

MINUTES OF THE MEETING Cabinet Member Signing HELD ON Tuesday, 19th November, 2024, 3.00 - 3.10 pm

PRESENT:

Councillors: Seema Chandwani- Cabinet Member for Resident Services & Tackling Inequality

ALSO ATTENDING:

Ayshe Simsek – Democratic Services & Scrutiny Manager, David Graaff – Head of Service Delivery, Chris Liasi – Committees and Governance Officer.

1. FILMING AT MEETINGS

The Chair referred to the notice of filming at meetings and this information was noted.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

There were none.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. DEPUTATIONS / PETITIONS / QUESTIONS

There were none.

6. HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND 6 OCTOBER 2024 TO MARCH 2025

The Cabinet Member for Tackling Inequality and Resident services considered the report which sought approval for the updated Household Support Fund Scheme. The Government, through the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), had launched the Household Support Fund in October 2021, with extensions through to 30th September 2024. In September 2024, the DWP announced a further extension, covering the period from 1st October 2024 to 31st March 2025. Local authorities were

tasked with managing the Fund in their respective areas. Haringey Council had been allocated £2,406,672 for the 6-month period.

The Funds were aimed to support households experiencing significant hardship, particularly those who did not qualify for other forms of government assistance, but still required urgent support. It was designed to assist a broad range of low-income households, including families with children, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers, and disabled individuals, with a focus on helping with energy, food, and water bills.

The Cabinet Member noted that the policy allocated:

- £640,000 for free school meal vouchers during the holidays, benefiting low-income households.
- £840,000 for £100 cash payments to families in financial hardship, including those with children not eligible for free school meals, pensioner households, low-income families with children under five, care leavers, and households with no access to public funds.
- £505,000 to direct cash payments of £200 to pension-age households in receipt of Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Support who do not receive the Winter Fuel Payment and households in financial stress with a disabled family member.
- £220,000 to an application-based process for households most in need of extra support in line with eligibility criteria for the scheme.

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 1 st October 2024 to 31st March 2025.
2. To approve the allocation of this funding as set out in Appendix 1
3. To delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Resident Experience, 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 Resident Experience, 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 Easter 2025 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 31st March 2025; and (in the event that government increases the funding available and/ or extends the eligible period beyond 31st March 2025), agrees that authority is delegated to the Assistant Director of Resident Experience to extend this policy as appropriate.

Reasons for decisions:

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 October 2024 to 31st March 2025.

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 cohorts of low-income residents who are “at risk” or “in crisis” (using its Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) data) or have no recourse to public funds. The council recognises that these groups will be particularly impacted by the challenges presented by the significantly higher 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 until the last round of Household Support Fund. This approach has been discounted as the centralised distribution of funding through the Haringey Support Fund allows 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. This approach was shown to be effective in the last round, with high rates of take-up.

CABINET MEMBER:

Signed by Councillor Chandwani

Date: 19.11.24