interests due to the fact that any delay in decision making will impact on the ability to utilise available funding to support families with children, other vulnerable households and individuals in Haringey. The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee has agreed that the decision is both reasonable in all circumstances, and that it should be treated as a matter of urgency. This is in accordance with Part 4, Section H, and Paragraph 18 (a) and (b) of the Council Constitution.

LEADER: Cllr Peray Ahmet

Signed by Leader

Date ...17 November 2021.....