

EXECUTIVE DECISION NOTICE

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| SERVICE AREA: | PLACE Operations and Neighbourhoods |
| SUBJECT MATTER: | Spending plan for Household Support Fund (Support Programmes for Residents) |
| DECISION: | It is DETERMINED that: That the proposed approach for utilising the £800,000 of Household Support Fund money remaining after the provision of Free School Meals be agreed for the provision of further assistance to low income households in relation to food and energy including support to the third sector. |
| DECISION TAKER(S): | Councillor Allison Gwynne |
| DESIGNATION OF DECISION TAKER (S): | Executive Member - Neighbourhoods, Community Safety and Environment |
| DATE OF DECISION: | 8 December 2021 |
| REASON FOR DECISION: | Supporting low income households, particularly low income families with children links to all of the priorities within the Corporate Plan which are impacted upon by Covid-19. The proposed spending framework fits with the Council's policies around supporting the most vulnerable in our communities. |
| ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS REJECTED (if any): | None |
| CONSULTEES: | Action Together Tameside |
| FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS: (Authorised by Section 151 Officer) | <p>On 30 September the DWP announced a new Household Support Fund to support vulnerable households and individuals during winter 2021/22. The fund is to be administered by Local Authorities and Tameside has been allocated £2.224m.</p> <p>The grant must be claimed in arrears based on actual expenditure incurred up to 31 March 2022. Plans will need to be put in place to ensure the maximum grant amount is utilised and claimed within the eligible claim period. Returns are required to be submitted to DWP in January and at the end of March 2022. Grant cannot be claimed for any expenditure incurred after 31 March 2022.</p> <p>The grant is expected to be targeted at the most vulnerable and those in need to support essential living costs, particularly food, energy costs, water and other essentials. At least 50% of the grant must be used to support families with children.</p> <p>An Executive Decision on 13 October 2021 approved the utilisation of at least 50% of this funding for the provision of supermarket vouchers to families with children eligible for free school meals. A further Executive Decision on 1 December</p> |

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| | <p>2021 extended the free school meals related voucher provision and allocated a total amount of £1.4m to this element of spend.</p> <p>This report proposes the allocation of £800k across three further areas to support the most vulnerable residents in Tameside:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two streams will provide small grants in form of vouchers or direct payments on basis of agreed criteria. £450k has been allocated to an open support programme and a further £50k for targeted support. The service will need to ensure that systems and processes are put in place to document the allocation criteria for these grants, with checks and controls to guard against fraud and duplicate payments. Total expenditure will need to be monitored to ensure that grant funding is not exceeded or, if demand for these schemes is lower than anticipated, that funding can be redirected to ensure it is fully utilised by 31 March 2022. • Stream three proposes a grant of £300k to Action Together to distribute grant through third sector partner organisations such as food banks. A grant agreement will need to be drawn up to ensure that the funding is utilised in accordance with the terms and conditions of grant, and expensed in full before 31 March 2022. <p>After the allocation of £1.4m for Free School Meals and a further £800k to the proposals set out in this report, there is a residual £24k of grant allocation which will be retained as a contingency. Utilisation of this residual amount will be agreed with the Director of Finance in accordance with the terms and conditions of grant. It is expected that any additional costs associated with the cost of Free School Meal vouchers and proposals in this report will be the first call on this contingency.</p> |
| <p>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS: (Authorised by Borough Solicitor)</p> | <p>As set out in the main body of the report the funding specifies how this money should be spent. This proposals sits within those specifications being food related.</p> <p>The proposal as set out in section 2 is to continue and to expand the voucher scheme, which has already been established by the council together with providing support to the third sector again targeting food poverty.</p> <p>It remains essential for the scheme to be robustly managed to ensure that vouchers are not provided either in error or as a result of fraud and a robust system of recovery should be in place to ensure that this funding is being used as intended for the benefit of Tameside residents.</p> <p>Similarly the provision of any grants to the third sector should be subject to robust due diligence to ensure the maximum benefit is achieved from the funding.</p> |
| <p>CONFLICT OF INTEREST:</p> | <p>None</p> |
| <p>DISPENSATION GRANTED BY STANDARDS COMMITTEE ATTACHED:</p> | <p>N/A</p> |

ACCESS TO INFORMATION:

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Alec Milner, Policy Officer

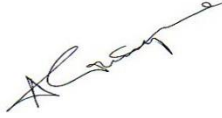


Telephone: 0161 342 3905



e-mail: alec.milner@tameside.gov.uk

Signed





Dated: 8 December 2021

Councillor Allison Gwynne - Neighbourhoods, Community Safety and Environment

EXECUTIVE DECISION REPORT

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| SERVICE AREA: | PLACE Operations and Neighbourhoods |
| SUBJECT MATTER: | Spending plan for Household Support Fund (Support Programmes for Residents) |
| DATE OF DECISION: | 8 December 2021 |
| DECISION TAKER(S): | Councillor Allison Gwynne |
| DESIGNATION OF DECISION TAKER (S): | Executive Member - Neighbourhoods, Community Safety and Environment |
| REPORTING OFFICER: | Emma Varnam – Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods Sarah Threlfall – Director, Transformation. |
| REPORT SUMMARY: | <p>The report proposes a spending plan for the Household Support Fund (HSF), splitting the funding award across four support schemes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding for Free School Meals (FSM) as agreed by executive decision on 13 October; 2. An open support programme into which all residents can apply, offering vouchers or payments for food, essentials, and energy; 3. A targeted support offer for residents with whom we're already working through existing welfare services, largely to support food, essentials, and energy costs, with a small portion able to be used for housing cost in exceptional circumstances; 4. Support offered through third sector partners in the form of vouchers to distribute or direct awards to be used for agreed purposes. |
| RECOMMENDATION: | That the proposed approach for utilising the £800 thousand of Household Support Fund money remaining after the provision of Free School Meals be agreed as set out in paragraph 2.9. |
| JUSTIFICATION FOR THE DECISION: | <p>Supporting low income households, particularly low income families with children links to all of the priorities within the Corporate Plan which are impacted upon by Covid-19.</p> <p>The proposed spending framework fits with the Council's policies around supporting the most vulnerable in our communities.</p> |
| ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS REJECTED (if any): | None |
| CONSULTEES: | Action Together, Tameside. |
| FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS: | On 30 September the DWP announced a new Household Support Fund to support vulnerable households and individuals during winter 2021/22. The fund is to be |

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| <p>(Authorised by Section 151 Officer)</p> | <p>administered by Local Authorities and Tameside has been allocated £2.224m.</p> <p>The grant must be claimed in arrears based on actual expenditure incurred up to 31 March 2022. Plans will need to be put in place to ensure the maximum grant amount is utilised and claimed within the eligible claim period. Returns are required to be submitted to DWP in January and at the end of March 2022. Grant cannot be claimed for any expenditure incurred after 31 March 2022.</p> <p>The grant is expected to be targeted at the most vulnerable and those in need to support essential living costs, particularly food, energy costs, water and other essentials. At least 50% of the grant must be used to support families with children.</p> <p>An Executive Decision on 13 October 2021 approved the utilisation of at least 50% of this funding for the provision of supermarket vouchers to families with children eligible for free school meals. A further Executive Decision on 1 December 2021 extended the free school meals related voucher provision and allocated a total amount of £1.4m to this element of spend.</p> <p>This report proposes the allocation of £800k across three further areas to support the most vulnerable residents in Tameside:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two streams will provide small grants in form of vouchers or direct payments on basis of agreed criteria. £450k has been allocated to an open support programme and a further £50k for targeted support. The service will need to ensure that systems and processes are put in place to document the allocation criteria for these grants, with checks and controls to guard against fraud and duplicate payments. Total expenditure will need to be monitored to ensure that grant funding is not exceeded or, if demand for these schemes is lower than anticipated, that funding can be redirected to ensure it is fully utilised by 31 March 2022. • Stream three proposes a grant of £300k to Action Together to distribute grant through third sector partner organisations such as food banks. A grant agreement will need to be drawn up to ensure that the funding is utilised in accordance with the terms and conditions of grant, and expensed in full before 31 March 2022. <p>After the allocation of £1.4m for Free School Meals and a further £800k to the proposals set out in this report, there is a residual £24k of grant allocation which will be retained as a contingency. Utilisation of this residual amount will be agreed with the Director of Finance in accordance with the terms and conditions of grant. It is expected that any additional costs associated with the cost of Free School Meal vouchers and proposals in this report will be the first call on this contingency.</p> |
| <p>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS: (Authorised by Borough Solicitor)</p> | <p>As set out in the main body of the report the funding specifies how this money should be spent. This proposals sits within those specifications being food related.</p> |

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| | <p>The proposal as set out in section 2 is to continue and to expand the voucher scheme which has already been established by the council together with providing support to the third sector again targeting food poverty.</p> <p>It remains essential for the scheme to be robustly managed to ensure that vouchers are not provided either in error or as a result of fraud and a robust system of recovery should be in place to ensure that this funding is being used as intended for the benefit of Tameside residents.</p> <p>Similarly the provision of any grants to the third sector should be subject to robust due diligence to ensure the maximum benefit is achieved from the funding.</p> |
| CONFLICT OF INTEREST: | None |
| DISPENSATION GRANTED BY STANDARDS COMMITTEE ATTACHED: | N/A |
| ACCESS TO INFORMATION: | <p>The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Alec Milner, Policy Officer</p> <p> Telephone:0161 342 3905</p> <p> e-mail: alec.milner@tameside.gov.uk</p> |

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) has awarded Tameside MBC approximately £2.2 million as part of their Household Support Fund (HSF), a £500 million grant package running from 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. Funding is to be provided in arrears subject to two management information returns due on 21 January 2022 and 22 April 2022 respectively.
- 1.2 DWP have set specific requirements for what is and is not appropriate usage of this grant funding. Monies should be used to support residents to buy food and basic essentials, along with support for energy bills and other essential costs like necessary phone and internet access. Cover for housing costs is permitted only in 'exceptional circumstances', i.e. only in cases where every other potential avenue has been exhausted to no avail, and not to maintain 'unsustainable tenancies'. Because of the fixed time window for spending the grant funding, DWP have made clear that the funding is not intended to be used for long-term support to any one resident or household, but residents can receive help through this scheme multiple times.
- 1.3 Similarly to the previous Covid Support Fund grants from DWP, at least 50% of the funding must be spent on families with children, and additionally at least 50% should be spent on food costs- this is lower than the 80% requirement from previous funding packages, which reflects the changing situation and the wider vulnerabilities experienced by families during Winter.

2. PROPOSED PLAN FOR SPEND

- 2.1 It is proposed that the awarded monies be split across four distinct support streams, each serving a specific purpose and together ensuring that the support offer spread is maximised across the borough's residents.
- 2.2 **Stream 1** is the provision of Free School Meals (FSM) vouchers to cover school breaks during the grant period and Easter. This proposal was covered in a separate Executive Decision Note seen by Executive Board on 1st December.
- 2.3 **Stream 2** is a proposed open support offer into which residents can apply for one-time award of vouchers or small grants to cover the costs of food, essentials, and energy. This stream would be open to all Tameside residents subject to an applications process and eligibility criteria determined internally out of the existing Tameside Resettlement Scheme (TRS) which provides residents in need with essential items of furniture when moving homes. [Tameside Resettlement Scheme and Household Support Fund](#). DWP have made clear that the grant funding is not intended for ongoing support to any individual or household, although there would be no limit to the number of applications that any one person could make to this stream or to the number of applications that can be granted where appropriate.
- 2.4 DWP guidance suggests that the Authority publish the details of this stream on our public website and provide the address of this page, along with the contact details needed to apply, along to DWP so they can direct residents who may contact them directly. The scheme would provide support via supermarket vouchers for food or winter clothing as well as support with fuel (both pre-payments meters and support grants to pay bills or fuel debts), and replacing essential furniture items like home appliances to those not moving homes and therefore not eligible for the existing TRS. It is proposed that this stream be allocated approximately £450,000.
- 2.5 **Stream 3** is to distribute support to those individuals with whom we're already working through other welfare support services. As in stream 2, support would be given in the form of vouchers or low value payments to support residents with the costs of food, essentials, and energy, though residents receiving help under this stream would not be required to

complete a formal application. Although the HSF grant funding is not intended to cover housing costs, DWP have made provision for single-time housing payments in 'exceptional circumstances', i.e. where every other possible avenue for receiving support has been exhausted and where support is needed in an emergency; DWP guidance also notes that the funding should not be used to support 'unsustainable tenancies'. It is proposed that this stream be allocated approximately £50,000.

- 2.6 Residents considered for Stream 3 support are to be referred by Welfare Rights, Out-of-Hours Emergency Control, Officers on the Rough Sleepers Initiative team, or a Director within Tameside MBC. Funding for wider essentials outside of food, energy, and related essential costs, for example spend on housing costs where appropriate as per 2.4 and essential items of furniture to replace broken appliances etc will be made only with approval from Director of Place or Assistant Executive Director for Operations and Neighbourhoods where they agree that the spend meets the definition of 'essential' for the purposes of administering the grant. Each eligible person will receive support of the required monetary value up to a maximum of £500.
- 2.7 **Stream 4** is for the provision of support through third sector partner organisations such as food banks. It is proposed that the distribution of this funding to appropriate organisations be administered by Action Together, pursuant to a grant agreement which will specify the conditions for appropriate use of monies and the requirements for data to be returned to Tameside MBC on how funding is spent required both for internal monitoring and the proper return of management information to DWP. It is proposed that this stream be allocated approximately £300,000.
- 2.8 Provision for energy bills in the second and third support streams can be delivered either by voucher or direct payments depending on how the recipient pays for energy in their home; residents who prepay by "topping up" their energy meter can be issued vouchers valid at shops and via their energy supplier's website/app, while residents who pay for energy by direct debit or after receipt of their energy bill would need to be provided with support via monetary awards.
- 2.9 As the funding will be released by DWP in arrears and following the verification of a management information return, Tameside MBC will only receive the funding for monies actually spent, therefore the figures allocated to each stream in the paragraphs above should be flexible to ensure that each stream is adequately funded and to enable the authority to maximise the volume of support offered to residents during the grant period.
- 2.10 In summary the breakdown of spend will be allocated:

| Scheme | Distributor | £,000's |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| Free School Meals | Education Service | 1,400 |
| Tameside Resettlement Scheme | Homelessness Service | 450 |
| Emergency Welfare | Welfare Rights/Homelessness | 50 |
| Third Sector Food Voucher Distribution | Action Together - Tameside | 300 |
| Contingency | Financial Management | 24 |
| Total | | 2,224 |

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 As set out at the front of the report