

Report for: Leader of the Council

Title: **Household Support Fund 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 Launched the Household Support Fund The objective of the Scheme 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 has been allocated £2,406,671.72.
- 1.2 The funding will enable the Council to provide support to families with children, other vulnerable households and individuals from 6th October 2021 and covers the period until 31st March 2022. The 'Household Support Fund' will allow the Council to extend and expand its support to households in food or fuel poverty . This report is seeking Cabinet member approval for the proposed initial arrangement for the delivery of funding as set out in the policy document (attached) and which is within the conditions stipulated by DWP. This initial decision will be followed by a second decision to allocate the remaining funding available.

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 Household Support Fund Scheme Policy: October 2021 which sets out the Council's arrangement for administering part of 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 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 Government.
 - 2.1.4 Agrees that this policy is subject to the availability of government funding and will terminate on 31st March 2022 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 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.
- 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 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 in accordance with the Scheme.
- 3.3 The Household Support Fund payments are expected to support households over the grant period and for funding to be spent between 6th October 2021 and 31st March 2022. 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 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.

5 Background

- 5.1 The objective of the Haringey Support Fund 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. It has therefore been decided that an initial decision will focus on the provision of Free School Meals (FSM) to include the October 2021 half term whilst a second decision will consider the remainder of the funding.
- 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 6th October 2021 up to 31st March 2022 to meet essential 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 50% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to support families with children, with up to 50% of the total funding to other types of households, including individuals
- 5.4 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. 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 Household Support Fund 1: October 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 6th October 2021 through to 31st March 2022. in line with national funding guidance and to address local need. Payments will provide additional support to families over the October half term 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, Household Support Fund 1: October 2021 Scheme Policy will allow for:

- Additional holiday support for family households in receipt of Free School Meals

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 Household Local Support Fund 1: October 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

Finance comments are contained throughout this report: the Council is proposing to put in place measures to spend funds obtained from the Household Support Fund Grant in line with the grant conditions.

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 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 Household Support Fund Grant Determination 2021: No 31 and, the Household Support Fund:- Guidance for County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England 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 N/A

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 Household Support Fund Scheme Policy (attached at Appendix 1) which sets out the Council's arrangement for administering part of the new funding provided by the government. In particular, this decision relates to approving the provision of additional food support for households eligible for Free School Meals up to a maximum spend of £1,000,000.

7.4.4 The objective of this decision is to support residents who are facing increased costs this winter due to pressures on household finances, including due to inflation, rising energy prices, and changes to Universal Credit. This decision will affect households with children who are claiming Free School Meals. This 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.

7.4.5 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 will include further details about how the Council intends to support other groups who are facing financial pressures this winter. 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.

8 Use of appendices

Appendix 1: Household Support Fund

9 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Not Applicable