

MINUTES OF MEETING Cabinet Member Signing HELD ON Monday, 10th June, 2024, 11.00- 11.15am

PRESENT:

Councillors: Seema Chandwani – Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality

ALSO ATTENDING: James Straw, Benefits Manager and Ayshe Simsek

18. FILMING AT MEETINGS NOTICE

The Cabinet Member referred to the filming at meetings notice and attendees noted this information.

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

20. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

22. DEPUTATIONS/PETITIONS/QUESTIONS

There were no deputations, petitions or questions put forward.

23. HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND IN HARINGEY APRIL-SEPTEMBER 2024

The Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality considered a report which sought approval of the allocation of Household Support Fund grant provided from the Government, through the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP).

This decision would enable the Household Support Fund scheme to be extended for a further six months for the period 1st April 2024 to 30th September 2024 and Haringey Council had been allocated £2,406,672 for the 6-month period.

The objective of The Fund was to provide support to households in the most need; particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support government has recently made available but who are nevertheless in need and who require crisis

support. The Fund was intended to cover a wide range of low-income households in need including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people, with an emphasis on supporting households with energy, food, and water bills.

The Household Support Fund Scheme Policy: May 2024, was attached at appendix 1 and set out the Council's arrangement for administering the Fund, which was within the conditions stipulated by DWP.

The Cabinet Member noted that the main difference in this phase of funding was that the Voluntary Sector would not receive direct funding to allocate but instead would be referring residents to apply directly to the Council through the welfare assistance scheme. The benefits manager added that he would be engaging with the Voluntary Sector Team to ensure the process was as clear and efficient as possible to mitigate any delays.

There was also communication with Food Banks on the extension of the scheme so that they could continue to signpost residents and also help them with the application process.

It was noted that there was increased applications for the support with living costs and payment of electricity bills and clarification would be provided on the maximum amount that single persons and families were entitled to from the support fund for energy payments.

In response to a question about the template letter noting the provision of the Household Support Fund from the government, advice was awaited from the DWP on this to ensure that pre-election rules were adhered to. The Cabinet Member was assured that this would not delay letters of notification of grant funding, and in turn payments, to residents

The Cabinet Member for Resident Services and Tackling Inequality,

RESOLVED

1. To note the Household Support Fund allocation from the government of £2,406,672 for the period 1st April 2024 to 30th September 2024.
2. To approve the allocation of this funding as set out in Appendix 1
3. To delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Customer Services, 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. To delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Customer Services, 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 Autumn half term 2024 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 are distributed by schools.
5. To agree that this policy is subject to the availability of government funding and will terminate on 30th September 2024; and (in the event that government increases the funding available and/ or extends the eligible period beyond 30 September 2024), agrees that authority is delegated to the Assistant Director of Customer Service to extend this policy as appropriate.

Reasons for decision

The Government through the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) has provided funding to local authorities to 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.

The Guidance for The Fund 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 who are most in need and is in accordance with the Scheme.

The Household Support Fund payments are expected to support households over the grant period and for all funding to be spent between 1st April 2024 and 30th September 2024.

The Council has identified that the cohort of low-income households with children, who are eligible to receive free school meals vouchers, will 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 will not be able to access free meals.

The Council has also identified using its Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) data, the cohort of low-income residents who were not eligible for one-off support payments from Central Government in 2023/24 or have no recourse to public funds. The council recognises that these groups will be particularly impacted by the challenges presented by the significantly rising cost of living.

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

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

Alternative options considered

The alternative option considered was not to develop a Haringey Support Fund Policy. This was discounted, as it would not have made use of the funds available to support Haringey residents.

A further option was to allocate funds to voluntary and community sector partners for distribution, as has happened in the last round of Household Support Fund. This approach has been discounted as the centralised distribution of funding through the Haringey Support Fund will allow a targeted distribution of funds to those most in need. The important identification of need will still be through the participation and engagement of the voluntary and community sector, but with the administration of fund distribution borne by the council.

24. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair

Date