

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	Decision to support families with children entitled to free school meals by providing a food vouchers during the May Half-Term period.
Date of decision:	7 May 2026
Decision maker:	Corporate Director for Community Wellbeing
Authority for delegated decision:	Cabinet member decision on 18 th April 2026 delegated operational matters in relation to the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) to the Corporate Director Community Wellbeing. Link: Decision–Crisis and Resilience Fund–Herefordshire Council
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	<p>Cabinet member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, and Corporate Director for Community Wellbeing have been consulted about the approach to support Herefordshire residents as part of the Crisis and Resilience Fund framework.</p> <p>A Political Group Consultation has also been undertaken, with feedback informing the development of the approach.</p>
Decision made:	To provide a food voucher of up to £15 per school holiday week per child that are eligible for free school meals. The £15 food voucher will cover one weeks during the May Half Term Holiday period. The total cost is estimated to be £69,000.00
Reasons for decision:	<p>The free school meal system is a long-established mechanism for supporting children and families on low incomes. The provision of food vouchers during school holidays for children eligible for benefits-related free school meals represents a time-limited, preventative intervention that supports household food security during periods of increased financial pressure. This proposal will support approximately 4,600 children, with eligible primary and secondary pupils receiving a £15 food voucher per week through May Half Term.</p> <p>Herefordshire Council has received an allocation of £2.3 million from the Department for Work and Pensions for the delivery of the Crisis and Resilience Fund, The intended outcomes of this funding are to prevent escalation into financial crisis, support household stability, and provide short-term assistance to households experiencing a sudden financial shock, particularly following an unexpected loss of income that affects their ability to meet essential living costs.</p> <p>This decision represents the final delivery of holiday free school meal vouchers funded through this mechanism. The Crisis and Resilience Fund is moving away from blanket provision towards a more targeted, outcomes-focused approach, prioritising households experiencing acute financial pressure. This approach ensures support is directed to those most at risk and aligns resources with the Fund’s core purpose of crisis prevention and resilience-building.</p> <p>The use of this funding provides families with a planned transition period away from universal holiday voucher provision, alongside access to alternative targeted support mechanisms for those experiencing financial shock. This approach promotes longer-term financial resilience and helps prevent households from being unable to afford essential costs.</p>

Equality Considerations:	<p>The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.</p> <p>Due to the scope of this project and its potential impact on certain protected characteristics, an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is attached as an appendix to the cabinet report.</p> <p>In summary, this project impacts protected characteristics as follows: The EIA did not identify any negative impacts at this time. Any future negative impacts will be reviewed and mitigated accordingly.</p>
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	<p>The cost of free school meal vouchers for May Half Term will be funded from the Crisis and Resilience Fund allocation of £2.3 million provided by central government. The proposed expenditure will be met in full of this ring-fenced grant and will not place any additional financial burden on the Council's core budget.</p>
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	<p>It is acknowledged that not providing this support may result in some families being left financially unsupported during this period and may not allow sufficient time for them to access alternative support services.</p> <p>This decision is not recommended. The Crisis and Resilience Fund is intended to support households experiencing a sudden loss of income or an acute financial shock. While families eligible for free school meals may experience increased financial pressure during school holidays, the Crisis and Resilience Fund is seeking to move away from the previously applied blanket approach to support.</p> <p>It is anticipated that this transition period will enable affected families to access alternative support and resilience services currently available, with the intention of supporting longer-term financial stability rather than short-term financial assistance.</p>
Details of any declarations of interest made:	None

Signed:

Date: