

MINUTES OF MEETING CABINET MEMBER SIGNING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 21ST MAY, 2025

PRESENT:

Councillors: Seema Chandwani

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There was none.

4. DEPUTATIONS / PETITIONS / QUESTIONS

There were none.

5. HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND 2025/26

The Benefits manager introduced the report and explained its rationale.

It was explained that the proposed Household Local Support Fund Policy met the priorities and outcomes of the Corporate Delivery Plan 2024 to 2026 and worked to support the efforts to mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis in the local community undertaken by the Council.

It was highlighted that there was previously cold weather provision which had previously been contained within the in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which had since been discontinued. However, it was explained that the Council was allocating £15,000 to allow for provision of Warm Welcomes in Winter to be undertaken by the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality:

1. Noted the Household Support Fund allocation from the government of £4,241,687.45 for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.
2. Approved the allocation of funding.

3. Delegated authority to the Delivery Director (Tackling Inequality), following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality, to amend this policy to maximise and control the distribution of the fund and to give effect to changes in legislation, statutory or non-statutory guidance, or directives or instructions of a similar character issued by Government.
4. Delegated authority to the Delivery Director (Tackling Inequality) following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality, to provide Free Schools Meal (FSM) vouchers to households with children who are eligible for free school meals during the Easter 2026 holidays from a future allocation of Household Support Fund, provided such an allocation is made and such an allocation is permissible under any such scheme. The vouchers would be distributed by schools.
5. Agreed that this policy is subject to the availability of government funding and will terminate on 31 March 2026; and (in the event that government increases the funding available and/ or extends the eligible period beyond 31 March 2026), agrees that authority is delegated to the Delivery Director (Tackling Inequality) to extend this policy as appropriate.

Reasons for decision

The Government, through the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP), provided funding to local authorities to administer the Household Support Fund. It was acknowledged that local authorities had the local ties and knowledge and were best placed to allocate funding according to local need.

The Guidance for the Fund allowed 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 set out how the Council would target and deliver support to residents. This spend was targeted to those who were most in need and was in accordance with the Scheme.

The Household Support Fund payments supported households over the grant period, and all funding had to be spent between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026.

The Council identified that the cohort of low-income households with children, who were eligible to receive free school meals vouchers, would be particularly impacted by the challenges presented by the significantly rising cost of living. Without support over the school holiday period, children in these households would not have been able to access free meals.

The Council also identified cohorts of low-income residents who were “at risk” or “in crisis” (using its Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) data) or had no recourse to public funds. The Council recognised that these groups would be particularly impacted by the challenges presented by the significantly higher cost of living.

The Council also identified low-income pensioners who were not in receipt of Pension Credit and would no longer receive a Winter Fuel Voucher from the Government, and so included provision for this within the scheme.

The Guidance for the Fund required local authorities to include an application-based approach for residents, and the Council proposed to achieve this requirement through the allocation of funds to its local welfare assistance scheme: the Haringey Support Fund.

The Council worked closely with voluntary and community sector partners to promote awareness of the application-based scheme and encouraged applications from hard-to-reach communities.

Funding was also distributed to the voluntary and community sector for the provision of warm spaces in the Winter. This provision had previously been funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which had now ended.

Alternative options considered

A variety of options were considered, which included higher values of vouchers distributed to residents. However, these options were discounted as they would have left insufficient funding for the Haringey Support Fund, which was the application-based route required by the Fund's rules.

CHAIR: Councillor Seema Chandwani

Signed by Chair

Date