

Record of decision taken under delegated powers by a council officer



Title:	Surrey County Council Response to Covid: Household 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

On 1 October 2021, the government (DWP) announced additional funding to target financial support for vulnerable households over the winter months, to be known as the Household Support Grant. This new grant will run from 06 October 2021 to 31 March 2022 and totals £500m. Surrey County Council's allocation of the funding is £5,290,829.72, based on the population of each authority weighted by a function of the English Index of Multiple Deprivation.

In terms of type of support, the expectation is that the Household Support Fund should primarily be used to support households in the most need for immediate and emergency assistance with food, energy and water bills. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to those items and with wider essential costs. At least 50% of the total funding must be spent on families with children.

Payment of the grant allocation is on an arrears basis and is subject to the submission of two Management Information (MI) returns to DWP outlining the authority's grant spend and the volume of awards for period 6 October – 31 December (due January '22) and for the period 1 January - 31 March (due April '22).

Proposals:

1. Proposals for the allocation of the majority of this funding will be developed over the coming weeks. The Council will work with key stakeholders and partner organisations to develop a strategic needs assessment to identify the most vulnerable households in the County. Including options for distributions, proposed allocations and distribution mechanisms.
2. Previous allocations of the COVID Local Support Grant (and previously the COVID Winter Support Grant) were used by the Council to provide food vouchers to those eligible for benefit related to Free School Meals during the school holidays.
3. Given the timing of this grant allocation and the upcoming October half term, it is proposed that an immediate commitment is made to utilise a proportion of this funding, c£330k (based on the numbers supported during the summer holidays), to continue this support for the October half term holidays. Providing £15 per child for the week of the holidays.

4. This would be extended, as it has previously, to include provision of food vouchers to 2,3 and 4 year old children with Funded Early Education Provision (FEED) and EY Pupil Premium.

Decision made

Decision made:

It was AGREED that:

£330k would be allocated from the Household Support Grant to enable the continued provision of food vouchers to children entitled to benefit related Free School Meals at £15 per child for the October half term. This is to include 2, 3 and 4 year old children with Funded Early Education Provision (FEED) and EY Pupil Premium.

Proposal will be developed for the remaining allocation over the next 2-3 weeks. The Council will work with key stakeholders and partner organisations, including Boroughs and Districts, to develop a strategic needs assessment to identify the most vulnerable households in the County. Including options for distributions, proposed allocations and distribution mechanisms.

Reasons for Decision:

To assist those families entitled to free school means during term time with the purchase of food over the upcoming school holidays.

Decision taken by:	Leigh Whitehouse – Executive Director for Resources Rachel Wardell – Executive Director for Children, Families & Lifelong Learning. Becky Rush – Cabinet Member for Resources & Deputy Leader Denise Turner-Stewart - Cabinet Member for Education & Learning
Decision taken on:	13 October 2020
To be implemented on:	One-off payments to be made to schools and Early Years providers for onward allocation to eligible families.

Alternative options considered

The alternative is to either:

- not allocate funding for this purpose and await the outcome of the strategic needs assessment to propose allocation to total grant allocation. This would leave families without support for the purchase of food during the upcoming October half term.
- not accept the funding allocation from DWP, which would reduce the ability of the Council to support those in the County most in need, particularly families with children, of assistance with the purchase of food, utilities and other essentials.

Summary of any financial implications

The DWP grant allocation amounts to £5,290,829.72. This decision allocated c£330k of this amount, leaving c£4.9m available to be allocated based on further analysis and identification of vulnerable households. The funding is due to be received by the Council in 2 tranches based on the submission of accurate allocation management information to the DWP in Jan and April 2022.

Declarations of conflicts of interest

None

Consultation/Process Followed

Previous decision to issue support to those eligible for FSM was taken in consultation with colleagues in the Education Cell of school phase council headteachers, the Surrey Crisis Fund, the LRF Welfare Cell, Twelve15 (SCC school catering), Surrey Welfare Rights Unit, SCC finance, children’s services, the virtual school, adult social care, schools relationships service and EMT, this decision is to extend that provision to cover October half term and is within the conditions of the grant guidance issued by DWP.

Background Documents

Exempt:

Cabinet report 31 st March 2020 setting out the council’s response to Covid-19.	
--	--

This page is intentionally left blank