

Council

Tuesday, 16th May 2023, 6.30 pm

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Chorley and YouTube

Agenda

Apologies

1 **Declarations of Any Interests**

Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any pecuniary interest in respect of matters contained in this agenda.

If you have a pecuniary interest you must withdraw from the meeting. Normally you should leave the room before the business starts to be discussed. You do, however, have the same right to speak as a member of the public and may remain in the room to enable you to exercise that right and then leave immediately. In either case you must not seek to improperly influence a decision on the matter.

2 **Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 18 April 2023 of Council**

(Pages 5 - 8)

3 **Mayoral Announcements**

4 **Public Questions**

Members of the public who have requested the opportunity to ask question(s) on any item(s) on the agenda will have three minutes to put their question(s) to the relevant Councillor. Members of the public will be allowed to ask one short supplementary question.

[To view the procedure for public questions/ speaking click here and scroll to page 119](#)

5 **Returning Officer's Report**

(To Follow)

To receive the report of the Returning Officer.

6 **Election of the Mayor for the council year 2023/24**

To formally elect the Mayor of the Borough for 2023/24.

7 **Election of the Deputy Mayor for the council year 2023/24**

To formally elect the Deputy Mayor of the Borough for 2023/24.

There will be a short adjournment whilst the mayoral party exchange robes and chains of office

8 Tributes to the retiring Mayor

The Retiring Mayor will receive tributes following her year in office.

9 Executive Cabinet appointments for 2023/24

(To Follow)

To receive a report of the Executive Leader.

10 Appointments to committees, panels and working groups for 2023/24

(To Follow)

To approve the appointment of Members of the Council to Committees, Working Groups, etc and to note shadow appointments for 2023/24.

11 Appointments to outside bodies for 2023/24

(To Follow)

To approve the appointment of Members of the Council to Committees, Working Groups, etc and to note shadow appointments for 2023/24.

12 Council Meetings in 2023/24

To note the programme of Council Meetings for 2023/24:

- 18 Jul 2023
- 19 Sep 2023
- 21 Nov 2023
- 30 Jan 2024
- 27 Feb 2024
- 16 Apr 2024
- 14 May 2024

13 Household Support Fund Phase 4 Delivery

(Pages 9 - 16)

To receive and consider the report of the Director of Communities.

14 Asylum Seeker Grant Funding

(Pages 17 - 24)

To receive and consider the report of the Director of Communities.

15 Changes to director structure

(To Follow)

To receive and consider the report of the Chief Executive.

16 Any urgent business previously agreed with the Mayor

Chris Sinnott
Chief Executive

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Minutes of Council

Meeting date Tuesday, 18 April 2023

Committee Members present: Councillor Julia Berry (Mayor), Councillor Tommy Gray (Deputy Mayor) and Councillors Sarah Ainsworth, Aaron Beaver, Martin Boardman, Alistair Bradley, Sam Chapman, Mark Clifford, Alan Cullens, Magda Cullens, Gordon France, Margaret France, Danny Gee, Harold Heaton, Alex Hilton, Terry Howarth, Keith Iddon, Hasina Khan, Samir Khan, Zara Khan, Roy Lees, Adrian Lowe, Matthew Lynch, Michelle Le Marinel, June Molyneaux, Alistair Morwood, Dedrah Moss, Beverley Murray, James Nevett, Alan Platt, Debra Platt, Aidy Riggott, Jean Sherwood, Arjun Singh, Kim Snape, Ryan Towers, John Walker, Jenny Whiffen, Neville Whitham, Alan Whittaker and Peter Wilson

Officers: Chris Sinnott (Chief Executive), Chris Moister (Director of Governance/Monitoring Officer), Alison Wilding (Head of Customer Services), Darren Cranshaw (Head of Democratic Services), Clare Gornall (Democratic and Member Services Officer) and Matthew Pawlyszyn (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

A video recording of the public session of this meeting is available to view on [YouTube here](#)

89 Declarations of Any Interests

No declarations of interests were made.

90 Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor announced that Councillors Walker, Boardman and Nevett were retiring from the Council in May and so this would be their last meeting. She offered her thanks for their valued contributions and service to the Council.

Tributes to the three retiring members were made by Councillors Cullens and Bradley.

91 Public Questions

A question was received by a member of the public however at the request of the questioner it had now been withdrawn.

There were therefore no public questions for consideration.

92 Executive Cabinet

Members considered a general report of the meetings of Executive Cabinet held on 23 February and 30 March.

The Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development and Public Service Reform, Councillor Alistair Bradley proposed the report and The Executive Member for Resources, Councillor Peter Wilson seconded, and it was;

Resolved (Unanimously) that the report be noted.

93 Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Task and Finish Groups

Members considered a general report of the meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 January and 16 March, the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel held on 9 March and an update on the Task Group – Review of Empty Properties.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor John Walker proposed the report and the Vice Chair, Councillor Roy Lees seconded, and it was;

Resolved (Unanimously) that the report be noted.

94 Governance Committee

Members considered a general report of the Governance Committee meeting held on 15 March.

The Chair of the Governance Committee, Councillor Debra Platt proposed the report and the Vice Chair of Governance Committee, Councillor Mark Clifford seconded, and it was;

Resolved (Unanimously) that the report be noted.

95 Policy Review: Council Tax Discretionary Reductions Policy

The Executive Member for Customer, Streetscene and Environment, Councillor Adrian Lowe, presented the report of the Director of Customer and Digital which proposed a revised and updated Council Tax Discretionary Reductions Policy.

It was moved by the Executive Member for Customer, Streetscene and Environment, Councillor Lowe, seconded by the Executive Leader, Councillor Alistair Bradley, and it was **Resolved (unanimously)**:

1. Council approves the revised Council Tax Discretionary Reductions Policy.
2. In view of the economic climate and the likely increase in applications, the financial position in respect of discretionary reductions is reviewed after 6 months.

96 Questions Asked under Council Procedure Rule 8 (if any)

No questions had been received.

97 To consider the Notices of Motion (if any) given in accordance with Council procedure Rule 10

A notice of motion was received, however it was not within the notice period specified in the Constitution.

The Mayor agreed that be considered as urgent under the next item.

98 Any urgent business previously agreed with the Mayor

1) Minutes – 28 February 2023

The Mayor agreed that the minutes of the last meeting of Council, held on 28 February 2023, be considered as an urgent item on the agenda.

The agenda item had been omitted in error and it was important, particularly as the municipal year is coming to end, that the business be considered at this meeting rather than delaying until the new municipal year.

It was moved by the Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development and Public Service Reform, Councillor Alistair Bradley, seconded by the Executive Member for Resources, Councillor Peter Wilson seconded, and it was;

Resolved (unanimously) That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2023 be approved.

Notice of Motion – King Charles III – Coronation

The Mayor agreed that due to the exceptional circumstances of the forthcoming Coronation of King Charles III, that a notice of motion proposed by Councillor Alan Cullens be put to Council for consideration as an urgent item.

It was moved by Councillor Alan Cullens, seconded by Councillor Debra Platt, put to the vote and it was **Resolved (by majority with two abstentions 39:0:2)**:

“On the 6th May the people of Chorley will come together to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

The nation continues to celebrate our monarchy which has given dedicated service to the people of Britain for generations and this Council recognises that and therefore proposes the following:

This Council resolves to write to their Majesties offering them our congratulations on their Coronation and to give them our full support during their reign.”

Chair

Date



Report of	Meeting	Date
Director (Communities) Introduced by (Executive Member (Early Intervention))	Council	Tuesday, 16 May 2023

Household Support Fund Phase 4 Delivery

Is this report confidential?	No
Is this decision key?	Not applicable

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide details on the district element of the government's Household Support Fund Phase 4 (HSF4), which is allocated to Chorley Council by Lancashire County Council.
2. To seek approval to receive £640,000 which has been allocated to Chorley to deliver the fund using specific criteria set out in the government guidance.
3. To provide an overview of the proposed approach.

Recommendations

4. To receive the grant amount of £640,000 as per the details within this report and create an expenditure budget to administer the grant.
5. To proceed to develop a delivery plan which reflects specific criteria set out in the government guidance published to allocate and administer the grant.

Reasons for recommendations

6. To ensure the funding is allocated to residents who are facing financial pressures until 31st March 2024.

Other options considered and rejected

7. To not receive the grant funding. This would mean that those residents that need the support would not receive it.

Executive summary

- 8. In the Autumn Statement the Chancellor announced, as part of a number of measures to provide help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living, that the Household Support Fund (HSF) would be extended from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 with a further £842m of funding.
- 9. Lancashire has been awarded £19,356,470 of which Chorley Council have been allocated £640,000. The span for the fund is a full calendar year, where previously funds released have had a scope for spending over 6 months.
- 10. Guidance for Phase 4 has been sent to Local Authorities with details of type of support and expectations on what local delivery should look to achieve.
- 11. Local provision will focus on working in partnership with community organisations and develop a delivery plan that responds to current issues but also encourages those who are in difficulty to access wider and more impactful support.

Corporate priorities

- 12. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

Housing where residents can live well	A green and sustainable borough
An enterprising economy with vibrant local centres in urban and rural areas	Healthy, safe and engaged communities

Background to the report

- 13. In the Autumn Statement the Chancellor announced, as part of a number of measures to provide help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living, that the Household Support Fund (HSF) would be extended from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 with a further £842m of funding.
- 14. As has been done for previous schemes, the fund will be made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need due to rising cost of living until March 2024.
- 15. Upper tier authorities are required to work with districts and Third Parties Organisations (TPO), including the VCSE sector to ensure the funds reach those in most need.
- 16. Lancashire has been awarded £19,356,470 of which Chorley Council have been allocated £640,000. The span for the fund is a full calendar year, where previously funds released have had a scope for spending over 6 months.
- 17. Lancashire County Council have retained funding to allocate Free School Meal vouchers during Easter, Summer, October, Christmas, and February holiday periods and provide support to other relevant services via this fund such as Senet Under one Roof Scheme.

18. New guidance for Phase 4 has been sent to Local Authorities and in terms of type of support, the expectation is that the HSF extension should be used in a similar way as the previous HSF scheme.
19. The main areas that the guidance would like delivery to focus include,
 - Focus on groups who have not benefitted from any recent cost of living support payments
 - There is no ringfence of any proportion of the funding for any cohort of people/households (within HSF 2 there was targets on families and pensioners)
 - Must operate an element of the scheme on an application process
 - Emphasis on supporting low-income households with cost of energy
 - Provide support with food and wider essentials
 - Support with housing costs in exceptional cases of genuine emergency and where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need
 - The scheme is clearly advertised and is available throughout the majority of the fund period, either continuously or in regular intervals over the course of the scheme
 - There is no requirement to apply means testing as a way of determining eligibility
 - A resident does not need to be on benefits or unemployed to receive this funding if they can demonstrate need.
 - A resident can access the fund on more than one occasion if necessary
 - This fund is open to people with no recourse to public funds
20. One of the significant changes is that funding can be used for supplementary advice services, including debt and benefit advice. This is now considered eligible spend within the HSF scheme. As the primary focus of this grant is on practical support, expenditure on such services is expected to be limited and linked to the provision of practical support. A recommended maximum is 10% of overall allocation.
21. The fund should look to ensure that unpaid carers and care leavers are aware of support and can easily access the fund this time around.
22. Consideration to be given on how households with non-school aged children (under 4) can be supported

Initial Scoping

23. The Councils Communities team have been working in partnership with community partners to develop a delivery plan that responds to current issues but also encourages those who are in difficulty to access wider and more impactful support.
24. This approach is achieved by directing applicants through community organisations, social prescribing and other health pathways to provide a more holistic approach to resolving issues and encourage the development of skills and social contacts that will increase resilience and wellbeing as well as providing financial support.
25. The Communities team has worked through the Chorley Together network to gain insight and collaboration in how to approach the distribution of the funding.
26. Feedback from delivery partners and those who access the fund confirmed that the delivery partner approach provides greater opportunities for residents in difficulties to

receive wider support, alongside the financial support both in the immediate and long term.

Proposed approach

27. This report sets out recommendations for how the funding could be allocated with the objectives of directing the funding towards those in most need and meeting the guidance provided.
28. The fund will help with short-term living costs such as food, energy and essential items. The scheme will also signpost to other sources of advice and assistance.
29. Types of requests which will not be covered by the Household Support Fund are:
 - any requests for items that are not essential
 - applications from those with sufficient income or savings
 - requests for support where this is the responsibility of the landlord
 - priority will be given to those who have not been eligible for income related benefits and who have not had any other government cost of living support
30. It is recommended to increase the number of partners delivering the funding to widen the reach and create additional processing and support capacity. As per the initial phase, delivery partners will be able to make direct contact with residents known to their service and known to be in difficulty as well as receiving referrals from other delivery partners, those involved in other support networks such as PIVOT and Social Prescribing and will be able to receive direct referrals from members of the public not known to other services.
31. Data gathered from the previous phases will be used to highlight those who were assessed and in need as well as reaching new applicants who need support.
32. Details of the funding and how to access it will be widely shared with partners and community stakeholders and made available on the Councils website. Officers will work through the school's networks to raise awareness of this funding with families who may not be receiving benefit or support already but are suffering financially.
33. All referrals will go via the most suitable delivery partner and transfer of referral to a more appropriate delivery partner will be conducted if needed utilising an existing platform (Refernet) and associated data sharing agreement of which all delivery partners will have access.
34. The summary of the methods to allocate and distribute the funding is as below.

Energy

35. Citizens Advice will deliver energy support and provide residents with vouchers towards cover cost of energy bills. An initial rate of £200 to £300 will be set as a guide which residents can apply. In line with the funding criteria, it will prioritise those who have not received other cost of living payments.
36. A staggered approach to distribution of this element of funding will be implemented to ensure we can sufficiently support households over the challenging winter months.

37. A direct payment to identified cohort of households who have non-school aged children and who are in receipt of Council Tax Support. This will provide support towards energy costs.
38. A direct payment to identified cohort of households with pensioners who are in receipt of Council Tax Support or Housing Benefit and guaranteed pension credit. This will provide support towards energy costs.

Food

39. Funding will be provided to our emergency food network partners to sustain delivery of Chorley food clubs/banks to address food poverty within communities and ensure they have sufficient food supplies to support residents for the next 12 months.
40. Communities team will hold a supply of supermarket vouchers supplied through LCC Edenred system which will enable quick support to residents who contact the council in an emergency and provide support within the mobilisation period. These vouchers have been selected as they do not allow the purchase of alcohol, tobacco, or lottery products.
41. Warm welcoming spaces initiative to be sustained where there is a provision of hot food which vulnerable residents can access along with wider advice on support.

Housing

42. Work closely with our Affordable Warmth Scheme to ensure we can continue to support vulnerable residents with interventions which has a sustainable impact on energy costs, for example, boiler repairs/replacements, fitting draft excluders, glazing improvements.
43. To support those residents that present via the councils discretionary housing payment scheme and ensure that the required needs can be met where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need.

Essentials linked to energy

44. Selected partner agencies will provide white goods such as fridges to support households alongside provision of smaller electrical essentials such as kettles, toasters.

Other essential items

45. Partners will also be able to utilise the fund to support residents to other living essentials such as clothing, footwear, school uniform, bedding, curtains, carpets.

Advice

46. All partners are made aware of essential support available across the borough and work closely together to provide signposting to residents which ensures a wider range of support can be given.

Targeted Approach

47. Through our council benefit systems, we can identify those households with non-school aged children who are on low income. Using this data, we can directly target this cohort and make direct payments where required to support with energy costs.

This supports these families as school aged children households have access to free school meals and also Holiday and Food programme.

48. Through our council benefit systems, we identified a cohort of pensioners in need of support who was receiving guaranteed credit. Utilising this data, it is recommended again to make direct payments. Pensioners have access to all forms of partner delivery, but there is lower take up by pensioners that seek this support. Using the direct payment, it ensures we provide a proportion of funding that targets this cohort.
49. A grant award to Central Lancashire Homestart will be allocated to provide targeted support to families. This will be used to support with food, essential items, clothing, and wider essentials which are identified to help the family.
50. There is a small contingency fund remaining which will be held until mid-way through deliver and then allocated to areas with greatest demand.
51. Consideration will be given how we best ensure that those with disabilities are aware of the fund and help that can be accessed. Utilising our knowledge and existing services such as HIA team and Handyperson scheme we will reach a proportion of disabled people to make aware of the fund and support to access.
52. Work to identify how we should consider providing support to people with caring responsibilities. The fund should look to ensure that unpaid carers and care leavers are aware of support and can easily access.

Grant agreements

53. Of the list of delivery partners grant agreements are already in place for most partners, agreement will be amended to include this additional funding and agreements will be created for those who do not currently have one in place.

Funding control

54. Funding is proposed to be allocated to delivery partners in the form of direct payments and voucher codes which are redeemable by the recipients at major local supermarkets.
55. Delivery partners will record funding issued in line with the management information template provided by DWP. Chorley Council will collate this information and submit this to LCC at prescribed intervals during delivery and final submission at the end of the scheme.
56. Whilst the fund is available to be accessed on more than one occasion, applicants will be asked to declare if they are accessing the scheme through a different delivery partner and sense checks with other delivery partners will be conducted where a delivery partner feels it is appropriate.
57. A maximum value payment of £400 per applicant has been set as an initial guide. Payments above this limit will be assessed via our delivery partner steering group before being approved by Chorley Council.
58. Delivery partners will receive a fee for delivery/administration costs which is available through this fund. The fee received has been agreed in discussion with delivery partners but based on a suggested target of 10% of the overall fund.

Eligibility and evidence

59. As the intention of the fund is intended to reach a wider cohort of vulnerability and is not exclusive to those on benefits, the evidence of need will be controlled by the delivery partner and in line with the guidance, will be appropriate based on a case by case scenario. The risk of applying too many controls in determining eligibility and evidence could result in those in most need not having the ability to access the support.
60. Delivery partners will be required to determine that the resident is a Chorley resident.
61. Guidance material used to deliver the scheme will be provided to delivery partners to help guide them through assessment and checking processes.

Data control

62. Delivery partners will use their own in-house policies and procedures to control data and will be required to maintain the requirements as set out in grant agreement documentation regarding applicable policies.

Information and support in delivering the scheme

63. Communities Team will oversee coordination of funding, support delivery partners and liaise with LCC. They will be the point of contact for complex cases, internal communication, and external enquiries.
64. Guidance documentation outlining the delivery approach and any specific details will be provided to delivery partners.
65. Delivery partners will have access to regular steering group TEAMS sessions to review demands and discuss feedback from casework. Any additional pathways or processes needed will be devised jointly with the Council and the delivery partner group.

Monitoring

66. Delivery partners will be expected to record data in accordance with the requirement of the funding and provide this to the Council to collate and report to the DWP via LCC.
67. Delivery partners will also record wider data to help gather insight on the root causes of the resident's difficulties.

Linking to other workstreams

68. This delivery proposal will link the support provided by the delivery partners to several other existing and emerging workstreams and existing early intervention and support pathways within the Council and other external partners.
69. This will ensure support options are maximised in an efficient way and demonstrates the ambition to co-deliver community impact projects directly with community partners.

Climate change and air quality

70. The work noted in this report has an overall positive impact on the Councils Carbon emissions and the wider Climate Emergency and sustainability targets of the Council.

Equality and diversity

- 71. The programme will be open to all Chorley residents who are eligible using the criteria provided by central government with a targeted approach to ensure all household make up can access support such as families, adult only, pensioners
- 72. An Impact Assessment will be completed prior to starting delivery

Risk

- 73. Risk associated with this funding is the ability to ensure the funding is allocated prior to the 31st March 2024 to ensure all the funding is used to support those in need.
- 74. However, if there is significant demand there is the risk that not all applicants will be supported. Therefore, it will be communicated that the scheme will operate on a first come, first served basis until no more fund remain. This would be only be for energy support payments, most food related support will still be able to be accessed due to working with sustainable organisations.
- 75. Risk that external partners may have capacity issues and struggle to cope with demand/levels of outputs. Risk will be minimised as all partners for delivery have been scoped accordingly through previous working relationships and risks identified through appropriate policies and procedures. Regular contact will be maintained to manage issues and performance

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

- 76. There are no direct financial implications of this report. The Household Support Fund Phase 4 (HSF4) allocation to Chorley Council of £640,000 will be used to administer the grant based on the specific criteria set out in the government guidance. The funding must be spent by 31st March 2024 or returned to Lancashire County Council and ultimately the government.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

- 77. Any amendment to existing grant agreements with partner organisations will need to be agreed by both parties in writing. The funds should be distributed in accordance with the best value duty.
- 78. Use of personal data must accord with the Data Protection Act 2018. Regard should be had to privacy notices and the stated purposes of processing relevant to the personal data used.

Background documents

There are no background papers to this report

Report Author:	Email:	Telephone:	Date:
Bernie Heggarty (Neighbourhood Priorities Officer)	bernie.heggarty@chorley.gov.uk	5818	25/04/2023



Report of	Meeting	Date
Director (Communities) Introduced by (Executive Member (Early Intervention))	Council	Tuesday, 16 May 2023

Asylum Seeker Grant Funding

Is this report confidential?	No
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Is this decision key?	Not applicable
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Purpose of the Report

1. The information in this report provides a breakdown of the Home Office funding committed to Chorley Council to assist with the costs of supporting asylum seekers under Full Asylum Dispersal.
2. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to members and ask that consideration be made to the recommendations listed below.

Recommendations

3. To receive the funding allocation of £109,750 and create a budget to allocate the funding.
4. To receive subsequent grant funding allocations and create an equivalent level of budget to allocate the funding.

Reasons for recommendations

5. The Home Office's policies and procedures associated with asylum seeker dispersal are constantly changing. As a consequence, so are the support needs of asylum seekers and the pressures on local services. The above recommendations will give the Communities team the opportunity to further scope out proposals for expenditure which align to the needs of the asylum-seeking community and allow for flexibility as these needs evolve over time.

Other options considered and rejected

6. To return the funding to the Home Office and not use it to support asylum seekers dispersed in Chorley or alleviate pressures on local services.

Corporate priorities

5. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

Housing where residents can live well	A green and sustainable borough
An enterprising economy with vibrant local centres in urban and rural areas	Healthy, safe and engaged communities

Background to the report

- 6. In March 2022, the government announced its decision to move to a full asylum dispersal model supported by grant funding. As part of this move, funding was allocated to local authorities for each new dispersal accommodation bed space occupied until 31 March 2023.
- 7. This report provides an overview of the grant funding allocation for Chorley, details the outcomes of scoping activity undertaken to date and provides recommendations for the approval of funding allocations.

Introduction

- 8. Asylum seekers are some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in society. Securing asylum status is difficult and complex and should this status be granted, asylum seekers are not permitted to work, leaving them dependent on government payments of approximately £5 per day. As a result, asylum seekers’ lives are stressful and afflicted by hardship.
- 9. Dispersal is the process by which the Home Office moves asylum seekers to specified local authority areas across the UK. They are first moved to initial accommodation while their application for asylum support is processed. Once the application has been processed and approved they are moved on to dispersal accommodation.

Funding Purpose, Allocation and Timeline for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023

- 10. For the period between 01 April 2021 and 31 March 2023, the Home Office has committed to make funding available to local authorities to assist with the costs of supporting asylum seekers under Full Asylum Dispersal.
- 11. The funding has been made available to address concerns raised by local authorities in relation to pressure on local services associated with support asylum seekers.
- 12. According to the Home Offices funding instruction, the funding must be used to facilitate Local Authorities to support requests for properties made under Full Asylum Dispersal. The funding is to address concerns raised by Local Authorities in relation to pressure on local services associated with supporting asylum seekers.
- 13. To date, Chorley Council has received three payments totalling £109,750.

14. The 2021/2022 grant payment was calculated using a different formula to the 2022/2023 grant payment(s), which is why the funding allocation is significantly lower for 2021/2022

Table 1: Funding Allocation Timeline

Date Received	Allocation	Payment Reference
10/08/2022	£22,250	Grant Payment 1 (Expenditure period 01 April 2021 – 31 March 2022)
25/10/2022	£45,500	Grant Payment 2: April 2022 – June 2022
24/11/2022	£42,000	Grant Payment 2B: July 2022 – September 2022
Total	£109,750	

15. Chorley Council will receive a further payment for quarter 4 eligibility by 30 June 2023. No quarter 3 payment was made, and this is likely to be because there was no increase in the number of bed spaces.

Funding Allocation for 2023/2024

16. On 29 March 2023, the Immigration Minister confirmed that the government is continuing work to reduce the unsustainable pressure on the UK’s asylum system and the cost to the taxpayer caused by illegal crossings.
17. Further measures were also announced to improve the asylum accommodation system which includes:
- For existing dispersed accommodation and beds in hotels, the government will provide local authorities with a one off £750 payment for each asylum seeker who is in Home Office accommodation on the 1st April 2023 – up from £250 last year. The payment will be made during quarter 1 of 2023/24.
 - A new pilot will be introduced to offer local authorities an additional one-off payment of up to £3,000 for new dispersal beds which are brought on and occupied quickly.
18. As of yet, it is unclear how much this funding allocation will equate to for Chorley Council.

Funding Allocation Delays

19. Table 1 indicates that the grant payments were received from August 2022 and currently, the funding remains unallocated. The main reasons for this are as follows:
- a. Informal consultation with community stakeholders and asylum seekers has been ongoing in order to ascertain need and any gaps in provision.
 - b. Clarification on the terms and conditions of the funding needed to be sought
 - c. Consultation needed to be undertaken with internal teams to ascertain support offered to asylum seekers and agree a funding allocation
 - d. Within the Communities team, scoping out an effective approach to allocating the funding has been postponed to allow for the roll out of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, the standing up of a temporary asylum seeker hotel in

- December 2022, the rolling out of the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy, and existing commitments to the UK Resettlement Scheme
- e. Management of asylum provision, and the undertaking of such scoping work, is a new requirement which previously was not funded and therefore not allocated within the team.

Feedback from the Home Office

20. The Regional Strategic Migration Partnership (RSMP) based at Manchester City Council, is the local authority link to the Home Office. The Communities team has consulted with the RSMP and has been able to ascertain the following regarding the grant funding:
 - A local authority can spend their funding allocation as they wish, to support asylum seekers where there is need. The Home Office does not ask local authorities to specify what they intend to spend the money on
 - The funding can be utilised over subsequent financial years
 - The funding is not ring-fenced, so if it remains unallocated before 30 June 2023 it is unlikely that the Home Office will ask for it to be returned

Impacts of Asylum Dispersal on Internal Teams

21. The Communities team collaborate frequently with community stakeholders to ensure that asylum seekers can access the relevant support services. For example, Refugee Resettlement staff consistently attend a community-based drop-in service offering advice and guidance to asylum seekers and coordinate a multi-agency forum so that this and other community-based provision remains coordinated across Chorley. This support has been provided in addition to the teams' commitments to the UK Resettlement Scheme, the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy.
22. The Public Protection team regularly receive requests to undertake postcode checks on areas where asylum seeker dispersal may take place. This is undertaken to ensure that asylum seekers are not accommodated in areas where anti-social behaviour or hate crime is an issue as this could further exacerbate community tensions.
23. The Housing Solutions team regularly support Refugees to find temporary or emergency accommodation once they receive their 'Right to Remain' status. Once this status has been granted, Refugees are served a 28 day notice by the accommodation provider to vacate their Home Office accommodation, which is often not at the start of the process and this leaves little time to secure alternative living arrangements. The resource from the Housing team is intensive due to the complexity of the individuals and the additional support required to ensure they are fully supported.

Support Available from Community Stakeholders in Chorley

24. In Chorley, there are four main organisations that offer support to asylum seekers; Saheliyaan Asian Women's Forum, the Chorley United Reformed Church (URC), the British Red Cross and Citizens Advice.
25. The Saheliyaan Asian Womens Forum has been well-established for many years. The support they offer includes access to emergency accommodation, access to

emergency food, immigration advice, English language acquisition support, health and wellbeing support and general signposting to other services. This organisation has not received any Chorley Council funding for the support they offer to asylum seekers.

26. Between October 2021 and October 2022, the URC received £10,000 from Lancashire County Council (LCC) to deliver a drop-in support service. However, during a re-commissioning exercise, the British Red Cross was awarded the funding for Chorley. Despite this, the URC has continued to offer support to asylum-seeking populations in Chorley without any funding being in place. Examples of support include; community integration, access to emergency food and essential supplies, health and wellbeing support and signposting to other services. The URC is working collaboratively with the British Red Cross and has supported them to run their drop-in service from their premises.
27. The British Red Cross is relatively new to Chorley and as described above, has been recently commissioned by LCC. After significant delays, their drop-in support service commenced in February 2023. A unique feature of this drop-in service is that specialist immigration advice and guidance should be available to asylum seekers, however, early feedback suggests that the service is not yet organised effectively, communication is poor and asylum seekers are being asked to travel to drop-in sessions outside of Chorley.
28. Citizens Advice has also been offering immigration advice to asylum seekers for many years. However, their advisors are only trained to offer low-level immigration signposting support and access to interpreters can be a challenge. Citizens Advice are recipients of Chorley Council's large commissioning funding.

Community Consultation

29. Since the first Home Office funding instruction was received in May 2022, Refugee Resettlement staff within the Communities team have been informally consulting with community stakeholders and asylum seekers to identify gaps in provision for asylum seekers specifically. The outcome of this informal consultation suggests that the main priorities of the community are:
 - Access to health and wellbeing opportunities, such as gym memberships, exercise classes and alternative therapies
 - Digital inclusion through access to devices and connectivity
 - Health advocacy support
 - Affordable transportation
 - Access to community-based support and spaces to socialise
 - Access to immigration advice and guidance within the Chorley area

Proposed Spend

30. The Communities team propose to undertake further scoping activity and develop a spending proposal for the grant funding which:
 - a. Attempts to mitigate the impact of asylum dispersal on internal teams
 - b. Aligns to the priorities of asylum seekers as identified during initial community consultation activity.
32. The Communities team recommend that these spending proposals be delegated for approval to the Executive Member for Housing

Climate change and air quality

31. The work noted in this report has no overall impact on the Councils Carbon emissions and the wider Climate Emergency and sustainability targets of the Council.

Equality and diversity

32. Any proposals for expenditure will support the Councils objectives around promoting equality and diversity. Asylum seekers are some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in society. The funding made available to local authorities to assist with the costs of supporting asylum seekers will ensure inclusivity by allowing asylum seekers to participate in activities which encourage the development of personal resilience.
33. An impact assessment will be completed once proposals for expenditure have been fully scoped.

Risk

34. All project proposals will be scoped accordingly, and risks identified through appropriate policies and procedures.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

35. The report seeks approval to receive government grant funding of £109,750 for the period April 2021 to September 2022, with further grant expected for the period through to March 2023, and to support expenditure incurred by the council in line with the conditions of the grant. As expenditure will be fully covered by the grant received, there is no impact on the overall financial position of the council.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

36. Any grants to delivery partner organisations may be recorded in legally binding grant agreements with provisions commensurate with the size of the grant.

Background documents

37. There are no background documents.

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