

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Communities (Introduced by the Executive Member (Resources))	Executive Member Decision	28 January 2022

## Household Support Grant

### Purpose of Report

- To agree how the district element of the governments Household Support Fund (HSF), allocated to Chorley Council by Lancashire County Council, should be allocated to enable it to be issued to those recipients most in need by March 2022.

### Recommendation(s)

- To allocate the grant amount of £240,000 as per the details within this report.
- To use the specific criteria set out in the government guidance published to allocate and administer the grant.
- To allow any adjustments to the proposed funding allocation to be agreed subsequently via delegated responsibility to the Executive Member of Resources.

### Executive Summary of Report

- £421 million has been made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England via the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP).
- The objective of the Household Support Fund is to provide support to vulnerable households in most need of support this winter as the economy recovers.
- 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.
- Chorley Council have been allocated £240,000 by Lancashire County Council who have retained funding to allocate Free School Meal vouchers during Winter and February half term and to make similar provision available to young children below school age and those in higher education and training where FSM applies to school age siblings.
- LCC have also set aside a reserve fund to address any gaps or increases in demands.
- This report sets out recommendations for how the funding should be allocated with the objectives of directing the funding towards those in most need.

<b>Confidential report</b> Please bold as appropriate	Yes	<b>No</b>
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<b>Key Decision?</b> Please bold as appropriate	Yes	<b>No</b>
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### Reasons for Recommendation(s)

#### (If the recommendations are accepted)

- To ensure the funding is allocated to residents who are facing financial pressures by March 2022.

### Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

12. To not allocate the grant funding would mean that those residents that need the support would not receive it.
13. To aim to deliver this funding in isolation of the voluntary sector and other partners would not maximise the support that residents are able to access from this sector.

### Corporate Priorities

14. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all		A strong local economy	
Clean, safe and healthy homes and communities		An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area	X

### Background

15. Authorities are encouraged to adopt the following principles in administering this grant:
  1. Use discretion on how to identify and support those most in need, considering a wide range of information
  2. Use the funding by the 31 March 2022 to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford food, energy and water bills, and other related essentials.
  3. Use the funding to also support households who are struggling to afford other wider essentials.
  4. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, it can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need, subject to the provisions highlighted within the guidance to avoid duplication of other housing related support which the beneficial may already be receiving.
  5. Upper tier authorities work together with District Councils including, where necessary and appropriate, other local services, such as social and care workers to help identify and support households within the scope of the scheme.
  6. There is no requirement to apply means testing as a way of determining eligibility
  7. A resident does not need to be on benefits or unemployed to receive this funding if they can demonstrate need.
  8. A resident can access the fund on more than one occasion if necessary
  9. This fund unlike previous funds is open to people with no recourse to public funds

### Proposed approach

16. The Communities team has worked through the Chorley Together network to gain insight and collaboration in how to approach the distribution of this funding. Chorley Together was established during the initial phase of the pandemic outbreak and continues to operate to cascade information across a local network, provide local updates and collaborate to provide ongoing support.
17. Feedback from the network suggested that a delivery partner approach would provide greater opportunities for residents in difficulties to receive wider support, alongside the financial support both in the immediate and long term. Addressing root causes of the financial difficulty where possible.
18. Risks relating to key cohorts not accessing the fund were identified through these discussions which highlighted a need to consider old people who are less digitally active and people with additional needs.

19. 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.
20. Guidance on the funding and how to access it will be widely shared with key partners and community stakeholders and made available on the Council's website.
21. All referrals will go via the most suitable delivery partner and transfer of referral to a more appropriate delivery partner if needed will be conducted utilising an existing platform (Refernet) and associated data sharing agreement of which all delivery partners will have access.
22. It is proposed to allocate the funding across the recommended categories as follows:

Energy payment support	134,000
Food Support (supermarket voucher scheme, food banks and local market voucher schemes)	48,000
Other Essentials	37,000
Sub Total	219,000
Delivery Costs	9,775
Contingency Fund	11,225

23. The summary of the methods proposed to allocate and distribute the funding is as follows:

1. A directly issued voucher or payment to those in receipt of pension payment and receiving one passported benefit, for support towards energy costs. Forecast figures suggest there are 1400 residents who it is proposed would receive £60.00 each, which is 35% of the overall budget.
2. A grant award to Citizens Advice to administer fuel payments and supermarket vouchers
3. A grant award to three delivery partners from the VCFSE sector to administer payments for other essentials and provide other wider support with additional funding to cover delivery / administration costs
4. A grant award to an organisation to administer a white goods repair or replace scheme
5. Supplementing food banks and an existing community-based voucher scheme
6. Retaining a proportion for Chorley Council Community CoVid Officer to allocate whilst the scheme is mobilising and to support general delivery
7. Retaining a contingency to allocate mid-way through the delivery period to increase areas where demand is higher
8. The value and breakdown of funding is as follows:

	Value	Delivery Partner	Delivery Costs
Fuel Payments (Energy) Direct award	84,000	Chorley Council	TBC
Fuel Payments (Energy)	50,000	Citizens Advice	3,750
Food and Essentials – Families and Young People	35,000	Homestart	2,625
Food and Essentials – Individual and Couples	25,000	Chorley Gateway (Chorley Help the Homeless)	2,500
Food and Essentials – Individuals with	6,000	Citizens Advice – Help through	900

additional support needs		Crisis scheme	
Food and Essentials – white goods scheme	7,000	Local business TBC	nil
Food and Essentials	7,000	Food Banks and local market voucher schemes	nil
Food and Essentials – mobilisation period	5,000	Chorley Council – Communities	COMF funded

#### Grant agreements

24. Of the above 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

25. Funding is proposed to be allocated to delivery partners in the form of direct payments and supermarket voucher codes which are redeemable by the recipients at major local supermarkets.
26. The funding will be allocated in two equal phases to allow for any adjustments to be made based on demand.
27. 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 two prescribed intervals; once during the scheme and once at the end of the scheme.
28. 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.
29. A maximum value payment of £300 per applicant has been set as an initial guide. Payments above this limit will be assessed by a second party from another delivery partner organisation or Chorley Council.
30. 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 5% of the overall fund. The delivery costs are currently just over 4% of the overall fund and vary from partner to partner between 7.5 and 15% which take in to consideration the overall value of the fund they are expected to award, expected complexities and the resources they have available. Where delivery costs are yet to be fully finalised due to being new processes we will aim to keep the delivery costs within the 5% guide.

#### Eligibility and evidence

31. 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.
32. 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.
33. Delivery partners will be required to determine that the resident is a Chorley resident.
34. Guidance material previously approved and used to deliver previous schemes will be provided to delivery partners to help guide them through assessment and checking processes.

#### Data control

35. 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

36. The Council created a post to support the delivery of CoVid related Community based schemes and this post will support the coordination of this funding, support delivery partners and liaise with LCC and their partners in relation to coordinating the supermarket voucher processes. They will also be a point of contact for complex cases, internal communication and external enquiries.
37. Delivery partners will have access to twice weekly drop-in TEAMS sessions to review demands and discuss feedback from casework. There will also be a monitored TEAMS chat available throughout the delivery period for quick responses and guidance.
38. Guidance documentation outlining the delivery approach and any specific details will be provided.
39. Any additional pathways or processes needed will be devised jointly with the Council and the delivery partner group.

#### Monitoring

40. Delivery partners will be expected to record data inline with the requirement of the funding and provide this to the Council to collate and report to the DWP via LCC
41. Delivery partners will also record wider data to help gather insight on the root causes of the resident's difficulties.
42. We also aim to conduct follow up contact on a sample of the recipients to understand the impact of the funding.

#### Linking to other workstreams

This delivery proposal will, through support from the Council Communities team, link the support provided by the delivery partners to several other existing and emerging workstreams such as:

- All the projects being delivered through the Chorley Council Covid Community recovery plans
- Contain outbreak management funded projects and support
- Existing early intervention and support pathways within the Council and with external partners
- 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.

#### Implications of Report

43. There are a number of risks associated with this proposal, namely financial and reputational.
44. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance	X	Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal	X	Integrated Impact Assessment required?	
No significant implications in this area		Policy and Communications	

### Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

45. This funding must be spent by 31st March 2022, or returned to Lancashire County Council, and ultimately the Government.
46. This leaves only around 2 months to distribute funds to eligible residents.
47. A partnership approach has been developed which will see existing partners utilising their established networks to distribute funds.
48. A number of safeguards are in place;
  - a. Funds will be released to Partners on a staged basis – once target activity levels are reached.
  - b. Vouchers will be digital and have system generated reference numbers to avoid misuse.
  - c. Activity will be recorded on the Refernet system to mitigate the risk of duplicate applications to different Partners.
49. Spend levels will be closely monitored to ensure funds are used to the best effect, and fully spent by 31st March 2022.

There are no wider budget / resource implications for the Council.

### Comments of the Monitoring Officer

50. There are no legal issues with this report

Jennifer Mullin  
Director of Communities

Report Author	Ext	Date
Angela Barrago	-	17/01/2022

Following careful consideration and assessment of the contents of this report, I approve the recommendation(s) contained in Paragraphs 2 - 4 of the report in accordance with my delegated power to make executive decisions.



**Dated 28.01.22**

**Councillor Peter Wilson**  
Executive Member (Resources)