

# URGENT DECISIONS

**Wednesday, 14th July, 2021, 11.00 am**

**Members:** Councillors Zena Brabazon

## **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. COVID ADDITIONAL WINTER GRANT SCHEME IN HARINGEY (PAGES 1 - 8)**

*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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Tuesday, 13 July 2021

Report for: Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children and Families

Title: COVID Additional 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 further extended the COVID Winter Grant Scheme/ 'Covid Local Support Grant.' The objective of the Scheme(s) is to provide support to vulnerable households and families with children particularly affected by the pandemic 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 was subsequently awarded a further £342,895. This funding was referred to as the 'Additional Winter Grant.' The spend for this was decided by Cabinet Member Decision in March 2021. A third allocation of £232,078.00 referred to as the 'Covid Local Support Grant' and/or 'Winter Grant 3: April 2021' was allocated by Cabinet Member Decision in June 2021. The DWP has stated that this further tranche of £928,310.43 allocated to Haringey will be the last extension. This final tranche is referred to as 'Winter Grant 4: July 2021.'
- 1.2 The funding will enable the Council to provide support to families with children, other vulnerable households and individuals from 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021 and covers the period until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021. The 'Covid Local Support Grant' will allow the Council to extend and expand its support to households in food or fuel poverty from the original three Winter Grant allocations. 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 Local Support Grant/ Winter Grant 4: June 2021 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 30<sup>th</sup> September 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 Local Support 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 Local Support Grant Scheme Policy sets out how the Council will target and deliver support to residents in addition to the support agreed in the original and additional Winter Grant policies (December 2020, March 2021, April 2021). This spend is targeted to those that are most in need and in accordance with the Scheme.
- 3.3 The Covid Local Support Grant payments are expected to support households over the grant period and for funding to be spent between 21<sup>st</sup> June and 30<sup>th</sup> September 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 a Covid Local Support Grant 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 Local Support Grant/ the Covid Winter Grant Scheme(s) is to provide support to those vulnerable households and families with children particularly affected by the pandemic, where alternative sources of assistance may be unavailable. Despite the speed at which the additional tranche of funding announced by the DWP 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 21<sup>st</sup> June up to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford food and utility bills.

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 Local Support 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.

5.5 The proposed Covid Local Support Grant/ COVID Winter Grant 4: July 2021 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> June 2021 through to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 in line with national funding guidance and to address local need. Payments will provide additional support to families over the Summer holidays who might otherwise struggle to afford basic supplies. This support will be delivered alongside the Council's holiday activity programme which provides enrichment activities and a lunchtime meal to school aged children. 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 Local Support Grant Scheme Policy will allow for:

- Additional holiday support for family households in receipt of Free School Meals
- Support to residents who are in food or fuel poverty including those with specific needs known to the Council and those known to other services including schools 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 Covid Local Support Grant/ Winter Grant 4: July 2021 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 The Council is proposing to put in place measures to spend funds obtained from the Winter Grants 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 (under the COVID Local Support 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 COVID Local Support No.2 Grant Determination 2021: No 31/5642 and COVID Local Support Grant extension: Final Guidance, sets out 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.

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 additional funding allocation from the Covid Local Support Grant from 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021 until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 unless terminated earlier or extended, approve the Covid Local Support Grant Policy, and delegate authority to the Assistant Director Commissioning, in consultation with the Director of Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Adults & Health, to amend this policy to give effect to changes in legislation. The Covid Local Support Grant Policy will provide support to families with children, other vulnerable households and individuals in food or fuel poverty by providing voucher-based holiday support for households eligible for Free School Meals during the Summer holidays; granting support to organisations supporting households with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and providing short-term vouchers and debt relief for households experiencing fuel insecurity, with the aim of helping 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 against 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 resident in

Haringey who have been identified as vulnerable through Council-held datasets, including households which are eligible for Free School Meals. We know that among those identified as vulnerable, groups from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, as well as children, older people and those from a lower socioeconomic background, are overrepresented and are likely to have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. The proposal to approve the additional funding allocation from the Covid Local Support Grant will allow these groups to benefit from additional support by accessing further funding where alternative sources of assistance may be unavailable and insufficient to meet their need. That being said, it is recognised that this grant is subject to the availability of government funding and could potentially terminate earlier than 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 which may have a negative impact for those protected groups, including those on a low income.

7.4.5 This notwithstanding, with the funding ring-fenced to support access to food and essential utility costs, it will allow the council to directly help the hardest-hit families and individuals over the coming months, mitigating against the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on the vulnerable groups identified. The proposed decision therefore represents a measure to address a known inequality disproportionately groups with a number of protected characteristics.

## **8 Use of appendices**

Appendix 1: 'Covid Local Support Grant/ Winter Grant 4: July 2021 Policy

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

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## Haringey Council

### COVID Additional Winter Grant Scheme Policy: July 2021

#### 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 renamed 'The Covid Local Support Grant' in July 2021.

1.2 The Covid Local Support Grant will enable Haringey to provide support to families with children, other vulnerable households, and individuals from 21<sup>st</sup> June-30<sup>th</sup> September 2021. This support is in addition to and an extension of the Covid Winter Grant scheme (December 2020, March 2021 and April 2021.) The DWP has stated this will be the last extension to the scheme.

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 £ £928,310.43. 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 £850, 000

- Provision of food support for households with children up to a maximum spend of £40,000
- Support to vulnerable adults known to Council services up to a value of £40,000

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

Voucher support to all households eligible for Free School Meals during the Summer holiday to the value of £15 per child. This will be administered by schools. Funding of £3 per child to each school to support with school's localised food support offer.

This is an extension of the support offered in the Winter Grant Scheme (December 2020, March 2021 and April 2021).

### **3.1.2 Support for Households with Children**

Additional funding to support food provision at holiday activities for school aged children as part of the development of the Haringey Holiday Activity programme which targets food and enrichment support at FSM eligible households.

Additional funding for food support to enrich our libraries universal summer cultural offer.

This is an extension of the support offered in the Winter Grant Scheme (December 2020, March 2021 and April 2021).

### **3.1.4 Support to vulnerable adults**

To be administered by Haringey Council. Vulnerable adults known to Haringey Council will be supported with vouchers or goods in line with the aims of the Winter Grant around 'eating and heating.'

## **4. Policy implementation and review**

4.1 This Policy will be applied from 15th July -30<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

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