

<b>Subject:</b>	Household Support Fund – Third Round	<b>Status:</b>	For Publication
<b>Report to:</b>	Council	<b>Date:</b>	16 November 2022
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Finance	<b>Lead Member:</b>	Resources
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception <input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Equality Impact Assessment:</b>	Required: No	Attached: No	No
<b>Biodiversity Impact Assessment:</b>	Required: No	Attached: No	No
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## 1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

### Council approve:-

- 1.1 The suggested allocations and process for the Household Support Fund.
- 1.2 That all future minor amendments to the criteria and budget be delegated to the Head of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- A third round of funding now totalling 320k has been made available via Lancashire County Council (LCC) to support families and individuals in hardship.
- The fund covers the period 01 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 inclusive and is aimed at supporting households in the most need, particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support that government has recently made available but who are never the less in need.
- The Fund is 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.
- Support which can make a quick but sustainable impact on energy costs is particularly encouraged; for example, insulation of hot water tanks, fitting draft excluders to a door, or replacing inefficient lightbulbs or white goods. The Fund can also be used to support households with the cost of food and water bills, essential costs related to energy, food and water, and with wider essential costs.
- The support can be delivered through a variety of routes including providing vouchers to households, making direct provision of food or goods, or issuing grants to third parties (with the exception of grants for advice provision). However part of the scheme must be delivered through an application process.
- This report proposes funding to partner organisations to enable them to support the most financially vulnerable along with payments to families, pensioners and individuals through an online application process.

## 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 A total of £9m has been allocated to LCC as part of the third round of Household Support Funding. LCC have confirmed that they are allocating £320,000 of this to Rossendale Council. The Government has stipulated that whilst we can distribute funds to partner organisations to support households in need we must also operate at least part of the scheme on an application basis.
- 3.2 This funding covers the period 01 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 inclusive and must be spent by March 2023.

- 3.3 Support is not restricted to vulnerable households in receipt of benefits. Therefore, engaging with Homewise, Citizens Advice and the food banks will give households not in receipt of benefits, but who are struggling to afford energy and water bills, food, and other related essentials, the opportunity to access the funding.
- 3.4 The guidance states authorities have the flexibility to identify which vulnerable households are in most need of support and apply their own discretion when identifying eligibility.

#### 4. DETAILS

- 4.1 A range of options for allocating the funding have been examined by officers. This exercise examined the information that the Council and its partners hold regarding financially vulnerable households in Rossendale.
- 4.2 Based on the research it is proposed to allocate the funds as set out below:

Item	Delivery	Cost
Affordable Warmth (boiler repairs etc)	Homewise	£50,000
Food Banks*	RAFT/Others	£65,000
Crisis Fund	Citizens Advice	£20,000
Emergency Payments - no recourse to Public Funds	RBC	£ 3,000
HSF 2 Legacy Payments	RBC	£ 1,000
Payments (online application)	RBC	£149,000
Administration (10%)	RBC	£32,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£320,000</b>

\* The amounts distributed to foodbanks are broken down:-

Raft - £40,000 and £5,000 to each of the smaller foodbanks: Crawshawbooth, Trinity Baptist Church, Lighthouse Project, Rossendale Food Box project and Positive Start.

- 4.3 The funding allows for 10% to be used to support administrating the fund. This equates to £32,000 which will be retained to ensure that the fund is administered effectively in house.
- 4.4 To access funding through the application process, it is proposed the criteria will be:
- Applicants must be Rossendale residents
  - Recipients of Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support
  - Households with children under 5 years of age
- 4.5 Application will be through an on-line application process. Support will be given to individuals who have difficulty completing the on-line form.
- 4.6 This report proposes the following payments:
- The aim is to pay each household a minimum payment of £100, however this will depend on demand.
- As the fund is limited the proposal is to open an application window from 17<sup>th</sup> November – 16<sup>th</sup> December, making payments the following week.
- 4.7 Due to the level of funding available the criteria for the application process is targeted to ensure meaningful payments can be made to eligible applicants. The support provided to the food banks and Citizens Advice will ensure eligible members of the wider community can obtain some support. The Council has restricted its application process to families with pre-

school aged children as LCC are targeting low income families with school aged children through their free school meals offer.

## **5. RISK**

All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

- The key priority with this funding is ensuring that it reaches those that are most in need. Previously the distribution through the BVRCVS was based on self-declaration, which was open to interpretation. For this round of funding the government has stipulated that an application process must be undertaken.

## **6. FINANCE**

- 6.1 The Council will receive £320k Household Support Fund from LCC to deliver this scheme.
- 6.2 This report requests that any minor changes to the scheme be delegated to the Head of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

## **7. LEGAL**

- 7.1 There are no particular legal implications arising from this report however this recommendation will provide a more robust process and structure to ensure that the assistance is given to those most in need.

## **8. POLICY AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The fund is targeted at the most vulnerable residents as instructed in the government guidance. Assistance will be given to individuals who need support completing the online application form.

## **9. REASON FOR DECISION**

- 9.1 It is considered that given the constraints around identifying those most in need, the scheme outlined in the report provides the best balance of distributing funding rapidly to those in priority groups, whilst also ensuring that additional support is available for those most in need and in contact with food banks and the Citizens Advice.