

Household Support Fund

To:	Communities, Social Mobility, and Inclusion
Meeting Date:	14 April 2022
From:	Paul Fox, Service Director Communities and Partnerships
Electoral division(s):	All
Key decision:	Yes
Forward Plan ref:	2022/026
Outcome:	That the delivery of Household Support Fund for the financial year 2022/23 adopts the overall approaches previously set out to the Committee in November 2021 and March 2022
Recommendations:	<p>The Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee is recommended to:</p> <p>a) Adopt, within the scope of any guidance issued, the approach to delivering the Household Fund in 2022/23 (as set out to Committee on March 2022 and informed by extensive co-production with partners) for the enhanced financial envelope now likely to be available to the scheme.</p> <p>b) Delegate to the Interim Director of Communities and Partnerships, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, additional decisions (including procurement decisions) in relation to the fund. This is in order that they may be made at pace following the late government announcement of the intention to resource Household Support Funds in 2022/23.</p> <p>c) Bring an update on the delivery of the scheme to the next meeting of the Committee.</p>

d) Delegate the consideration of matters relating to and impacting on the delivery of a direct voucher scheme to the Director of Education and the Children & Young Person Committee.

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Member contacts:

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1. Background

- 1.1 In October 2021, the government announced a Household Support Fund to run from 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. The Fund was intended to support those most in need over the winter months, primarily with food and fuel costs.
- 1.2 The indicative funding allocation for Cambridgeshire was £3,581,424.
- 1.3 The Children and Young People Committee approved a Direct Voucher Scheme for eligible families over the October half-term, Christmas school holiday, and February half-term periods on 19 October 2021. The funding allocation for the Direct Voucher Scheme approved by Committee was £1,124,266. On 11 November 2021, the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee agreed a process for delivering a Household Support Fund with the remaining balance of £2,457,158.
- 1.4 A report to the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee on 10 March 2022 provided members with an update on delivery of the scheme. This included the number of applications processed and supported. It also detailed changes that had been made to the scheme to align resources with the variable demand (and therefore expenditure) the scheme experienced throughout its course.
- 1.5 The Full Council meeting of 8th February 2022 approved an allocation of £1m for a new Household Support Fund (HSF) wider scheme for 2022/23, alongside an investment of £3.6m to fund the direct award voucher scheme.
- 1.6 On 10 March 2022, the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee agreed to delegate approval of the final design of the new Household Support Fund for 2022/23 wider scheme to the Service Director for Communities and Partnerships, in consultation with the Chair of the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 On Wednesday 23rd March 2022, the Chancellor made his Spring Statement. His speech included the statement *'I am doubling the Household Support Fund to £1bn with £500m of new funding. Local Authorities are best placed to help those in need in their local areas and they will receive this funding from April.'*
- 2.2 Based on the Chancellor's statement, the resource available to support a Cambridgeshire HSF for 2022/23 appears to be set to increase.
- 2.3 At the time of writing, no government guidance was issued for the HSF 22/23 and no confirmation was received on the indicative allocation to Cambridgeshire.

- 2.4 Since the drafting of the 10 March 2022 report to the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee, significant co-production work has been undertaken to design what was assumed to be a £1m HSF for 22/23. The remainder of this report updates the Committee on that process and sets out the rationale for adopting the approach developed so far to deliver a HSF that may be enhanced as a result of the Chancellor's recent announcement.
- 2.5 The Household Support Fund 21/22 provided emergency financial support to thousands of people in need. The limitations placed on the fund by the government meant that while the Council were able to distribute significant financial support to those who requested it, such support was short-term in nature. Such financial payments in themselves do little to address the underlying problems that the household is experiencing, or that have caused their need for support. The HSF which operated across the country in 2021/22 has therefore been categorised and criticised as a 'sticking plaster' approach.
- 2.6 The local funding set out in paragraph 1.5 is free of such restrictions. This enables the Council to consider a blended system that allows a crisis response as well as working to prevent more households reaching that crisis state. In particular, the intention is that the future offer will provide a much greater focus on financial sustainability and income maximisation. The aim of this is to provide a longer-term boost to household incomes and ensure that households who are struggling are better able to support themselves. It is also intended that this will be part of a wider support offer, linking families and households and helping them to navigate the existing support mechanisms they may not previously have been aware of.
- 2.7 An extensive co-production exercise is underway to help us design such a system and has already been through iterations of testing and development through discussions with various stakeholders. This exercise includes:
- Individual conversations with trusted partners that helped us deliver the 21/22 HSF,
 - A survey sent to all that received support from the scheme,
 - Follow up conversations with a sample of respondents to understand more about their experience,
 - Design sessions with district council partners and the Community Resilience Group (invitation list of approximately fifty organisations which includes district councils, public services and the voluntary and community sector).
- 2.8 The general agreement from all partners to date is that the approach set out in paragraph 2.6 is the correct one to deliver the most sustained and sustainable support to those who need it most.
- 2.9 For the reasons set out in paragraph 2.3, the total amount available to support the approaches set out above in 22/23 is unknown at the time of writing. However, it is logical that we should look to align available funding with the approaches set out above. In doing

so we will continue to apply the following principles to the design and delivery of the HSF for 22/23:

- Co-production of our offer and processes and the core of the HSF,
- Easy to understand and access,
- Minimised bureaucracy and administrative spend,
- Building upon on existing support networks and joining up local services, rather than duplicating them,
- Supporting those in need to navigate the complex systems of support available, not simply 'handing them off' or 'signposting them',
- Sharing learning and intelligence with our partners to help target our offers,
- Collaborating with partners across the public and voluntary sectors.

- 2.10 It is possible that the timely delivery of the scheme for 22/23 will require expenditure or procurement that will not be able to be agreed at a Committee meeting. It is therefore recommended that the existing agreement (to delegate the final design of the HSF scheme 22/23 to the Interim Director of Communities and Partnerships, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair), be extended to encompass the scheme as enhanced by any new government resource.
- 2.11 This work is complementary to the locally funded direct voucher scheme for 22/23 which has indicative funding as set out in paragraph 1.5. Any matters arising from new government allocation of HSF funding for 22/23 will be considered by the Director of Education and the Children & Young Person Committee.

3. Alignment with corporate priorities

3.1 Communities at the heart of everything we do

The Cambridgeshire Household Support Fund will work closely with district councils and a wide range of trusted partners at a community level, enabling a localised approach to be taken to support a household in need where appropriate.

3.2 A good quality of life for everyone

The Cambridgeshire Household Support Fund is designed to meet the urgent and immediate needs of households over the winter months. However, our scheme will also sit alongside broader support arrangements available via the countywide coordination hub, our district council partners, and a wide range of other service providers. Supporting Households out of crisis and onto a path of longer-term recovery will help to build capacity, resilience and self-reliance.

3.3 Helping our children learn, develop and live life to the full

At least 50% of the Fund is designed to support families with children. Alongside the direct voucher scheme, we will be identifying families in need and encouraging them to apply to the Fund.

3.4 Cambridgeshire: a well-connected, safe, clean, green environment

Helping households in immediate and urgent need will enable them to begin a pathway to longer term recovery. Our ability to connect supported people with other services, including digital skills training or our climate change work, will ensure we retain a longer-term focus on those households achieving sustainability.

3.5 Protecting and caring for those who need us

The Fund will provide immediate relief for households in crisis, and our scheme, which will sit alongside a broader range of opportunities to provide support, coupled with our ability to identify households in need that may not yet be known to us, will ensure we focus our support on those most in need.

4. Significant Implications

4.1 Resource Implications

The report above sets out details of significant implications.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

Any procurement activity undertaken will follow the Council's CPRs and the Procurement Team will be engaged to support. Procurement and contract procedure rules will need to be followed when commissioning the new services described in the report. The Fund will be managed through the local authority and staff employed through Cambridgeshire County Council

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

The Council is likely to be required to provide management information to Department for Work and Pensions as a condition of the funding.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

It will be important that the Fund is made widely available to all households who may be in immediate or urgent need.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

Communicating this Fund countywide, as well as engaging with district councils, parish and town councils and other trusted partners, will be essential if we are to ensure help reaches those people most in need.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

Local Members will play a vital role in helping to promote the scheme, identify households who may need to apply to the scheme, and to support those households with their applications. At both county and district levels they provide a significant opportunity to ensure our Fund targets those in greatest need.

4.7 Public Health Implications

The Household Support Fund is a potential source of support for community members experiencing hardship, however many of the challenges affecting the health and wellbeing of community members are structural and require a wider approach. The Household Support Fund's impact is greater, more sustainable, and preventative if it is part of a package of interventions that lever in different types of support within the system for community members through a co-ordinated pragmatic approach.

4.8 Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas

4.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Status: Neutral

Explanation: There is unlikely to be any impact on buildings as a direct result of this Fund, although we will be seeking to support households into more efficient and greener energy deals as a broader benefit.

4.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Status: Neutral

Explanation: There are unlikely to be any impacts on transport as a result of the scheme.

4.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.

Status: Neutral

Explanation: There are unlikely to be any impacts on land as a result of the scheme.

4.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Status: Neutral

Explanation: There are unlikely to be any impacts on waste management as a result of the scheme.

4.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability, and management:

Status: Neutral

Explanation: There is unlikely to be any impact on water usage as a direct result of this Fund, although we will be seeking to support households into more efficient water usage as a wider benefit of the scheme.

4.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Status: Neutral

Explanation: There are unlikely to be any impacts on air pollution as a result of the scheme.

4.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.

Status: Neutral

Explanation: Although the scheme itself may not directly improve resilience and households' abilities to cope with climate change, we anticipate a set of broader support arrangements which we hope will deliver longer term benefits.

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the Head of Procurement? Yes

Name of Officer: Clare Ellis

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law? Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?

Yes

Name of Officer: Paul Fox

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?

Yes

Name of Officer: Amanda Rose

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes

Name of Officer: Paul Fox

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health?

Yes

Name of Officer: Val Thomas

5. Source documents guidance

5.1 Source documents

[Anti-Poverty and Social Mobility Report, March 2022](#)

[Cambridgeshire Household Support Fund \(Excluding the Direct Voucher Scheme\) Report, November 2021](#)