

## NOTICE OF MEETING

# URGENT DECISIONS

**Friday, 12th March, 2021, 2.30 pm -**

**Members:** Councillor Kaushika Amin

Quorum: 1

### **1. 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. COVID WINTER GRANT SCHEME IN HARINGEY (PAGES 1 - 10)**

*Please be advised that the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny has further 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 . Accordingly, 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 of the Council Constitution.*

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Thursday, 11 March 2021

Report for: Urgent Decision – Cabinet Member Signing (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families)

Title: **COVID Winter Grant Scheme in Haringey**

Report

Authorised by: Charlotte Pomery, Assistant Director Commissioning

Lead Officer: Florence Guppy, Strategic Lead Community Enablement

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), has established the COVID Winter Grant Scheme. The objective of the Scheme is to provide support to vulnerable households and families with children particularly affected by the pandemic throughout the winter period where alternative sources of assistance may be unavailable. Local authorities are responsible for administering the Scheme and funding has been allocated to each authority. The Council was initially allocated £986,329.83. The spend for this was decided by Cabinet Member Decision in December 2020. The Council has subsequently been awarded a further £342,895. This funding is referred to as the 'Additional Winter Grant.'
- 1.2 The funding will enable the Council to provide support to families with children, other vulnerable households and individuals from early December 2020 and covers the period until 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021. The 'Additional Winter Grant' will allow the Council to extend and expand its support to households in food or fuel poverty from the original Winter Grant allocation. This report is seeking Cabinet member approval for the proposed arrangement for the delivery of additional funding as set out in the policy document (attached) and which is within the conditions stipulated by DWP.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Cabinet Member:
  - 2.1.1 Approves the additional funding allocation from the Government
  - 2.1.2 Approves the COVID Additional Winter Grant Scheme Policy which sets out the Council's arrangement for administering the additional funding and is attached at Appendix 1
  - 2.1.3 Delegates authority to the Assistant Director Commissioning, in consultation with the Director of Children Services and the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Families, 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

- 2.1.4 Agrees that this policy is subject to the availability of government funding and will terminate on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021 unless terminated earlier or extended beyond this date by Cabinet or Cabinet Member decision.

### **3. Reasons for decision**

- 3.1 The Government through the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) has provided funding to local authorities to provide and administer the COVID Winter Grant Scheme. It is acknowledged that local authorities have the local ties and knowledge and are best placed to allocate funding according to local need.
- 3.2 The Scheme 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 COVID Additional Winter Grant Scheme Policy sets out how the Council will target and deliver support to residents in addition to the support agreed in the original Winter Grant policy (December 2020). This spend is targeted to those that are most in need and in accordance with the Scheme.
- 3.3 The Winter Covid Grant payments are expected to support households over the grant period and for funding to be spent by 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Therefore, 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.

### **4 Alternative options considered**

- 4.1 The alternative option considered was not to develop an Additional Winter Grant Scheme 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.

### **5 Background**

- 5.1 The objective of the Covid Winter Grant Scheme is to provide support to those vulnerable households and families with children particularly affected by the pandemic throughout the winter period, where alternative sources of assistance may be unavailable. Despite the speed at which the Additional Grant announced by the DWP at the beginning of March must be spent, the Council is taking steps to ensure that it reaches those most in need and who have experienced particular hardship during the pandemic. The Council is mindful that the pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities in the borough, including those of income and financial security.
- 5.2 When administering the scheme, Local Authorities are encouraged to apply the following principles:
- Use discretion on how to identify and support those in need
  - Use the funding from December 2020 up to 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021 to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford food and utility bills. This includes payments made, or committed to from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020 to 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021. This allows for food vouchers issued before the end of the funding period to be redeemed in April 2021
- 5.3 In this guidance, local authorities are permitted to allocate funding to support vulnerable households within the scope of:

- At least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to support families with children, with up to 20% of the total funding to other types of households, including individuals
- At least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to provide support with food, energy and water bills (including sewerage), with up to 20% on other items

5.4 Authorities have the flexibility within the Covid Winter Grant scheme to identify which vulnerable households are in most need of support and to apply their own discretion when identifying eligible households. Authorities can request applications for support or can proactively identify households who may benefit, or can take a mixture of the two approaches. There is no requirement for Authorities to undertake a means test. On this basis, the proposals for spend of the Covid Additional Winter Grant Scheme expand the number of households who will receive support from the Council.

5.5 The proposed COVID Additional Winter Grant Scheme Policy attached at Appendix 1 sets out the details of the additions to the scheme to be applied in Haringey which will cover the period 21<sup>st</sup> December 2020 through to 16<sup>th</sup> April in line with national funding guidance and to address local need. Using local Council data which identifies households on low incomes who are struggling financially, application of the Policy will mean direct payments being made to hundreds of households in financial need in the borough. In addition, payments will provide additional support to families over the Easter holidays who might otherwise struggle to afford basic supplies. 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.

5.6 In Haringey, the Covid Additional Winter Grant Scheme Policy will allow for:

- Additional holiday support for family households in receipt of Free School Meals
- Additional support to households with No Recourse To Public Funds (NRPF)
- Support to residents who are in food, fuel or water poverty including those with specific needs known to the Council and those known to other services and VCS organisations

Support will be available to households with No Recourse To Public Funds in line with relevant guidance.

## **6 Contribution to strategic outcomes**

6.1 This Winter Grants policy helps meet the priorities and outcomes of Haringey's Borough Plan 2019-2023 and supports efforts to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 in the local community.

## **7 Statutory Officer Comments**

### **7.1 Finance**

7.1.1 Finance comments are contained throughout this report: the Council is proposing to put in place measures to spend funds obtained from the Winter Grant top up funding in line with the grant conditions.

7.1.2 The increase in income and expenditure budgets will be addressed in the cabinet quarterly budget monitoring reports.

## 7.2 Legal

7.2.1 The grant funding to local authorities for the COVID Winter Grant Scheme 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 letters to local authorities Chief Executives dated 10th November 2020 and 26<sup>th</sup> February 2021 and COVID Winter Grant Scheme: Guidance for County Councils and Unitary Authorities include the conditions for the grant funding. While the Council can determine the arrangement for administering the Scheme (including identifying those most in need and eligible for support), it must ensure that the funding conditions are met.

## 7.3 Procurement

7.3.1 No comments

## 7.4 Equalities

7.4.1 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.
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7.4.2 The three parts of the duty applies to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.

7.4.3 The proposed decision is to approve the funding allocation regarding the COVID Winter Grant Scheme Policy from December 21st until 31st March 2021, unless terminated earlier or extended; and to delegate authority to the Assistant Director Commissioning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adults & Health, to amend this policy to give effect to changes in legislation. The COVID Winter Grant Scheme policy will provide support to families with children, other vulnerable households and individuals through the provision of voucher-based holiday support for households eligible for Free School Meals; increase access to 'Healthy Start Vouchers', grant support to organisations supporting households with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and short-term vouchers and debt relief for households experiencing fuel insecurity, and support to ensure all residents can self-isolate when required. This support will be administered by Haringey Council in partnership with support organisations, schools, and children's centres.

7.4.4 The objective of this decision is to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on Haringey residents, through the provision of grants to some of the most vulnerable members of the community. The decision will affect individuals and households who have been identified as vulnerable through Council-held datasets. We know that vulnerable households and families with young children, among whom Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, and older people, including those on a low income are overrepresented, are likely to be particularly affected by the pandemic throughout the winter period, and where alternative sources of assistance may be unavailable, will benefit from support to pay for food and fuel in the coming months. With the funding ring-fenced to support with food and essential utility costs, it will allow the council to directly help the hardest-hit families and individuals over the winter period.

7.4.5 It is recognised that this grant is subject to the availability of government funding and could potentially terminate earlier than March 31st 2021 which will affect those protected groups, including those on a low income. Therefore no negative consequences are identified and the proposed decision represents a measure to meet the needs of people with protected characteristics, including those on a low income, and therefore mitigate any new inequalities arising as a result of the impact of Covid-19.

## **8 Use of appendices**

Appendix 1: Additional Winter Grant Discretion Policy

Appendix 2: Winter Grant Policy (December 2020)

## **9 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

None

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## **Haringey Council**

### **COVID Additional Winter Grant Scheme Policy**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 This document sets out Haringey Council's ('the Council's') approach to supporting people through the additional funding from the Department for Work and Pension's COVID Winter Grant Scheme.

1.2 The COVID Additional Winter Grant Scheme will enable Haringey to provide support to families with children, other vulnerable households and individuals from December 2020 and covers the period until 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021. This support is in addition to and an extension of the Covid Winter Grant scheme (December 2020)

1.3 Local authorities are permitted to allocate funding to support vulnerable households within the scope of:

- At least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to support families with children, with up to 20% of the total funding to other types of households, including individuals
- At least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to provide support with food, energy and water bills (including sewerage), with up to 20% on other items

#### **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 Covid 19 Pandemic.

2.2 To support households and prevent household needs from escalating into crisis.

2.3 To support residents to follow Public Health Guidance, reduce Covid 19 transmission and prevent hospital admission and Covid 19 deaths.

2.4 To support households with dignity and without stigma enabling residents to be as independent as possible and treated with dignity at all times

#### **3. Winter Grant Spend:**

3.1 The maximum additional spend from the Covid Winter Grant is £342,895. Outlined below is the maximum allocation for each element of the Covid Winter Grant Spend. These maximum allocations allow for the Assistant Director of Commissioning to delegate funding within the maximum allocations according to emerging need.

All support will be available to households with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) in line with government guidance.

- Provision of food support for households eligible for Free School Meals up to a maximum spend of £100,000

- Direct support to residents who are NRPF where there is a genuine care need that does not arise solely from destitution up to a spend of £75,000
- Support for households experiencing food or fuel insecurity including the provision of short-term vouchers and debt relief up to a maximum spend of £40,000
- Financial support to a cohort of residents directly identified from Council data sets as in food, fuel and water poverty up to a maximum spend of £110,000
- Grants to local organisations supporting good mental health and emotional wellbeing up to a maximum of £10,000 to provide support to residents with emerging mental health concerns exacerbated by financial difficulties
- Grants to local organisations who have provided direct support in line with the aim of the Winter Grant between January -April 2021 up to a spend of £30,000

### **3.1.1 Free School Meals (FSM) Holiday Provision**

Additional funding will support the food element of the borough's easter 'Holiday Activity Fund' which targets food and enrichment support at FSM eligible households. This is in addition to the FSM provision identified in the Winter Grant Scheme (December 2020).

### **3.1.2 Support to NRPF Residents**

Direct financial support to residents with NRPF who are known to Council services for a care need beyond destitution in line with the aims of the Covid Winter Grant including provision of winter clothing. This is in addition to the support offered through VCS providers in the Winter Grant Scheme (December 2020).

### **3.1.3 Support for Food or Fuel Insecurity**

To be administered by Haringey Council in partnership with support organisations. This funding will allow for emergency fuel vouchers as well as support with clearing utility debt for those engaged with ongoing support. This is an extension of the support offered in the Winter Grant Scheme (December 2020).

### **3.1.4 Direct Targeted Support**

Direct financial support to residents identified by Council data sets as in in food, fuel and water poverty. The direct financial support will be offered alongside wider support to maximise financial resilience. This is a new form of support not offered in the Winter Grant Scheme (December 2020.) This allows the Council to proactively support residents in line with the aims of the scheme.

### **3.1.5 Grants to Local Organisations**

Grant support to organisations providing support to residents who need support in line with the aims of the Covid Winter Grant including provision of hot food and winter clothing. This is in addition to the support offered to VCS third party organisations in the Winter Grant Scheme (December 2020.) This third party provision will complement the support offered

directly by the Council and help to ensure that all residents are able to access and benefit from the support provided by the Winter Grant (December 2020) and additional Winter Grant Scheme.

**4. Policy implementation and review**

4.1 This Policy will be applied from 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021 until 16<sup>th</sup> April.

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

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