

Record of decision taken under delegated powers by a council officer



Title:	Surrey County Council Response to Covid: COVID Local Support Grant
Divisions Affected:	All divisions
Key Decision:	Yes
Reason Key:	Affects two or more Divisions
Decision taken under delegation by virtue of:	Cabinet decision 31 March 2020 Min ref: 41/20

Summary

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On 14 April 2021, the government announced a further extension of the COVID grant to support vulnerable families. The grant is now to continue until 20 June 2021, with a further £40m of support. 2. Renamed the COVID Local Support Grant (CLSG), it has the same eligibility criteria, and uses the same reporting frameworks, as the previous COVID Winter Support Grant Scheme. 3. The CWG Scheme, originally announced in November 2020, provided £170 million to councils to support those most in need across England with the cost of food, energy and water bills and other associated costs during the Coronavirus pandemic. The original scheme was due to end on the 31 March 2021, in February this was extended to the 16 April 2021, with further funding of £59m announced. This second extension provides support to 20 June 2021, reflecting the timing of planned further easing of lockdown restrictions as outlined in the Government's roadmap in February. 4. The £40m CLSG will be allocated to LAs on the same basis as the previous CWGS, using the population of each authority weighted by a function of the English Index of Multiple Deprivation. Surrey County Council are due to receive £500,327. This is in addition to the £2.8m allocated in previous announcements. Funding is paid in instalments and is dependent on the Council returning reporting on how the funding is being spent, in line with specific grant conditions. 5. DWP guidance on the grant is summarised below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 80% of the grant must be allocated to households with children; up to 20% may be allocated to households without children or individuals. Care leavers up to the age of 25 are not classified as children for the purposes of this grant. • At least 80% of the grant must be allocated for food or utility bills; up to 20% of the grant can be allocated for other financial needs. 6. Local authorities may determine the groups they consider most vulnerable and the thresholds for support, however feeding children is a key aim of the grant. The funding is not means tested.

7. Proposals were developed and approved in November/December 2020 for tranche 1 funding, through consultation throughout the Council, with the LRF, the Welfare Cell and Headteachers. Allocations for tranches 2 & 3 and the first extension were agreed in March based on further consultation and the positive impact made by the initial allocations.
8. This paper seeks approval for the allocation of the further extension funding of £500,327.

Proposals:

9. There was strong support from school leaders and welfare rights leads for food vouchers for children in receipt of benefit related free school meals. They considered these a very effective means of targeting and distributing food support for children in very financially vulnerable households during the school holidays.
10. In addition, for low income families with children in early years (2 years old receiving Funded Early Education Provision and 3 & 4 year olds on EY Pupil Premium) SCC holds data on these children and can target support via Early Years providers.
11. The previous support offered have provided vouchers to in excess of 20,000 children during the Christmas, February half term and Easter holidays. It is proposed that this additional funding is used to continue to offer this support over the upcoming May half term period.
12. Recognising that there are other families who will not benefit from extra targeted support for children on FSM and that the Council continues to see increased demand and calls to the Crisis Fund. It is proposed that additional funding is provided to the Crisis Fund to manage this increased demand and continue with the widened criteria implemented at the outset of the pandemic.
13. The Council also continue to work closely with a number of foodbanks who continue to see significant demand increases. Providing additional financial contributions to these foodbanks will widen the impact of this funding and ensure we reach the most vulnerable across the County.

Decision made

Decision made:

It was AGREED that:

The following allocations would be made from the COVID Local Support Grant announced in April 2021:

Children entitled to Free School Meals	£0.3m
Low income families with children in early years settings	
Surrey Crisis Fund	£0.1m
Contribution to food banks	£0.1m
	£0.5m

Reasons for Decision:

To assist those most in need of assistance with the purchase of food and other essential items during the winter months, with a particular focus on families with children, in line with the DWP grant conditions.

Decision taken by:	Leigh Whitehouse – Executive Director for Resources Rachel Wardell – Executive Director for Children, Families & Lifelong Learning. Becky Rush – Cabinet Member for Resources Mary Lewis – Cabinet Member for Children, Young People & Families
Decision taken on:	29 March 2021
To be implemented on:	One-off payments to be made to the organisations/individuals, as set out above.

Alternative options considered

The alternative is to not accept the funding allocation from DWP which would reduce the ability of the Council to support those in the County most in need, of assistance with the purchase of food and other essentials, particularly families with children.

A number of allocation mechanisms were considered, but the proposal above was deemed to provide the most impact and coverage across the County.

Summary of any financial implications

The DWP grant allocation amounts to £3.36m, including all extensions. This is due to be received by the Council in 4 tranches, dependent on the submission of accurate allocation management information. Allocations were made to organisation/individuals in December, February & March with further allocations due by 20 June.

Declarations of conflicts of interest

None

Consultation/Process Followed

Decisions taken in consultation with colleagues in the LRF Welfare Cell, the Education Cell of school phase council headteachers, the Surrey Crisis Fund, Twelve15 (SCC school catering), Surrey Welfare Rights Unit, SCC finance, children's services, the virtual school, adult social care, schools relationships service and EMT, and are based on the grant guidance issued by from DWP.

Background Documents

Cabinet report 31st March 2020 setting out the council's response to Covid-19 and regular COVID update reports to Cabinet throughout 2020/21.

Exempt: