



HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

MANAGING DIRECTOR'S DECISION RECORD

Department: Children and Joint Commissioning Services

Division: Joint Commissioning

Date of Decision: 20 November 2020

Officer Making Decision: Managing Director, in consultation with the Leader (or in his absence the Deputy Leader), Chair of the relevant Committee (or in his absence Vice Chair) and Monitoring Officer.

Subject / Description & Reason for Decision: **Proposals for the expenditure of the Government's COVID Winter Grant Scheme**

On 8 November 2020, the Government announced a COVID Winter Grant Scheme which will provide children and families with extra support during the winter, by providing councils with new funding to ensure vulnerable households do not go hungry or without essential items. The Winter Grant Scheme requires LAs to provide support to families with children, other vulnerable households and individuals from early December 2020 and covers the period until the end of March 2021. This scheme is part of a wider winter support package for families and children.

Local authorities are being asked to determine eligibility in their area and target their support to those experiencing most hardship. The conditions of the grant are as follows:

- at least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to support families with children, with up to 20% of the total funding to other types of households, including individuals; and
- at least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to provide support with food, energy and water bills (including sewerage), with up to 20% on other items.

Local authorities have flexibility in administering the funding within the confines of the scheme as detailed above and may include cash, the provision of food, vouchers, or funding through third party organisations.

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The indicative award for Hartlepool is £396,948.59 for the period 01/12/2020 – 31/03/2021.

Published guidance on the scheme is awaited from the Department of Work and Pensions, however, given the timescales to have a scheme in place and operational for December it is necessary to commence implementation immediately.

It is proposed that a scheme is delivered that has the widest possible reach and gets at least 80% of the funding out to children and families through the most efficient and effective means possible. To achieve this, the intention is to identify all children and young people who experience disadvantage collated through those who are eligible for free school meals as well as the under 5 and over 16 disadvantaged cohort. In addition the scheme would also be extended to children who are not eligible for free school meals but are in low income households and at risk of experiencing food and fuel poverty. The indicative figure is that this is approximately 8,300 children/young people.

To run a scheme which provides food to families during school holiday between now and March 2021 would cover three weeks of school holiday time. It is proposed that the funding is allocated on a per head, per eligible child/young person basis for food and utilities. Within the data held by the Council it is difficult to administer any scheme based around utilities, so the proposal is to maximise food provision which enables spare cash to be used for other expenses such as utilities.

Working on an estimated number of 8,300 children with an allocation of £15 per eligible child per week, (the Government ran free school meal scheme delivered during the summer holidays of 2020 allocated £15 per child per week) for each of the three school holiday weeks (two at Christmas and one in February), this would commit £373,500 of the total grant received.

The council will procure vouchers for local supermarkets of parents' choosing for each eligible child and distribute these to vulnerable families, with a two week allocation at Christmas and a further allocation in February.

In order to provide support to other vulnerable people who are not in family households with food and utility costs over the winter, the balance of the grant, approximately £23,448, is to be added to the Local Welfare Support Scheme. The LWS scheme is the most rigorous model for the fair allocation of funding for vulnerable people. VCS organisations, housing

providers and adult refer people to LWS so there are strong links to reach vulnerable people in need. The Council will run a media campaign to promote the availability of this one off short term funding to support vulnerable people over the winter and encourage people to come forward and apply for assistance.

Type of Decision:

In accordance with Article 12 – 12.3 - the decision is not defined as a Key decision for the following reason:-
The Expenditure is inevitable as a result of the Government providing a Section 31 grant ('New Burden' Funding) to help fund the impact of specific legislative commitments where there is no in year cost, or future commitment for the General Fund. Details of any Section 31 grants and the commitments which need to be funded will be reported to the Finance and Policy Committee and the relevant Policy Committee as soon as is reasonably practicable thereafter.

Nature of Delegation Being Exercised:

Constitution Reference – CE15 – urgent decisions normally reserved to a Committee. The Managing Director (or in his/her absence the Director of Resources and Development) may take a decision normally reserved to Full Council or a Committee where:

- (a) Failure to take the decision quickly would, or would be likely to, harm the interests of the Council and the public.
- (b) The decision is so urgent that it cannot wait until the next meeting of the Committee at which the decision would normally be taken

Alternative Options Considered & Rejected:

Council to deliver a holiday hunger scheme as it has in previous years – reach of this scheme is not as broad as this proposal.

Any Declared Register of Interest

No (delete as appropriate)
If Yes, specify:

Signatures for retained copy only

Managing Director – Denise McGuckin



Decision made in consultation with:

ODR No. :

Leader of the Council - Cllr Shane Moore

Chair of Policy Committee – Cllr Smith

Chief Solicitor and Monitoring Officer – Hayley Martin

Director of Resources and Development – Chris Little