

## Household Support Funding for Leeds

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Report of: Chief Officer Community Hubs, Welfare and Business Support

Report to: Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

Will the decision be open for call in?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

### **What is this report about?**

#### **Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions**

- This report is to gain approval for Leeds City Council to accept £7,098,648.16 from the Department for Work and Pensions Household Support Fund (HSF) to support vulnerable residents with the costs of food, fuel and essential items until the end of March 2022. The report also proposes how the funding will be utilised in accordance with the guidance provided by Government.
- Since December 2020 in response to the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic the government has provided local authorities with funding to support vulnerable households with the costs associated with food, fuel and essential items. Administered by the DWP this funding was provided initially through the COVID Winter Grant Fund and then the COVID Local Support Grant until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021.
- On 30<sup>th</sup> September the Government announced that a new Household Support Fund would be made available to local authorities in England to support those most in need this winter. Although similar to both the Winter and Local Support Grants, the HSF is a separate programme.
- It is a condition of the grant that at least 50% of the total funding must be spent on families with children. In terms of type of support, the expectation is that the HSF should primarily be used to support households in the most need with food, energy and water bills. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to those items and with wider essential costs. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, it can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need. The funding can also be used to support families with food support in school holidays.
- For Leeds it is proposed that the funding be allocated as follows:
  - Children and Young people - up to £2.64 million to include:
    - Vouchers or equivalent support for free school meals for October 2021, Christmas 2021 and February 2022 school holidays for all children and young people eligible for Free

School Meals, living in low-income households and/ or with No Recourse to Public Funds.

- Vouchers or equivalent for children aged 0-4 living in low-income households.
- Vouchers or equivalent for care leavers on low income.
  
- Welfare support and assistance for vulnerable and low-income households - up to £1.25m to include:
  - Assistance from the Leeds Local Welfare Support Scheme for food, fuel and essential items.
  - Additional financial support for residents receiving Discretionary Housing Payments.
  - Assistance for families through section 17 arrangements.
  
- Council Tax Support - up to £2.31million to support people in receipt of Council Tax Support with the costs of fuel and essential bills.
  
- Housing costs -up to £250,000 to support tenants in receipt of Discretionary Housing Payments with housing costs.
  
- Food, fuel and essential items support via the Leeds Food Aid network, other third sector organisations and targeted support for vulnerable groups. Up to £190,000.
  
- Funding for the administration of the scheme of approximately £500,000.
  
- Accepting the HSF funding contributes to the Best Council Plan focus of tackling poverty and reducing inequalities. The funding supports the Best City Priorities of Child Friendly City, Safe, Strong Communities, Inclusive Growth, and Health & Wellbeing.

## **Recommendations**

The Director of Communities, Housing and Environment is recommended to:

- a) Accept the allocation of £7,098,648.16 Household Support Fund from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), to be used between 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and the end of March 2022.
- b) Note the proposed levels of expenditure as outlined in this report to ensure that the funding meets the grant criteria to support vulnerable families and individuals with the costs of food, fuel, water and essential items, including the provision of free school meals to low-income families over holiday periods.
- c) Agree that the amounts per expenditure type may be varied to ensure that the funding is appropriately utilised and spent within the allowable grant criteria provided by Government.

## **Why is the proposal being put forward?**

- 1 The Department for Work and Pensions have allocated just under £7.1m of the Household Support Fund to Leeds City Council to spend on supporting vulnerable households until March 2021 with the cost of food, fuel and essential items. In order to ensure that the Council able to start to allocate this funding as soon as possible the funding needs to be accepted.
- 2 The proposals for how the funding is to be allocated aim to ensure that residents most in need are able to receive support direct and quickly. These proposals are based on the experience of running both the Covid Winter and Local Grants schemes between December 2020 and September 2021.

## What impact will this proposal have?

### Wards Affected:

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

- 3 The HSF funding of £7,098,648.16 will provide support to vulnerable families and individuals in Leeds over the winter months.

## What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 4 All relevant Executive Members have been briefed on the guidance and remit of the funding and proposed spending allocations.

## What are the resource implications?

- 5 Leeds City Council has been allocated £7,098,648.16 Household Support Funding from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), to be used between 6<sup>th</sup> October and the end of March 2022. The funding is to enable Local Authorities to provide support to families with children, other vulnerable households and individuals with the cost of food, energy, water bills and other essentials.
- 6 The grant funding guidance allows the Council to allocate a specified amount of funding to cover administration costs of the scheme.

## What are the legal implications?

- 7 A Key Decision is required to accept the funding. The decision is eligible for call-in.

## What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 8 Leeds City Council will ensure that the provision of support undertaken meets the objectives and criteria set out by the DWP.

## Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth

Health and Wellbeing

Climate Emergency

- 9 The funding supports the Best City Priorities of Child Friendly City, Safe, Strong Communities, Inclusive Growth, and Health & Wellbeing.

## Options, timescales and measuring success

### a) What other options were considered?

- 10 None

### b) How will success be measured?

- 11 The HSF will be distributed in full to vulnerable households across the city.

### c) What is the timetable for implementation?

- 12 From October 2021 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

## **Appendices**

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## **Background papers**

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