

## Record of operational decision

<b>Decision title:</b>	Decision to provide up to £100k of the Household Support Fund to deliver the high energy medical equipment scheme.
<b>Date of decision:</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> January 2024
<b>Decision maker:</b>	Director of Resources and Assurance
<b>Authority for delegated decision:</b>	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: <a href="#">Decision - Household Support Fund 2023/24 - Herefordshire Council</a>
<b>Ward:</b>	Countywide
<b>Consultation:</b>	Cabinet member for finance, corporate services and planning and cabinet member for children and families were consulted on this decision.
<b>Decision made:</b>	To approve up to £100k of the Household Support Fund grant to deliver the high energy medical equipment scheme. Households can receive up to £250 via a one off payment. In extreme circumstances a further payment will be considered after six weeks of the first payment being issued.
<b>Reasons for decision:</b>	<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 medical equipment that typically consumes high amounts of energy are at greater risk of experiencing fuel poverty due to increased bills during the winter months.</p> <p>Individuals can make a self-referral or be referred by a professional body in order to be considered for the one-off £250 payment. Payment will be made within a 14 day from the referral being received. This scheme has the potential to benefit up to 400 households. Further information on the scheme is provided within the policy (Appendix A).</p>
<b>Equality Considerations:</b>	<p>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.</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</p>

	<p>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>
<b>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal:</b>	<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 with high energy cost due to the use of medical equipment will help to alleviate pressure from the rising cost of energy over recent years.</p>
<b>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</b>	<p>Not to approve spend to provide funding to those at risk of fuel poverty and are currently using high energy medical equipment. 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 not fall into fuel poverty during the winter when bills are typically higher.</p>
<b>Details of any declarations of interest made:</b>	<p>None.</p>

Signed

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024