

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 7 June 2022

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director – Finance

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Household Support Fund 2022-23

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To outline progress with the delivery of the £1.3m grant allocation received by the Council, for the six month extension to the Government's Household Support Fund.

2.0 RECOMMENDED That:

- (i) Progress with delivery of the Household Support Fund, as outlined in the report, be noted;**
- (ii) A further progress report be brought to the next meeting of the Board.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

3.1 On 23rd March 2022 the Government announced an extension to the Household Support Fund, which previously operated from October 2021 to March 2022. The Fund is intended to support vulnerable households particularly those including children and pensioners.

3.2 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has issued guidance and grant allocations for councils, with the grant funding covering the period 1st April 2022 to 30th September 2022. Halton's allocation of grant funding is £1,297,880 of which 5% is permitted to provide for the costs of administering the grant.

3.3 The DWP guidance states that;

- (i) At least one third of the total grant funding must be ring fenced to support vulnerable households with children;**
- (ii) At least one third of the total grant funding must be ring fenced to support vulnerable pensioner households, and**

- (iii) Up to one third of the total grant funding must be provided to other vulnerable households in need of support.

Spending Plan

- 3.4 The Benefits Division will co-ordinate use of the grant on behalf of the Council. In order to maximise the benefit of the grant funding for the Borough's vulnerable households and to ensure it is fully utilised within the relatively short timescales permitted, discussions have been held with colleagues across the Council and also Voluntary Sector partners.
- 3.5 In addition, discussions have been held with LCR and AGMA colleagues, to ensure some consistency of approach across the region.
- 3.6 A spending plan was prepared, as set out in the Appendix, regarding how the grant funding might be utilised via a combination of Council departments and voluntary sector partners, to deliver help and assistance to vulnerable households over the six month period.
- 3.7 The spending plan is intended to provide clarity as to what actions are required of the relevant Council departments and partner organisations, with lead officers being identified. It will also provide a basis for monitoring spending against the grant, as required by the DWP and ensure it is fully utilised in accordance with the grant guidance by 30th September 2022. If the grant is not fully utilised by 30th September 2022 it will be clawed back by the DWP.
- 3.8 In order to ensure at least one third is allocated for vulnerable households with children, free school meal vouchers of £12 per week will once again be provided to approximately 7,500 eligible pupils. These will be provided for both the Summer half term and the Summer school holidays, which it is estimated will cost approximately £630,000.
- 3.9 To support vulnerable pensioner households with at least one third of the funding, all 4,303 pensioners currently receiving Council Tax Reduction will be provided with an award of £120. It is estimated that this will deliver approximately £516,360.
- 3.10 The remaining grant funding (up to a third) will be used to assist other vulnerable households. This will be provided primarily with the assistance of partner organisations as listed in the Appendix. Discussions are being held with each of the partner organisations, to ensure the funding will be delivered in accordance with the DWP guidance and that appropriate monitoring information can be provided to the Council.

Conclusions

- 3.11 Given the urgent need to procure and distribute free school meal vouchers in time for the Summer half term holidays, the Chief Executive utilised urgency powers to approve the spending plan, in consultation with the Leader, Operational Director Legal & Democratic Services and

Operational Director Finance. This decision was published as required and will be reported to the Executive Board on 16th June 2022.

3.12 The Spending Plan presented in the Appendix, is intended to ensure that the Council's £1,297,880 grant allocation from the Household Support Fund, is fully utilised in accordance with the DWP guidance and by the deadline date of 30th September 2022.

3.13 It is considered that this approach will deliver support to the most vulnerable households within the Borough, especially those with children and pensioners as required by the DWP guidance, and within the short timescales provided.

3.14 A further progress report regarding delivery of the Household Support Fund will be presented to the Board on 6 September 2022.

4.0 POLICY AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

5.1 **Children and Young People in Halton**

5.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

5.3 **A Healthy Halton**

5.4 **A Safer Halton**

5.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

The delivery of support from the Household Support Fund to the Borough's vulnerable households, has the potential to support all of the Council priorities.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 If the grant allocation from the Household Support Fund, is not fully utilised in accordance with the DWP guidance by the deadline date of 30th September 2022, any remaining grant funding will be clawed back by the DWP. The Spending Plan presented in the appendix is intended to ensure that the grant funding is fully utilised by the deadline.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Household Support Fund Allocations and Guidance	DCLB Stadium	Paul Garnett Divisional Manager Benefits

APPENDIX

Household Support Fund Spending Plan 1st April 2022 to 30th September 2022

Total grant allocation	1,297,880
Less administration costs (5%)	64,894
Available grant funding	1,232,986
1. Vulnerable Households with Children	630,000
Free school meal (FSM) vouchers provided for: Summer half term 30/5/22 – 3/6/22, 1 week Summer holidays 21/7/22 – 31/8/22, 6 weeks Based on 7,500 children entitled to FSM Paid for 7 weeks £12 voucher per week 49% of total available grant funding	
2. Vulnerable Pensioner Households	516,360
Number of pensioners on council tax reduction = 4,303 Award £120 per pensioner 40% of total available grant funding	
3. Other Vulnerable Households	85,000
Distributed via; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens Advice Bureau (energy/fuel support) £35,000 • Widnes Food Bank £10,000 • Runcorn Food Bank £10,000 • Adult Social Care £5,000 • Holiday Activity Fund £5,000 • Affordable Warmth £10,000 • Halton Voluntary Action £10,000 	