

## Record of operational decision

<b>Decision title:</b>	Award of Funding from the Household Support Fund to the Local Welfare Provision Service to run an open application process for emergency support.
<b>Date of decision:</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
<b>Decision maker:</b>	Director of Resources and Assurance
<b>Authority for delegated decision:</b>	Cabinet member decision on 10 May 2024 delegated operational matters in relation to the Household Support Fund to the Director of Resources and Assurance Link: <a href="#">Household Support Fund 5 - Herefordshire Council</a>
<b>Ward:</b>	Countywide
<b>Consultation:</b>	Cabinet member for finance, corporate services and planning has been consulted about the approach to support children and families as part of the Household Support Fund framework.
<b>Decision made:</b>	To arrange for up to £75,000.00 of funding from the Household Support Fund to the Local Welfare Provision service for the administration and provision of emergency support through an open application process for households experiencing financial hardship.  Full details of the Local Welfare Provision (Household Support Fund) Policy can be found at Appendix 1.
<b>Reasons for decision:</b>	<p>Herefordshire Council has received an allocation of £1,329,601.78 from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) under the Household Support Fund. Part of the funding criteria states that an open application process must be available for all residents within the county to apply. The expectation is that it should be used to support households in the most need; particularly those who may not be eligible for other support the government has made available but who are nevertheless struggling due to the increased cost of living.</p> <p>The council already operates an application scheme for people requiring support in an emergency through its Local Welfare Provision (LWP) service. Utilising this funding enables the LWP service and eligibility criteria for emergency support to be enhanced, by providing additional staff resources to assess and administer applications and distribute the voucher payments.</p> <p>The attached policy provides the local eligibility framework for emergency support to meet crucial needs of a person or household experiencing financial hardship resulting in them struggling to feed themselves or their family, heat their home, or pay for other essential living costs.</p>
<b>Equality Considerations:</b>	Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows; a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act; b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Local authorities have discretion on exactly how the Housing Support Fund is used within the

	<p>scope set out in the guidance for April 2024 to September 2024 issued by the Department of Work and Pensions and the local eligibility framework which is set out in paragraph 5 of this report. In prioritising low income households, there is likely to be a positive impact for people who are financially disadvantaged (although this is not in itself a protected characteristic within the Equality Act 2010). If there are households in urgent need due to rising living costs, they may access support through the Local Welfare Provision service of the Council. The scheme specifically targets families on low incomes with children who are eligible for free school meals. It will also aim to target disabled households, especially those that have high utility bills. The Household Support Fund will provide additional support to other financially disadvantaged households in Herefordshire, many of these households will include those who share a protected characteristic e.g. age, so by utilising the scheme this will support the council in discharging its Equality duty by supporting many of these households to access these funds through third party agencies. All agencies involved in the distribution of the funding will be made aware of their equality responsibilities in regards to the Equality Act.</p>
<p><b>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</b></p>	<p>The cost of the scheme will be funded through the Household Support Fund allocation of £1,329,601.78.</p> <p>By providing an open application process that prioritises low income households with urgent needs due to rising living costs, there is likely to be a positive impact for people who are financially disadvantaged (although this is not in itself a protected characteristic within the Equality Act 2010).</p>
<p><b>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</b></p>	<p>Not to approve spend to provide funding through the Local Welfare Provision. This is not recommended. The Household Support Fund is expected to support households in most need. Part of the Household Support Fund criteria is to provide residents with access to support through an open application process. By not proceeding we will not meet the guidelines set out by the DWP.</p>
<p><b>Details of any declarations of interest made:</b></p>	<p>None</p>

Signed:

Date: 25/06/2024

Andrew Lovegrove  
 Director of Resources and Assurance