

URGENT DECISIONS

Monday, 22nd May, 2023, 12.30 pm

Councillors: Seema Chandwani

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A member with a disclosable pecuniary interest or a prejudicial interest in a matter who attends a meeting of the authority at which the matter is considered:

- (i) must disclose the interest at the start of the meeting or when the interest becomes apparent, and
- (ii) may not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must withdraw from the meeting room.

A member who discloses at a meeting a disclosable pecuniary interest which is not registered in the Register of Members' Interests or the subject of a pending notification must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days of the disclosure.

Disclosable pecuniary interests, personal interests and prejudicial interests are defined at Paragraphs 5-7 and Appendix A of the Members' Code of Conduct

3. HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND IN HARINGEY PHASE 2: MAY 2023 (PAGES 1 - 12)

Due to the urgency, 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 households 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.

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Tuesday, 16 May 2023

Report for: Cabinet Member Signing

Title: **Household Support Fund in Haringey
Phase 2: May 2023**

Report
Authorised by: Jess Crowe, Director of Culture, Strategy & Engagement

Lead Officer: Sara Sutton, Assistant Director for Place Based Partnerships and
Commissioning

Ward(s) affected: All

Report for Key/
Non Key Decision: Key Decision

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 The Government, through the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) launched the Household Support Fund in October 2021. In February 2023, the DWP announced that the scheme would be extended for a further 12 months for the period 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024.
- 1.2 Local authorities are responsible for administering The Fund in their area. Haringey council has been allocated £4,813,343.44 for the 12-month period.
- 1.3 The objective of The Fund is to provide support to households in the most need; particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support government has recently made available but who are nevertheless in need and who require crisis support. The Fund is intended to cover a wide range of low-income households in need including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people, with an emphasis on supporting households with energy, food and water bills.
- 1.4 The Household Support Fund will allow the Council to continue and expand its support to households in most need. This report is seeking approval for the allocation for the second phase of this funding to provide support to households in line with agreed spending, up to a total of £2,406m (half of the entire allocation of £4,813,343.44) to cover the period to 30th September 2023.
- 1.5 The Household Support Fund Scheme Policy: May 2023 Phase 2, sets out the Council's arrangement for administering the first part of The Fund, which is within the conditions stipulated by DWP. This decision will be followed by a further decision to approve the allocations policy for the next phase of The Fund in the Autumn 2023.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

- 2.1 It is essential that in this time when many people are experiencing hardship caused by the Cost-of-Living Crisis, we do all that we can to support our most vulnerable residents.

This Fund is an important part of the support available and one of a range of measures we are implementing to provide support to Haringey residents.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet Member for Tackling Inequality and Resident Services:

- 3.1. Approves the Household Support Fund Scheme Policy: May 2023 Phase 2, which sets out the Council's arrangement for administering the second part of the funding, attached in Appendix 1.
- 3.2. Delegates authority to the Assistant Director for Place Based Partnerships and Commissioning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Tackling Inequality and Resident Services 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 Government.
- 3.3. Delegates authority to the Assistant Director for Place Based Partnerships and Commissioning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Tackling Inequality and Resident Services, to award small grants to Voluntary and Community sector organisations to support the delivery of the scheme, in accordance with procurement regulations and local policy.
- 3.4. Agrees that this policy is subject to the availability of government funding and will terminate on 31st March 2024 unless terminated earlier.
- 3.5. Notes that a further set of recommendations for spend of the existing funding will come forward in due course, within the conditions set out by the guidance.

4. Reasons for decision

- 4.1. The Government through the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) has provided funding to local authorities to administer the Household Support Fund. It is acknowledged that local authorities have the local ties and knowledge and are best placed to allocate funding according to local need.
- 4.2. The Guidance for The Fund provides for local authorities to determine eligibility in their area and target support to those most in need but within the scope of conditions set by DWP. The proposed decision on the Household Support Fund sets out how the Council will target and deliver support to residents. This spend is targeted to those that are most in need and is in accordance with the Scheme.
- 4.3. The Household Support Fund payments are expected to support households over the grant period and for all funding to be spent between 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024. Appendix 1 sets out the details of the second part of the scheme to be applied in Haringey which will cover the period April through to September 2023, in line with national funding guidance and to address local need. As part of the Council's overarching approach to supporting those in need, we continue to adopt a strengths-based methodology which seeks to build routes out of poverty for local residents where possible. The Council has undertaken a needs assessment that has supported the development of this policy.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1. The alternative option considered was not to develop a Haringey Support Fund Policy. This was discounted as it would not have made use of the funds available to support Haringey residents.
- 5.2. A further option was to bring forward plans to allocate the total amount of funding at this stage, but this was discounted because by September the households in our Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) tool, that identifies households who are in financial stress, may change and this will ensure the funds are allocated to those most in need at that time.

6. Background

- 6.1. In February 2023, the government confirmed the extension of the Household Support Fund making £842m available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England. The objective of the Fund is to provide support to vulnerable households in most need to help with significantly rising living costs. The expectation is that the Fund should primarily be used to support a broad cross section of vulnerable households including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people.
- 6.2. Local Authorities have been given the discretion to decide how this funding should be used provided it is within the scope of the guidance. Authorities have the ability to deliver support through a variety of routes including providing vouchers to households, making direct provision of food or goods or issuing grants.
- 6.3. When administering The Fund, Local Authorities are encouraged to adopt the following principles:
 - Use discretion on how to identify and support those in need
 - Use the funding from 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024 to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford energy and water bills, food and other related essentials.
 - In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, the funding can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need, subject to conditions set out in the guidance.
- 6.4 Authorities have the flexibility within the Household Support Fund to identify which vulnerable households are in most need of support and to apply their own discretion when identifying eligible households. In addition, authorities must operate an application-based service for support to ensure those in need have a route to emergency support. Authorities are expected to establish eligibility criteria for their application service and should communicate with residents to ensure that their scheme and mechanism for applying is clear and accessible. There is no requirement for Authorities to undertake a means test.

- 6.5 Authorities should particularly consider how they can support those vulnerable households who are ineligible for other government support with the cost of living, as detailed at 3.7 in Appendix 1.
- 6.6 The proposed Household Support Fund Policy, phase 2 May 2023 is attached at Appendix 1 sets out the details of the initial phase of the scheme to be applied in Haringey to address local need. As part of the Council's overarching approach to supporting those in need during the cost-of-living crisis, we continue to adopt a strengths based methodology which seeks to build routes out of poverty for local residents where possible.

7. Contribution to strategic outcomes

- 7.1 This Household Local Support Fund Policy May 2023 meet the priorities and outcomes of Haringey's Corporate Delivery Plan 2023/24 and supports efforts to mitigate the impact of the cost of living crisis in the local community.

8. Statutory Officer Comments

8.1 Finance

The council is proposing to put in place measures to spend the additional Housing Support Fund allocation from the Government of £4,813,343.44 in full by 31st March 2024 and in line with the grant conditions. Expenditure associated with the grant will be contained within the total sum available and will no impact on the council's wider budgetary position.

8.2 Legal

The grant funding to local authorities (under the Household Support Fund) is made pursuant to Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 which permits the Government to pay grant to local authorities towards expenditure incurred or to be incurred by it. The grant may be paid on such conditions as the Government may determine. The DWP letter to local authorities Chief Executives and Finance Officers dated 20th February 2023, the Household Support Fund Grant Determination 2023: No 31/6496 and Household Support Fund: (1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024) - Guidance for County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England sets out the conditions for the grant funding. In determining the arrangements for the Scheme, the authority must ensure that the grant funding conditions are met.

The Fund is intended to cover a wide range of low income households as set out in the guidance. Support is not restricted to vulnerable households in receipt of benefits but should also include support to those vulnerable households who are ineligible for other government support with the cost of living. The guidance sets out the types of support which includes energy and water, food, essentials linked to energy and water and wider essentials not linked to energy and water if the authority considers it appropriate for their area.

The Fund cannot be used to provide mortgage support, but homeowners could qualify for support with energy, food and wider essentials as defined in the guidance.

Authorities have the flexibility within The Fund to identify which vulnerable households are most in need and apply their own discretion when identifying eligibility. However, authorities are also required to also operate part of their scheme on an application basis, with clear eligibility criteria communicated to residents, which allows residents to come forward and ask for support. The authority must make public, their plans for The Fund including placing it on their website.

The proposed policy to initially allocate funding to households with children through the free school meals voucher for the May half term holiday is within the scope of the funding guidance.

8.3 Procurement

8.3.1 N/A

8.4 Equalities

8.4.1 The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

8.4.2 The three parts of the duty apply to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status apply to the first part of the duty. Although it is not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Haringey treats socioeconomic status as a locally protected characteristic.

8.4.3 The proposed decision is to approve the Household Support Fund Scheme Policy (attached in Appendix 1), which sets out the Council's arrangement for administering part of the new funding provided by the government.

8.4.4 The objective of this decision is to support residents facing increased costs due to pressures on household finances, including inflation, rising energy prices, and changes to Universal Credit. This decision will affect households with children who are claiming Free School Meals. Therefore, this decision is likely to have a positive equalities impact on families on low incomes, amongst whom there are a disproportionate number of residents with other protected characteristics.

8.4.5 It is noted that by delivering this portion of the support fund as free school meal vouchers, vulnerable resident's eligible for free school meal support will automatically receive this with no additional application necessary. This delivery mechanism will help ensure that everyone entitled to this support will receive it, and no one will miss out due to challenges accessing it.

8.4.6 It is noted that a further decision will be sought on the disbursement of the remainder of the Haringey Council allocation from the Household Support Fund. This decision will include further details about how the Council intends to support other groups facing financial pressures. These other groups vulnerable to the cost-of-living crisis also represent a disproportionate number of residents with protected characteristics, and as such future decisions about the remainder of the fund are likely to have a positive equalities outcome.

8.4.7 It is also noted that the support is subject to the availability of government funding and criteria. There are no expected negative equalities consequences arising from this decision.

Use of appendices

Appendix 1: Household Support Fund May 2023 Phase 2

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Not Applicable

Haringey Council

Household Support Fund Scheme Policy: Phase 2, May 2023

APPENDIX 1

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out Haringey Council's ('the Council's') approach to supporting people through use of the additional funding from the Department for Work and Pension's Household Support April 2023 to March 2024.
- 1.2 The government has made funding available to enable local authorities to support households, particularly those including children, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled who would otherwise struggle with energy, food and water bills. The fund can also be used to support households with other essential costs. In administering the scheme local authorities are encouraged to use their discretion on how to identify and support those most in need.
- 1.3 Authorities can deliver the support through a variety of routes including providing vouchers to household, making direct provision of food or goods or through the issue of grants.
- 1.4 This document sets out the second phase of the Council's plan to administer this years Fund by describing how the Council will provide support to households in line with agreed spending, up to a total of £2,406m (half of the entire allocation of £4,813,343.44) to cover the period to 30th September 2023.

2. Objectives of this Policy

- 2.1 To provide support to vulnerable households recognising the profile and specific needs of residents in Haringey, in particular those who have been most adversely impacted by the significant rises in living costs and its economic consequences.
- 2.2 To support households and prevent households from escalating into crisis.
- 2.3 To support households with dignity and without stigma enabling residents to be as independent as possible and treated with dignity at all times

3. Household Support Fund Spend

- 3.1. The maximum spend from the extension of the Household Support Fund for the period 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024 is £4,813,343.44. All funds are to be spent by 31st March 2024.
- 3.2. Previous rounds covered six months; this round is a year and reflects that with double the grant.
- 3.3. Despite this round being one year Haringey will continue to administer the fund as a six-month split, spending £2.406m now and a further £2.406m in September 2023. This is because by September the households in financial stress may change..

- 3.4. A further decision will consider the remainder of the funding from September 2023.
- 3.5. Funds can now be used to provide advisory services that complement the fund's primary purpose, being to provide crisis support to households. Although, this policy does not include any allocation to this.
- 3.6. All support will be available to households with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) in line with government guidance.
- 3.7. Several upcoming direct one-off payments [from Central Government] should be considered when deciding how to distribute the fourth round of the household support fund.
- 3.8. These payments include:
- £900 for those on mean tested benefits paid in three instalments over 23/24 (those only in receipt of housing benefit are again not eligible for this payment and we can identify them through LIFT)
 - £150 for disabled people
 - £300 for pensioners on top of their winter fuel grant.
- 3.9. Additionally there is also a:
- £200 payment for households not connected to mains gas supply and who use alternative fuels for heating. Payments made from February 2023.
 - £400 payment to support those who do not have a domestic electricity meter (i.e. living in a care home or houseboat)
- 3.10. As with previous rounds costing of options assume 85% uptake of the direct cost of living payments, and as such may vary (by approximately 10%) due to uptake rates as well as data accuracy.
- 3.11. All support will be available to households with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) in line with government guidance.
- 3.12. In Haringey, the Household Support Fund Scheme Policy - May 2023 Phase 2 will allow for:
- Additional holiday support for households in receipt of Free School Meals up to and including the 2023 summer term
 - A £100 payment to:
 - Families in financial stress with children ineligible for Free School Meals
 - Low-income households with children under 5
 - Pensioner households in financial stress
 - Households in financial stress with a disabled family member
 - Care leavers
 - Households with No Recourse to Public Funds in line with relevant guidance
 - Households who did not qualify for the Cost-of-Living Payments who are in financial stress
 - All other households identified as being in financial stress

3.13. A total of £60,000 (plus administrative costs) will be allocated to Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations to support households most in need of extra support from minority and marginalised communities and/or those identified as living in ‘hidden households’, including:

- Households living with people with a disability
- Households from minority and marginalised communities
- Homeless people or people at risk of homelessness
- No recourse to public funds with a community care need (as per guidance)
- Households with large families to support
- Survivors of domestic abuse
- Individuals living in households of multiple occupancy
- Family carers

This list is not exhaustive, and organisations will determine eligibility in accordance with the guidance. An allocation of any remaining funds, after the scheme administration costs, will be made to support individuals in financial hardship who make an application through the Haringey Support Fund for one-off support. Eligibility will be determined in accordance with the Haringey Support Fund scheme.

3.14. Households may be eligible for more than one payment.

3.15. The table below sets out the proposed allocations. This includes an upper limit, which will allow officers a small amount of discretion, in consultation with the Lead Member, to move funding between different projects. This is designed to ensure the council can remain agile and respond to emerging needs as this fund is delivered over the next few months.

Project	Description	Proposed allocation (limit) £000
Holiday free school meal vouchers	Free School Meal vouchers for school-aged children during holidays	£1,000k (up to £1,000k) This allocation includes £300k as allocated in the earlier policy document.

Direct cash payments of £100 without an application process targeted to those identified through our data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families in financial stress with children ineligible for Free School Meals • Pensioner households in financial stress • Households in financial stress with a disabled family member • Households who did not qualify for Cost of Living Payments who are in financial stress • Low-income households with children under 5 • Payments to care leavers • Households with No Recourse to Public Funds in line with relevant guidance • Other households identified in financial stress • 	Up to £888k
Allocation to Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations	Households most in need of extra support from minority and marginalised communities and/or those identified as living in 'hidden households'	Up to £60k (plus admin costs)
Funding Administered by the Council via the Haringey Support fund - application based process.	Households most in need of extra support in line with eligibility criteria for the scheme	Up to £260k
ministration	The costs of administering all of the above projects	Up to £200k

	including, officers time, systems and supplies and services costs.	
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4. Policy implementation and review

4.1. This Policy will be applied 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024.

4.2. Despite this round being one year we could continue to treat it as a six-month split, spending £2.406m around now and a further £2.406m from September 2023. This is because by September the households in our Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) tool, that identifies households who are in financial stress, may change and this approach will ensure the funds are allocated to those most in need at that time.

4.3. In applying the Policy, the Council will have regard to relevant implementation guidance as issued.

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