

Report for: Cabinet Member Signing – 29 November 2022

Title: Household Support Fund Round 3 Allocations Policy

Report

Authorised by: Gill Taylor, Assistant Director Communities and Housing Support.

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

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, for the period October 2021 – March 2022. The Government has now announced that the Household Support Fund will be extended for the period 1st October 2022 – 31st March 2023. The objective of the Scheme is to provide support to vulnerable households struggling with the significant rise in living costs, with an emphasis on supporting households with energy, food and water bills. Local authorities are responsible for administering the Scheme and funding has been allocated to each authority.
- 1.2 Haringey Council has been allocated £2,406,671.72, for the six-month period 1st October 2022 – 31st March 2023.
- 1.3 The funding will enable the Council to offer new support to families with children, other vulnerable households, and individuals. The Household Support Fund will also allow the Council to extend and expand its existing support to households in food or fuel poverty. In October 2022, a decision was taken to allocate an initial tranche of the funding to provide Free School Meals vouchers during the Autumn half term.
- 1.4 This decision will approve the allocation of the remaining £2,256,671.72 of the fund.

2. Recommendations

The Cabinet Member for Tackling Inequality and Resident Services is recommended:

- 2.1.1 To approve the expenditure of the remaining sum of the Household Support Fund of £2,256,671.72 for the period 1st October 2022 – 31st March 2023.

- 2.1.2 To approve the *Household Support Fund Scheme Policy - October 2022 – Phase 2* which sets out the Council's arrangements for administering part of the additional funding. The policy is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.1.3 To delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Communities and Housing Support, after 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.
- 2.1.4 To delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Communities and Housing Support, after 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.
- 2.1.5 To agree that this policy is subject to the availability of government funding and will terminate on 31st March 2023.

3. Reasons for decision

- 3.1 The Government, via the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP), has provided funding to local authorities to support vulnerable households, the Household Support Fund. It is acknowledged that local authorities have the local relationships and knowledge and are best placed to allocate funding according to local need.
- 3.2 The Guidance for the Scheme requires local authorities to determine eligibility in their area, and target support to those most in need, within the scope of conditions set by DWP. This report, and the policy at Appendix 1, sets out how the Council will target and deliver this support to residents. The policy sets out an approach intended to help those that are most in need, which is in accordance with the guidance for the scheme.
- 3.3 Household Support Fund help, both in-kind and direct payments, are expected to support households throughout the grant period. Funding will be spent between 1st October 2022 and 31st March 2023.

4. Alternative options considered

- 4.1. An alternative option considered was not to develop a Household Support Fund Policy. This was discounted as it would not have made use of additional support available to Haringey residents, and would have necessitated a return of the funds to DWP.

5. Background

- 5.1. On 26th August 2022 the government announced an extension of the Household Support Fund, making £421m 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 in most need who may struggle to meet the cost of energy, food and other essential living needs. On 30th September 2022, the government issued the final guidance for this extension to the Household Support Fund to cover the period 1st October 2022 – 31st March 2023.

- 5.2. 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 the scheme through a variety of routes including providing vouchers to households, making direct provision of food or goods or issuing grants. The council is aware that the impact of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis has exacerbated existing inequalities in the borough, including income and financial insecurity.
- 5.3. 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 1st October 2022 to 31st March 2023, to meet essential needs and help those who are struggling to afford energy, food and utility bills and other related essentials.
 - In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, the funding can 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.
- 5.3 The guidance currently proposes that local authorities are permitted to allocate funding to support vulnerable households as the expectation is that consideration is given to those who may not be eligible for the other support government has recently made available but who are nevertheless in need.
- 5.4 Authorities have the flexibility to identify which vulnerable households are in most need of support, and to apply their own discretion when identifying eligible households. Authorities have the authority to deliver the scheme using a variety of routes including providing vouchers, making direct provision of food or goods, or issuing grants to third parties (with the exception of grants for advice provision). Every area must operate at least part of their scheme on an application basis. In other words, residents should have the opportunity to come forward to ask for support. There is flexibility on exactly how this can be run, including through third parties.
- 5.5 The proposed Household Support Fund Policy, Octobers 2022 Phase 2 attached in Appendix 1 sets out the details of the additions to the scheme to be applied in Haringey which will cover the period 1st October 2022 through to 31st March 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.

5.6 In Haringey, the *Household Support Fund Scheme Policy - October 2022 – Phase 2* will allow for:

- Additional holiday support for households in receipt of Free School Meals during the 2022 Winter term
- A £100 payment to:
 - Free School Meal vouchers for eligible school-aged children during holidays
 - 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 £650 Cost of Living Payment who are in financial stress
 - All other households identified as being in financial stress
- A total of £150,000 (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.

6. Contribution to strategic outcomes

- 6.1. The *Household Support Fund Scheme Policy - October 2022 – Phase 2* helps meet the priorities and outcomes of Haringey's Borough Plan 2019-2023 and supports efforts to mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis 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 DWP letter to local authorities Chief Executives and Finance Officers dated 30 September 2022, the Household Support Fund No. 3 Grant Determination 2022: No 31/6300 and, the Household Support Fund: (1st October 2022 – 30th March 2023)- final 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 grant funding conditions are met.

- 7.2.2 The Council must ensure the fund covers a wide range of households with rising living costs, using their discretion on how to identify and support those most in need, including households who are ineligible for other government support with the cost of living. Support with cost of energy, food, water and other wider essential costs may be provide through a variety of routes including the provision of vouchers, direct provision of food or goods or issuing grants to third parties. Every area must operate at least part of their scheme on an application basis, which must be clearly advertised to residents. The proposed policy to allocate the remaining fund to households in need is within the scope of the funding guidance.

7.3 Procurement

- 7.3.1 Not applicable

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 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.

7.4.3 The proposed decision is to approve the *Household Support Fund Scheme Policy - October 2022 – Phase 2* (attached in Appendix 1), which following on from the decision in October to use £150,000 to fund free school meals, sets out the Council's arrangement for administering the rest of the £2,256,671.72 of the new funding provided by the government.

7.4.4 The objective of this decision is to support residents facing increased costs due to pressures on household finances, including inflation and rising energy prices. This decision will affect most low-income households in Haringey who have been identified as financially at risk or in crisis. Therefore, this decision is likely to have a positive equalities impact on families and households on low incomes, amongst whom there are a disproportionate number of residents with other protected characteristics.

7.4.5 It is noted that support will be targeted to residents known to the Council and partners as in need and that a variety of delivery mechanisms (Free school meals, proactive payments and applications and support via the Haringey support fund and VCS organisations) will be used. This approach will help to ensure that as many residents can receive support as possible, including those who may be harder to reach or face challenges in accessing the support available to them.

7.4.6 Due to the design of the different aspects of the policy, the fund is expected to specifically benefit: children and young people (who will be supported through Free School Meal (FSM) provision and targeted payments to those who are not FSM eligible); socioeconomically disadvantaged residents (identified using LIFT data), BAME people who are overrepresented in the cohort of residents with 'restricted eligibility' due to immigration, care leavers, vulnerable adults, such as, older people and those with disabilities and long-term health conditions (who will be proactively

targeted for support through the Council and its partners). As a result, this decision is expected to have a positive impact on residents with protected characteristics.

- 7.4.7 It is also noted that the support is subject to government funding and criteria availability. With currently available criteria there are no expected negative equalities consequences arising from this decision.

8. Use of appendices

Appendix 1: *Household Support Fund Scheme Policy - October 2022 – Phase 2*

9. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Not Applicable