

Record of officer decision

Decision title:	Financial support for emergency assistance – fuel poverty and essential household supplies: emergency food provision
Date of decision:	29 th March 2022
Decision maker:	Director of Resources and Assurance
Authority for delegated decision:	<p>Decision taken by key cabinet member on 28th February 2022 to give delegated authority to the section 151 officer following consultation with the appropriate director to move funding between approved schemes within the Covid Recovery plan to ensure that any underspend can be maximised.</p> <p>https://hc-modgov.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=8607</p>
Ward:	County wide
Consultation:	<p>The COVID Recovery Plan was approved by Cabinet on 24th June which provides funding of £6m to support the economy, community wellbeing and organisation with recovery. The plan provided an overview of the schemes for delivery, which included 'Educational catch up' 'Community and Personal Resilience' and 'Get Active' all appropriate consultation was undertaken at this time.</p> <p>http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieIssueDetails.aspx?IId=50037702&PlanId=0&Opt=3#A158109</p> <p>Following this, additional consultation with members has taken place which has given delegated authority to the section 151 officer to move any underspend between pre agreed schemes to ensure that this can be maximised.</p> <p>Consultation has also been undertaken with those providing assistance to individuals and families adversely effected by Covid 19, including those providing support for food provision.</p>
Decision made:	Award a funding total of £40,000 to Herefordshire Community Foundation as part of the council's ongoing response to Covid 19 to support emergency food provision for residents on low incomes.
Reasons for decision:	<p>Covid 19 has had a very severe impact on local communities in terms of the impact on people's health and wellbeing, loss of income, loss of jobs, long periods of anxiety and isolation.</p> <p>In December 2021 there were 3,015 people in Herefordshire (aged 16+) claiming out-of-work benefits, which is 43% higher than in March 2020.</p> <p>Provisional data suggest there were 11,516 Universal Credit claimants in Herefordshire in November 2021, well above the 5,983 seen in March 2020. In Herefordshire, UC claimants currently comprise 10% of the working age population. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, rising inflation will mean a 3% real cut in benefits year on year even before accounting for the removal of the £20 per week Universal Credit uplift.</p> <p>Whilst there are no up to date statistics for measuring food poverty in Herefordshire, there are increasing numbers of people in crisis situations: in 2020, 10,889 food parcels were distributed across five food banks in the</p>

	<p>county. The Children's integrated needs assessment 2019 also noted that around 1,900 county school children are eligible for free school meals. As the true impact of the Covid pandemic is becoming better known, the significant financial pressures placed on low income households is becoming better understood.</p> <p>Due to limited timescales there has not been the opportunity to test the market. However research has been previously undertaken to gather knowledge of suitable providers across the county. Herefordshire Community Foundation has systems, processes and staffing capacity in place to administer these grants targeted at voluntary and community organisations providing emergency food. It also has the local relationships to ensure that these grants are well publicised and to support applicants if necessary.</p>
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	<p>This Covid Recovery Plan budget allocation must be committed within the 2021/22 financial year. This decision also enables this funding to reach local voluntary and community groups which are grounded in their local communities and best placed to deliver emergency food support to those in need in Herefordshire.</p> <p>The council recognises that the pandemic has exacerbated the inequalities in our society, and in Herefordshire, the Wellbeing Survey 2021 found wellbeing is lowest in those living in the most deprived areas. There is an opportunity to continue to ensure that the council addresses these needs and helps individuals, families and communities to recover, importantly working to improve the lives of those most affected.</p>
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	<p>No alternative option has been considered as Herefordshire Community Foundation has demonstrated that it is best placed to provide this type of advice and support as a trusted community based organisation.</p>
Details of any declarations of interest made:	<p>None</p>

Signed Director: Andrew Lovegrove Director Resources and Assurance Date: 26.04.2022