Record of operational decision

Decision title:	To approve the award of a contract for a digital financial platform to support delivery of the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF).
Date of decision:	28/07/2026
Decision maker:	Director of Community Wellbeing
Authority for delegated decision:	Cabinet member decision on 18th 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:	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. A Political Group Consultation has also been undertaken, with feedback informing the development of the approach.
Decision made:	To award a contract to eVouchers (Wonde) for the provision, implementation and ongoing support of a digital financial platform to enable delivery of the Herefordshire Crisis and Resilience Fund for the duration of the programme.
Reasons for decision:	The implementation of a digital financial platform is essential to enable the efficient, secure and compliant delivery of the Crisis and Resilience Fund. The platform will support a cash-first approach to financial assistance while improving consistency, transparency and governance across the programme. Key benefits include: • Faster, secure delivery of crisis payments through a cash-first digital solution. • Multiple referral and application routes, including assisted applications. • Consistent eligibility assessment and decision making. • Improved coordination between council services and delivery partners. • Reduced administration and manual processing. • Stronger audit trails and fraud prevention. eVouchers (Wonde) has been selected as the preferred solution as it provides an established platform that meets the operational requirements of the Crisis and Resilience Fund, supports a cash-first approach to financial assistance, offers robust reporting and audit functionality, and can be implemented within the required timescales. The procurement and implementation of the platform will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, Financial Regulations, ICT governance requirements, information governance requirements and applicable procurement legislation. The system will provide enhanced performance monitoring and reporting capabilities, including: • Number and value of payments issued. • Application volumes and processing times. • Monitoring of repeat applications. • Real-time tracking of expenditure against budget. • Reporting aligned with Department for Work and Pensions grant requirements.

	This will strengthen oversight, accountability and assurance arrangements and support ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement throughout the life of the fund. The Crisis and Resilience Fund is expected to support a significant number of households across Herefordshire. The eVouchers platform will enable the council to manage high volumes of applications and payments efficiently while maintaining appropriate controls, auditability and consistency. The platform also supports multiple access routes, including assisted applications and referrals from partner organisations, helping to mitigate the impact of digital exclusion. The award of the contract aligns with the increasing adoption of cash-first crisis support models by local authorities and will ensure that Herefordshire Council has the digital infrastructure required to deliver the fund effectively over the three-year funding period. A communication and implementation plan will be developed to support the introduction of the platform. This will include training and guidance for staff, briefings for delivery partners, and clear information to support referrals and applications. Structured onboarding arrangements will ensure that all users can operate the system effectively and in accordance with governance requirements. The introduction of the platform is expected to improve the efficiency, consistency and transparency of financial support delivery and is not anticipated to have any adverse impact on residents or staff. Appropriate communication and support will be provided to staff and partners where changes to processes are required.
Equality Considerations	An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed for the Crisis and Resilience Fund and is attached as an appendix to the Cabinet report. The assessment did not identify any adverse equality impacts arising from this proposal. Any potential impacts identified during implementation will be monitored and mitigated where appropriate.
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/ equality considerations:	The cost of the financial digital platform will be funded from the Crisis and Resilience Fund allocation of £2.3 million provided by central government. The proposed expenditure will be met from this ring-fenced grant and will not place any additional financial burden on the Council's core budget. The platform operates on a transaction-based model, with the supplier generating income through retailer commission rather than direct charges to the Council for the value of payments issued. As the contract facilitates the distribution of potentially significant volumes of financial assistance over the three-year programme, the maximum contract value has been set at £500,000 per annum to reflect the total value of transactions that may be processed through the platform and to ensure compliance with procurement regulations. Actual direct expenditure by Herefordshire Council is expected to be minimal.

Failure or downtime of the digital platform could delay payments to residents in crisis.	Supplier due diligence, service level agreements (SLAs), system resilience and support arrangements, and contingency processes for urgent payments if required.
Handling of personal and financial data through the platform creates a risk of data breaches or non-compliance.	Compliance with GDPR, data sharing agreements, DPIA (if required), secure system architecture, and ICT governance approval.
Digital exclusion - Some residents may be unable to access or engage with a digital payment system.	Maintaining assisted application routes, referrals via partners, and ensuring alternative access routes in line with a "no wrong door" approach.
Reliance on a single platform provider could create delivery or continuity	Robust, contract management, clear exit arrangements, and alignment

	risks. | with council procurement rules. System or configuration errors could result in incorrect payments or delays. | Testing prior to implementation, approval workflows within the system, reconciliation processes, and financial oversight.
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	By not implementing a digital financial platform to support delivery of the Crisis and Resilience Fund, Herefordshire Council would be reliant on manual or fragmented processes, resulting in increased administrative burden, greater risk of delays in issuing support, and reduced assurance in relation to compliance, audit requirements and fraud prevention. This option would significantly limit the council's ability to deliver the fund effectively and at scale. A manual system would not provide the level of integration, reporting functionality, performance monitoring or financial control required to support the effective delivery of the fund and would not adequately support the transition to a more targeted, needs-led approach to financial assistance.
Details of any declarations of interest made:	None

Signed…………………………………………………………………… Date: