

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 6 September 2022

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director – Finance

PORTFOLIO: Leader

SUBJECT: Household Support Fund 2022

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

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

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.**
- (iii) The Operational Director Finance in consultation with the Chair of Corporate PPB recommend the new Household Support Fund scheme for approval by Executive 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 A spending plan was prepared, as set out in the Appendix A, 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.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 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 of help.
- 3.7 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 A.

Progress Update

- 3.8 At the end of June 2022 expenditure from the Household Support Fund was relatively low as anticipated because only one week of free school meal vouchers has been issued for the summer half term. Also the £120 payment for pensioners receiving council tax reduction is being paid in August 2022. Appendix B outlines the spend for the period 1st April 2022 – 30th June 2022 that also includes expenditure from partner organisations including Halton Citizens Advice Bureau, Widnes Food Bank, Holiday Activity Food programme and Halton Voluntary Action.
- 3.9 The bulk of free school meal vouchers are being issued for the six weeks covering the period 21st July 2022 – 31st August 2022, and it is estimated the spend will be £523,000. As mentioned above the payment to pensioners is being made in August 2022 and will have an estimated total value of £516,360.
- 3.10 A further progress report regarding delivery of the Household Support Fund will be presented to the Board on 1 November 2022.

New Household Support Fund scheme

- 3.11 The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) hosted an all local authority meeting on 11th August 2022 to provide an update on the new Household Support Fund (HSF), which will cover the period 1st October 2022 – 31st March 2023. The DWP are currently working through the design and governance of the new HSF, but one change they highlighted is there will be no requirement to spend on particular groups of people as stipulated in the current HSF. Another change the DWP is considering relates to requiring residents to make an application for assistance for a proportion of local authority residents, rather than the council using a targeted approach to provide support.
- 3.12 The DWP were unable to be definitive regarding local authority funding allocations, although they stated they expect the funding amounts to be similar to those provided previously. The DWP is also considering broadening its management information requirements from local authorities to better understand where assistance is being provided.
- 3.13 Draft guidance for the new HSF is expected to be shared with local authorities in late August 2022.
- 3.14 When the DWP issues final guidance for the new HSF the Operational Director Finance in consultation with the Chair of Corporate PPB recommend the new Household Support Fund scheme for approval by Executive Board.

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 A 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 A

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 	

APPENDIX B**Household Support Fund
Spend for the period 1st April 2022 – 30th June 2022**

Total grant allocation	1,297,880
1. Vulnerable Households with Children	
Free school meal (FSM) vouchers provided for: Summer half term 30/5/22 – 3/6/22, 1 week	87,240
Summer holidays 21/7/22 – 31/8/22, 6 weeks	0
2. Vulnerable Pensioner Households	
Number of pensioners on council tax reduction = 4,303 Award £120 per pensioner	0
3. Other Vulnerable Households	
Distributed via;	
• Citizens Advice Bureau (energy/fuel support) £35,000	18,279
• Widnes Food Bank £10,000	2,111
• Holiday Activity Fund £5,000	2,500
• Halton Voluntary Action £10,000	876
Total	111,006