

HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND PROPOSAL

URGENT DECISION BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



DATE	23rd April 2024
PORTFOLIO	Resources & Performance/Health, Culture and Wellbeing
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PURPOSE

1. To seek approval to deliver a fifth Household Support Fund scheme (HSF5).

RECOMMENDATION

2. It is recommended that the Chief Executive using urgency powers under Part 3 of the Constitution (Executive Functions) agrees to:
3. Endorse this report
4. Delegate authority to the Head of Legal & Democratic Services to agree and sign the MOU with Lancashire County Council to deliver HSF5.
5. Delegate authority to the Head of Policy and Engagement to finalise a delivery plan for the scheme, in consultation with the Head of Finance and Property.
6. That call in be waived by the Chief Executive following agreement by the Chair of Scrutiny due to the urgency of this decision, Lancashire County Council’s deadline for receipt of the signed MOU is 30th April 2024. Failure to submit would put the funding at risk.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

7. To continue to support the most vulnerable during the continued cost of living crisis.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

Fund amount and overview of the scheme

8. Lancashire County Council have awarded the Council £460,668 for HSF5 to deliver a range of products that supports the most vulnerable through the continued cost of living crisis.

9. The funding must be spent or committed by the end of September 2024.
10. The Government's guidance sets out the expectation that the fund should be used to support households in the most need. The council can issue payments directly to residents. It can also fund registered charities to provide support, such as food banks. The Government is also allowing the fund to be spent on advice services.
11. The council can claim reasonable administration costs.

Review of past schemes

12. Burnley Council has administered £2,575,000 of support since the fund started in late 2021. Direct payments in the form of vouchers have been targeted at:
 - low-income households with a children
 - low-income pensioners
 - residents that have a disability band reduction or severe mental impairment or carers discount on their council tax
 - those in receipt of housing benefit only. Individuals in this group are not eligible for a means-tested Cost of Living Payment
 - those that applied but were not eligible for council tax support, if their income or capital was close to the threshold for eligibility for council tax support.
 - Payments to working age householders in receipt of council tax support.
 - Applications from other households that have previously not received any form of household support or cost of living payment

HSF has also been used to fund the food bank and other charities providing food and other essential supplies to residents. Any resident can apply to the food bank for support and may be offered extra help through Burnley Together. The council were also able to use household support fund to support more applicants applying for a discretionary hardship payment and provide funding for debt and case worker support

HSF5 proposed scheme.

13. On the basis that the council receives £460,668, the following scheme is proposed subject to third-party organisations agreeing to service level agreements prepared by the Policy and Engagement Team. Delivery will start mid-May when the council has entered into a funding agreement with the county council.
 - £80,000 to provide a payment to the most vulnerable residents and for applications from other households that have previously not received any form of household support or cost of living payment.
 - £30,000 for additional discretionary hardship payments
 - £47,000 for debt and welfare rights advice in Burnley Town centre and Padiham including money management for young people.
 - £45,000 for other local charities and community settings/outreach work providing support to the most vulnerable.
 - £50,000 to help with travel expenses such as bus passes and accessible transport for disabled residents.
 - £72,000 to support household food insecurity including education, the food bank and community grocery stocks.
 - £81,000 for essential housing costs and hygiene products.
 - £25,000 for potential data analysis (low income family tracker dashboard) to target support at postcode level and investigate proactive outreach work

- £30,668 for administration costs (6.6%). The guidance from county is that in all cases, Authorities should keep administrative costs to a reasonable level, they recognise that costs will differ between Authorities and in the previous iterations of the HSF, average administrative spend was around 5% of the total allocation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND BUDGET PROVISION

14. There are no new budget implications arising from this report.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

15. Administration of the scheme is a key part of the council's response to the cost of living crisis.
16. Inflation has the greatest impact on those on low incomes so the recommendation ensures that the fund goes to those in greatest need.

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION

17. Executive Members for Resources and Performance & Health, Culture & Wellbeing

BACKGROUND PAPERS

18. Not applicable

FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

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