

**REPORT TO:** Corporate Policy & Performance Board

**DATE:** 1 November 2022

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Operational Director – Finance

**PORTFOLIO:** Leader

**SUBJECT:** Household Support Fund Extension  
1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023

**WARD(S):** Borough-wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To provide a progress update regarding delivery of the Government's Household Support Fund from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.

**2.0 RECOMMENDED: That progress with delivery of the Household Support Fund be noted.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 On 6<sup>th</sup> September 2022 the Board received a report which provided an update regarding delivery of the Government's Household Support Fund between 1 April 2022 and 30 September 2022. The report also outlined that the Government had announced an extension of the Household Support Fund, covering the period 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023. The Fund is intended to support vulnerable households with the pressures caused by the significantly rising cost of living.

3.2 Subsequently, guidance was received regarding the operation of the Scheme and Halton was awarded grant funding of £1,297,880. Any unspent grant as at 31 March 2023 must be returned to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

3.3 The DWP has made a number of changes to its guidance for the new scheme. The main change is that there will be no ring fence of any proportion of funding for any particular cohort of people. The second key change is a requirement for councils to operate at least part of their scheme on an application basis ie. Residents should have the opportunity to come forward and request support.

3.4 In order to meet the requirement to operate part of the scheme on an application basis it is proposed to allocate £178,000 to the Discretionary Support Scheme, which has an existing telephone application process.

- 3.5 The DWP guidance states that the new Household Support Fund is intended to cover a wide range of low income households in need, including families with children, pensioners, and people with disabilities.
- 3.6 In order to provide assistance to vulnerable households with children it is proposed to allocate funding to low income families with children by issuing free school meal vouchers of £12 per week during the school holidays, which it is estimated will cost approximately £540,000.
- 3.7 To support vulnerable pensioner households, it is proposed that all pensioners currently receiving council tax reduction will be provided with an award of £100. It is estimated that this will cost £430,000.
- 3.8 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 and ensure it is fully utilised, discussions have been held with colleagues across the Council. A Spending Plan has been prepared as set out in the Appendix, regarding how the grant funding might be utilised via a combination of Council departments and the Voluntary Sector to deliver help and assistance to vulnerable households over the six month period.
- 3.9 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, to ensure it is fully utilised in accordance with the grant guidance by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.
- 3.10 The Board agreed on 6 September 2022, that the new Scheme and Spending Plan once prepared, should be approved by the Operational Director, Finance in consultation with the Chair. Thereafter, given the need to procure and distribute free school meal vouchers in time for the Autumn half term holidays, the Chief Executive approved the Scheme and Spending Plan utilising urgency powers.
- 3.11 Progress with delivery of the Household Support Fund will continue to be reported to the 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**

None identified

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

None identified

## **5.3 A Healthy Halton**

None identified

## **5.4 A Safer Halton**

None identified

## **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 31 March 2023, 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**

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

## APPENDIX

### Household Support Fund Spending Plan 1<sup>st</sup> October 2022 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

Total grant allocation	1,297,880
Less administration costs (5%)	64,894
<b>Available grant funding</b>	<b>1,232,986</b>
<b>1. Vulnerable Households with Children</b>	<b>£540,000</b>
<p>Free school meal vouchers for school holidays:            Autumn half term 24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> October 2022 (1 week)            Christmas holidays 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec 2022 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan 2023 (2 weeks)            Spring half term 20<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> February 2023 (1 week)            Easter holidays 3<sup>rd</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> April 2023 (2 weeks)</p> <p>Based on 7,500 children entitled to FSM            Paid for 6 weeks            £12 voucher per week</p>	
<b>2. Vulnerable Pensioner Households</b>	<b>£430,000</b>
<p>Number of pensioners on council tax reduction = 4,300            Award £100 per pensioner</p>	
<b>3. Discretionary Support Scheme</b>	<b>£177,986</b>
By application	
<b>4. Other Vulnerable Households</b>	<b>£85,000</b>
<p>Distributed via;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CAB £40,000</li> <li>• Widnes Food Bank £10,000</li> <li>• Runcorn Food Bank £10,000</li> <li>• Holiday Activity Fund £5,000</li> <li>• Affordable Warmth – Energy Projects Plus £10,000</li> <li>• Halton Voluntary Action £10,000</li> </ul>	