

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Communities and Leisure (Introduced by Cabinet Member (Communities, Leisure and Wellbeing))	Council	Wednesday, 15 May 2024

Household Support Fund 5

Is this report confidential?	No
Is this decision key?	Not applicable
Savings or expenditure amounting to greater than £100,000	Significant impact on 2 or more council wards

Purpose of the Report

- To agree to the proposals and delivery plan for South Ribble's allocation of Household Support Fund 5.

Recommendations to Council (delete if not applicable)

- To accept the grant allocation of £329,741 from Lancashire County Council.
- To establish a revenue budget in line with the grant allocation for the purposes of administering Household Support Fund 5.
- Any changes to the delivery plan and budget to be delegated to the Director of Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for communities, Leisure and Wellbeing.

Reasons for recommendations

- Household Support Fund is targeted at those most in need. If the Council was to not accept the funding, it would limit the ability of the Council to provide direct financial assistance, advice and support.
- The Council has established in its Corporate Plan a project for supporting the Cost of Living. Household Support Fund and its distribution is a key component of that project and will support the Council in ensuring residents have access to advice and services when they need it.

Other options considered and rejected

5. The approach to how the fund is delivered is to be determined by the local district council, whilst adhering to the requirements of the grant agreement. The time limit for the fund and required delivery timescales requires that the Council moves at pace. For these reasons the delivery plan is determined on known local need from previous funding rounds as well as established routes for funding.
6. The council could ask partners to administer grants on our behalf. This has been done in the past. However, ensuring capacity and quick mobilisation, the aim is to retain inhouse processing and grant distribution.

Executive summary

5. South Ribble Borough Council has been allocated £329,741 in the fifth round of the Household Support Fund. The funding is made available through the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) and administered by Lancashire County Council (LCC). Lancashire County Council have been provided with £9,678,235, of which £4,500,000 is allocated to the district councils.
6. LCC will be providing through their portion of the fund, free school meal provision in holiday periods and support with fuel advice and household goods.
7. South Ribble's provision will be focused on providing direct grant and financial assistance to residents through a range of schemes, together with supporting local organisations and building resilience within local services that directly support people with the cost of living.

Corporate priorities

8. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

An exemplary council	Healthy and happy communities
Opportunities for everyone	Green and clean neighbourhood

Background to the report

9. The government in the spring budget, extended the delivery of Household Support Fund. Information has now been shared by Lancashire County Council with the district councils regarding the allocations and requirements for delivery.
10. The guidance continues to provide flexibility to identify which vulnerable households are in most need of support and apply at our discretion eligibility criteria. We must ensure that in doing so we have considered the needs of various households including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people.
11. The guidance has identified the following types of support:
 - Energy and water, as well as essentials linked to energy and water
 - Food
 - Wider essentials such as clothing, broadband, period and hygiene products
 - Advice services including debt, benefit and/or employment advice
 - Housing costs
 - Reasonable administrative costs

12. The operational period of the funding is between April 2024 and September 2024.

Identifying Areas of Need

13. Household Support Fund has been provided under four previous schemes. Each delivery period enables learning and review to ensure that targeted support and schemes delivered by the Council are effective.
14. The delivery plan for April – September 2024 is based on knowledge from officers and consideration of existing data/information. The fund provides flexibility for the Council to determine local need and appropriate schemes that can support households. The areas that they determine we should focus on are:
- families with children of all ages,
 - pensioners,
 - unpaid carers,
 - care leavers,
 - disabled people,
15. So that the Council is sure that support is targeted effectively, there will be a focus on where support is provided to ensure that it reaches those most in need.
16. An assessment of local need would suggest that consideration is given to the following areas and groups:
- Households living in areas of deprivation within the borough:
 - Seven Stars,
 - Leyland South West,
 - Bamber Bridge,
 - Middleforth,
 - St Ambrose.
 - Households that are 'property rich, cash poor' (fixed incomes) where more sustainable and long-term change can be provided through adaptation and energy efficiency.
 - Single Person households (the numbers of households on Council Tax Support and single person discount is 69%).
17. The proposed delivery plan will take in to account access to the different offers of support for all groups identified above. It will also provide consideration on any local grants provided to organisations and groups, on the extent to which they will make an impact in the identified areas of deprivation.

Delivery Plan

18. A framework has been developed to outline the provision of Household Support Fund 5. This framework builds on learning from previous delivery and is aimed at being able to discharge the grant in a timely way and quickly commit / spend the monies to ensure South Ribble receives its full allocation. The framework is attached at Appendix A.

Administrative Costs

19. It is important that the scheme is resourced. The administrative fee will be used to meet the costs of the Council in delivering the overall coordination of the Household Support Fund, as well as directly meeting costs to deliver the Household Support Fund Payment scheme.

Advice and Support

20. The delivery plan proposes that resource is provided so that households and individuals can access advice and support to address immediate challenges and put in place measures or changes that will improve their overall financial security.
21. The Council will provide this through its Social Prescribing Service. The funding will be used to provide the capacity with the team to manage referrals related to cost of living. Their role will be to provide initial advice and provide signposting to appropriate services and support.
22. As part of Household Support Fund, the Council has already been able to invest in the low-income family tracker. This enables the Council to target low-income households more effectively where it is likely that they will be able to increase their current income through additional support and benefits. In identifying these households, advice and information will be sent to them to provide the support to enable them to have any benefits reviewed and support their income maximisation.
23. Wider advice and access to services will be provided through a one-week cost of living roadshow. This will be targeted to areas of the borough based on delivery outcomes from the initial roadshow delivered in February/March 2024. The same model will be deployed with key partners attending the bus to provide direct advice and support in local communities.

Financial Support (Energy, Food, Household)

24. The proposals under this area will directly put financial resources in the hands of residents. A number of schemes will be provided that can support a wide number of households. The schemes proposed are:
 - Household Support Fund Payments: This is an application based scheme where residents can directly apply to the Council for help with short-term living costs such as food, gas electric, water, household bills and clothing.
 - Step Up Grants: This scheme is available through referral from professional bodies / agencies supporting individuals and vulnerable households. The funding provided can support with larger household items and costs, and in exceptional cases further housing costs where Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) has already been provided. The purpose of the scheme is to provide longer term sustainable change.
 - Affordable Warmth (Warm Homes): The funding will be used to extend the operation of the existing warm home scheme until September. The scheme provides replacement of boilers, windows and insulation with the view to improving energy efficiency, reducing carbon footprint and energy bills.
 - Social Prescribing Discretionary Support Fund: This scheme will support individuals engaged with the social prescribing service and provide small immediate relief to assist with access to training / employment courses and wellbeing activities. For example, it may provide the purchase of a phone, or data

to enable them to not be digitally excluded or access to short courses and travel to help develop skills.

- School Uniform Pop-Up Shop: This provides practical support to families who need to access school uniforms and other associated items such as school bags. It will be delivered as a pop-up shop in locations within the borough, particularly those identified with higher levels of deprivation.

Housing Costs

25. In the previous round of Household Support Fund, additional funding was needed to increase the levels of budget available for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). These payments help people with their rent when their housing benefit or Universal Credit housing costs payment does not meet the full value of their rent. Based on last year the same level of funding is to be provided to enable more households to access DHP.

Infrastructure and Community

26. There are acute pressures on many community-based delivery partners and local services due to the cost of living. Significant support in Household Support Fund has been provided through to Food Banks which have seen a large increase in the numbers of households seeking support.
27. Within infrastructure and community, the aim of the financial support to be provided to partners is to support sustainability, meet capacity and where needed increase provision to meet demand. The two schemes that have been proposed are:
- Local Resilience Fund: This is to provide larger/staffed not for profit organisations with additional funding for existing services which support people with the cost of living. We would invite partners to submit expressions of interest which will be assessed and determined.
 - Community Provision Grants: Community Hubs are well placed to identify local need and the small community organisations that provide support and warm spaces for residents. The hubs will be provided with a budget of £15,000 which will be distributed between hubs to identify local not for profit groups who need support to provide information/advice and practical support in the shape of access to services such as luncheon clubs, cafes, cooking facilities and spaces with free wi-fi.
28. Due to the time scales and restrictions on funding, both processes will need to have identified the groups for funding by 30th May so that there is assurance monies can be committed by the 30th June.

Proposed Budget Allocations

29. Within the terms provided by County Council, the district allocations have the following percentage allowances:
- 10% allocated to support form filling / advice services,
 - maximum of 8% to support administration costs.
30. The following budget profile has been determined to support delivery of Household Support Fund 5:

	Budget	
Allocation	£	329,741
Administration	£	26,379
Advice Services	£	32,974
Un Ringfenced	£	270,388

Proposed Budget Allocations for Household Support Fund 5

Item	Budget	
Programme Coordination (Administration)	£	10,182
Household Support Payment Administration	£	16,197
Social Prescribing (Advice and Support)	£	26,974
South Ribble Information Bus (Advice and Support)	£	6,000
Extension to Affordable Warmth	£	35,000
Discretionary Housing Payment	£	16,000
Step Up Grants	£	35,000
School Uniform Shop	£	4,388
Social Prescribing Discretionary Support Fund	£	10,000
Partners Resilience Fund	£	55,000
Household Support Fund Payment	£	100,000
Community Hubs Community Fund	£	15,000

Resourcing and Capacity

31. The scheme will be coordinated and managed within the Community Development Team through existing resources. The service will act as the key point of contact and liaison with LCC, providing required monitoring information and attendance at regular delivery meetings.

Programme Governance

32. The Household Support Fund 5 Framework is the basis for the governance of the scheme, setting out the eligibility criteria as well as processes for the different grant schemes.
33. To maintain effective delivery and management of the programme, an internal working group is established, consisting of representatives from Benefits, Private Sector Housing, Community Development, Customer, Finance, Audit and Communications. These meetings will take place every two weeks to ensure momentum and maintain clear oversight of deliverables and the budget position.
34. Council governance processes will apply for procurements and budget management.

Climate change and air quality

35. The work noted in this report impacts on the following areas of climate change and sustainability targets of the Councils Green Agenda.:
 - a. net carbon zero by 2030,
 - b. limiting non sustainable forms of transport,

Equality and diversity

36. The Equality Impact Assessment for this programme of activity identifies a general positive impact due to the nature of the support and services provided.
37. An area that needs to be considered is the support for different ethnic groups, particularly around the supply of food, which can vary between cultures as well as accessible information in different languages. Working with the Community Integration Officer, the programme will look to identify where there is a need for materials to be printed in different languages as well as engaging through different cultural leaders to promote access to the funds.
38. A focus on single people will also look to address the socio-economic gap created where single people may be left more vulnerable to rising costs due to limited income in the household. This is similar for those where there need may be greater due to disability and higher costs for energy use and adaptations.
39. An area of a positive benefit is older age groups, where they are single occupants and or living in a property that is not energy efficient. The scheme will provide some resource to extend affordable warmth to provide updates and new technology that can help reduce energy bills over the long-term.
40. Families will face pressures and the support for school uniform shop, together with other packages of support aim to help those families with young children.

Risk

41. The council will receive 80% of the grant by 31st May and a further 20% will be advanced by 30th June. However, this is dependent on the council having spent or committed at least 50% of the first instalment by 30th June. The risk to the council is underspend on the funding. If it is likely that the Council will be underspent there is risk of funding being reduced and total spend plans not being realised. Therefore, the plan must be robust and effectively managed to ensure early indications on issues are addressed where they arise. To address this risk an internal project working group will meet every three weeks to review progress and update on project elements.
42. Fraud is a key risk when undertaking any grant or payments to residents based on assessment. When providing direct payments to residents, a clear structured process and checks against council tax records will reduce the risks of fraud. The Council also deploys a voucher based system so that funds provided can be targeted towards specific purchase types.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

43. The Household Support Fund Phase 5 (HSF5) allocation to South Ribble Council of £329,741 is a continuation of previous funding which will be used to administer the grant based on the specific criteria set out in the government guidance and detailed above. This report allows for the establishment of the relevant budget in line with the allocation.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

44. The council has a general power under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything that an individual may generally do, provided it is not prohibited by other legislation and the power is exercised in accordance with the limitations specified in the Act. Therefore, the council is able to receive and accept the grant and utilise it as per the contents of the report and in line with the terms and conditions set out in the government guidelines and the grant agreement. Legal Services will assist the delivery of the scheme, by formalising agreements as and when required.

Background documents

There are no background papers to this report.

Appendices

Appendix A: Household Support Fund 5 Framework

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