

REPORT TO	DATE
Chief Executive in consultation with the Mayor	11 July 2022



TITLE	REPORT OF
Urgent Decision Under Section 35 of the Council's Constitution: Household Support Fund Round 2	Jennifer Mullin

Is this report confidential?	No
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PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. Agreement on the distribution of South Ribble's Household Support Fund Round 2 allocation for 2022.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The distribution of South Ribble's Household Support Fund to potentially vulnerable residents, as outlined in this report.
3. Approval of flexibility within the distribution of the fund, to ensure that resources are allocated to the areas of most need.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

4. Household Support Fund offers the opportunity for the Council to support both vulnerable residents, and those who have been adversely financially affected by COVID.
5. Ensuring best use of this funding is directly in line with the Council's priorities.

CORPORATE OUTCOMES

6. The report relates to the following corporate outcomes:

An exemplary council	✓
Thriving communities	✓
A fair local economy that works for everyone	✓
Good homes, green spaces, healthy places	✓

BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

7. SRBC has been allocated £340,000 in the second round of Household Support Fund (HSF), resourced by the DWP and overseen by LCC. Once again, LCC has received £9.678m of HSF, to support vulnerable households in COVID recovery.
8. DWP guidance for councils states that HSF should 'primarily be used to support households in the most need with food, energy and water bills. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to those items and with wider essential costs.'

9. Funding received by LCC is being split between individual district allocations and payments of £15 per child per week of school holidays to families in receipt of free school meals over the summer holidays. These payments satisfy the DWP requirement for a third of funding to be spent on households with children.
10. There is a further DWP requirement to support pensioners who are potentially vulnerable with a third of the overall budget. At county level, the decision has been taken that all districts will issue a £90 one off payment to pensioners in receipt of Council Tax Support. In South Ribble, this is 1251 individuals, which equates to £112,590 – 33% of our £340,000 allocation.
11. This leaves a balance of £227,410 for ‘other households.’ There is an expectation that districts will use their local knowledge and networks to distribute funding to households who need support, either directly, or through third party organisations. There are no standard criteria to meet and no prescribed assessment process to follow.
12. All HSF round 2 monies must be spent by 30 September 2022. LCC officers have indicated that a management fee of around 5% is appropriate.

PROPOSALS

13. Through the South Ribble Together support hub and the previous round of HSF, we have gained significant insight into the issues and challenges faced by vulnerable households across the borough. We are aware that increasing energy and food costs are a growing concern, and that many household incomes have decreased during the pandemic, through illness, redundancy, unpaid leave and reduced hours.
14. Using this insight, the communities team is proposing a varied approach to allocation of funds. Although timescales are tight, this funding presents a genuine opportunity to make a difference locally, including those households who are exempt from other support streams. This includes people who are working and do not receive benefits, but struggle on low incomes.
15. Conversations have been held with partners to gain insight into current needs and service demands; the proposals for South Ribble are in line with the feedback received.
16. A two-phase approach is proposed, to ensure that funding is distributed efficiently, effectively, and there is flexibility in directing budget where there is most need. Phase 1 includes funding to a range of partners, charities and community groups who were all successful in delivering round 1 of the same funding.

Theme	Goods / service	Provider	Spend	TOTAL
Energy	Utility support - gas, water, electricity	CAB	£ 40,000	£ 80,000
	Home energy efficiency adaptations	SRBC	£ 40,000	
Food & energy	Shelving, fridges, freezers & stock for community shops.	Leyland Foodbank	£ 4,000	£ 28,000
		Bamber Bridge Foodbank	£ 4,000	
		Penwortham Foodbank	£ 4,000	
	Community Shop Vouchers	New Day Foodbank	£ 4,000	
		The Place	£ 4,000	
	Slow cookers, recipe books & ingredients	The Base	£ 4,000	
		CNOS	£ 4,000	
Food, energy & wider essentials	Move on packs - appliances, energy vouchers, furniture, bedding, towels, etc	Refuge	£ 4,000	£ 20,000
		Tippytoes	£ 4,000	
		Barnardos	£ 4,000	
		Key Unlocking Futures	£ 4,000	
		SLEAP	£ 4,000	
Wider essentials	Step up grants – bespoke support for people in crisis	SRBC	£ 12,000	£ 12,000
TOTAL			£140,000	£140,000

17. Phase 2 is dependent on the demand / spend from the above, proposed as:

Theme	Goods / service	Spend
Energy / food	Utility support / home adaptations	£ 60,000
	Contingency	£ 10,410

18. The overall proposed budget breakdown is:

	Proposed budget
Phase 1	£ 140,000
Phase 2	£ 60,000
Contingency	£ 10,410
Admin fee @ 5%	£ 17,000
TOTAL	£ 227,410

19. For utility to provide fuel on pre-paid to those with accounts. As in HSF round 1 delivery, a sliding scale of value is proposed, based on household size:

Single person	£100	Couple	£150
1 child family	£200	2 child family	£250
Family with 3 or more children / dependents		£300	

support, CAB is able vouchers for those meters, and grants

20. A proportionate allocation of the management fee would be paid to CAB, to cover training and supervision of volunteers and collation of management information.

MONITORING AND REPORTING

21. Following the model used previously in HSF round 1, a twice-weekly monitoring meeting is planned with CAB, to review demand and spend. South Ribble Together Caseworkers are in the office each day and will work closely with CAB colleagues to ensure smooth operation.
22. Monitoring meetings will be used to discuss and resolve complex cases, to ensure a backlog does not build up.
23. All providers listed the table in paragraph 18 will be required to provide a regular data return on the spend and number of payments made / people supported. All providers will be given the ongoing support of the Communities Service.
24. Management information to be returned to LCC for DWP monitoring focuses on spend and volume. The following tables have been supplied as a template:

Total Value of Awards split by Household Composition					
		a) Households with Children	b) Households with Pensioners	c) Other households	c) Total amount provided to vulnerable households
Row 1	Spend (£s)				
Row 2	Volumes				

Total Value of Awards Split by Category							
		a) Energy and Water	b) Food	c) Essentials linked to Energy and Water	d) Wider Essentials	e) Housing Costs	e) Total
Row 1	Spend (£s)						
Row 2	Volumes						

CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT AND OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION

25. In order to ensure that HSF funding reaches as many households as possible, a range of promotion methods are proposed. These include:
 - A flyer for foodbank parcels, and briefing for foodbank volunteers
 - A webpage on www.southribble.gov.uk
 - Proactive contact with applicants for household energy schemes who have been unsuccessful but are on a low income
 - Proactive contact with residents on a Council Tax recovery plan
 - Briefing for gateway staff
 - Briefing for housing staff
 - Briefing for South Ribble Together Network partners (includes South Ribble Integrated Team, Help Through Crisis, Progress, SLEAP and others)
 - Briefing for DWP staff who are based at the Civic Centre
 - Briefing for Headteachers and article in parentmail newsletters

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

26. Across Lancashire, district councils are taking a range of approaches in distribution of Household Support Fund, including automatic payments to benefit recipients, energy grants and provision of shopping vouchers.
27. Conversations have been held with council services, charities and community groups who support vulnerable households, to ascertain current levels of demand. The proposals outlined in this report correlate directly with feedback received.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND AIR QUALITY IMPLICATIONS

28. The proposals in this report do not directly impact the Council's climate change and sustainability targets, but there are measures which do contribute:
 - Replacing items such as windows and boilers with more energy efficient models.
 - Use of CAB to offer fuel vouchers alongside energy advice and support.
 - Step up grants to update to improve homes and make them warmer.
 - Slow cooker project to encourage healthy and energy efficient food preparation.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

29. The timescales for distributing this funding are tight, and there is a reputational risk in not spending the borough's allocation and having to return funding to the DWP. Mitigation of this risk includes using a range of providers, a phased approach, and monitoring of spend and impact.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPACT

30. In relation to Household Support Fund, there are no negative impacts on any of the protected groups. There are positive impacts on age, disability and maternity as financial support given through the fund seeks to reduce vulnerability.

COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

31. This funding must be spent by 30 September 2022, or returned to Lancashire County Council, and ultimately the Government.
32. This leaves only around 3 months to distribute funds to eligible residents.
33. A partnership approach has been developed which will see existing partners utilising their established networks to distribute funds.
34. A number of safeguards are in place;
 - Funds will be released to CAB on a staged basis – phase 2 being issued once the initial tranche has been spent.
 - Activity will be recorded to monitor take up.
 - Spend levels will be closely monitored to ensure funds are used to the best effect, and fully spent by 30 September 2022.
35. There are no wider budget / resource implications for the Council.

COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

36. Clearly we need to move quickly on this and there needs to be some degree of flexibility over how we deliver on this. Working in conjunction with our partners we need to ensure that vulnerable households are the beneficiaries of this fund.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

There are no background papers to this report.

Jennifer Mullin
Director of Communities

Report Author:	Telephone:	Date:
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Approval of Urgent Decision

Following careful consideration and assessment of the contents of the report, I approve the recommendations contained in the report in accordance with the Council's constitution in consultation with the Committee Chair:

Gary Hall
Chief Executive

Dated: 11 July 2022

Councillor David Howarth
Mayor

Dated: 11 July 2022