

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	Decision to provide up to £107,940.00 of the Household Support Fund to deliver the Warmth on Prescription scheme
Date of decision:	07/11/23
Decision maker:	Director of Resources and Assurance
Authority for delegated decision:	Cabinet member decision on 20 April 2023 delegated operational matters in relation to the Household Support Fund to the Director of Resources and Assurance Link: Decision - Household Support Fund 2023/24 - Herefordshire Council
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	Cabinet member for finance, corporate services and planning and cabinet member for children and families were consulted on this decision.
Decision made:	<p>To approve up to £107,940.00 of the Household Support Fund grant to deliver the Warmth on Prescription scheme. Individuals referred can receive up to £330 in energy support payments, an energy support pack as well as advice on how to reduce energy bills. Each pack will be tailored to the customer, depending on requirements, and will be made up of the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low energy LED lightbulbs (X8 bulbs) - Small electric throw - Radiator reflector panels (X3 sheets) - Draught proofing tape (covering doors and windows) <p>Customers will also receive the standard Keep Herefordshire Warm energy pack items which include: temperature gage, shower timer, bag for life, radiator bleeding key, meter reading kit and energy saving tips leaflet.</p>
Reasons for decision:	<p>Herefordshire Council has received an allocation of £2,659,203.57 from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) under the Household Support Fund.</p> <p>In line with DWP guidance most of the funding should be earmarked to support those most in need and affected by the recent cost of living crisis. The decision to support vulnerable people with medical conditions that are facing fuel poverty would meet the recommended guidance.</p> <p>Individuals with respiratory conditions tend to be at greater risk of poor health and more vulnerable to the colder weather. These individuals therefore typically need to spend more on their fuel bills in order to keep warm over the winter months and if they are not able to their health conditions can be exacerbated.</p> <p>Individuals will be identified via a network of health professionals via referral into the 'Keep Herefordshire Warm' programme. This is to ensure those most in need are best placed to be in receipt of the funding.</p> <p>Individuals referred to the scheme can receive up to £330 in energy support as well as receiving advice on how to reduce energy bills within their household. Individuals will also receive a support pack to reduce energy consumption. The support provided could benefit up to 230 households.</p>
Equality Considerations:	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

	<p>and persons who do not share it.</p> <p>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 scope set out in the guidance for April 2023 to March 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>All agencies involved in the distribution of the funding will be made aware of their equality responsibilities in regards to the Equality Act.</p>
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal:	<p>The cost of the scheme will be funded through the Household Support Fund allocation of £2,659,203.57.</p> <p>The council recognises that the pandemic has exacerbated the inequalities in our society, and this is being further compounded by the increased cost of living. By providing support for those on prescription and at risk of fuel poverty will help to alleviate pressure from the rising cost of energy over recent years.</p>
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	<p>Not to approve spend to provide funding to those at risk of fuel poverty and currently being prescribed medicine. This is not recommended. The Household Support Fund is expected to support households most in need. By providing funding to this demographic will allow for some of the county's most vulnerable individuals to keep warm during the winter months.</p>
Details of any declarations of interest made:	<p>None.</p>

Signed

Date: 07/11/2023