

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	Award of Funding from the Household Support Fund to the Local Welfare Provision Service to run an open application process for emergency support.
Date of decision:	21 st November 2024
Decision maker:	Head of Communities
Authority for delegated decision:	Cabinet member decision on 7 November 2024 delegated operational matters in relation to the Household Support Fund to the Talk Community Lead Link: Decision - Household Support Fund 6 - Herefordshire Council
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	Cabinet member for finance, corporate services and planning and Director of Finance have been consulted about the approach to support children and families as part of the Household Support Fund framework.
Decision made:	To arrange for up to £75,000.00 of funding from the Household Support Fund to the Local Welfare Provision service for the administration and provision of emergency support through an open application process for households experiencing financial hardship. Full details of the Local Welfare Provision (Household Support Fund) Policy can be found at Appendix 1.
Reasons for decision:	Herefordshire Council has received an allocation of £1,329,601.78 from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) under the Household Support Fund. Part of the funding criteria states that an open application process must be available for all residents within the county to apply. The expectation is that it should be used to support households in the most need; particularly those who may not be eligible for other support the government has made available but who are nevertheless struggling due to the increased cost of living. The council already operates an application scheme for people requiring support in an emergency through its Local Welfare Provision (LWP) service. Utilising this funding enables the LWP service and eligibility criteria for emergency support to be enhanced, by providing additional staff resources to assess and administer applications and distribute the voucher payments. The attached policy provides the local eligibility framework for emergency support to meet crucial needs of a person or household experiencing financial hardship resulting in them struggling to feed themselves or their family, heat their home, or pay for other essential living costs.
Equality Considerations:	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. 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. In summary, this project impacts on protected characteristics as follows: a. Age - Pensioners who are just above the pension credit threshold will be eligible for support for their heating over the winter months. Working with Age UK will enable us to identify those pensioners most in need. b. Disability - Services within the council that work with disabled people in receipt of adult social care services will be asked to identify households in need of support financially to help reduce the impact of increasing energy costs. c. Pregnancy & Maternity - Parents identified by professional colleagues, who need financial support to pay for essentials related to children, for example, nappies, formula milk, clothing, or food. d. Other: Carers, care leavers, homeless,

	<p>economic deprivation - Services within the council that support unpaid carers will be consulted with to consider how financial support can be offered to households most in need.</p> <p>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 the scheme will be funded through the Household Support Fund allocation of £1,329,601.78.</p> <p>By providing an open application process that prioritises low-income households with urgent needs due to rising living costs, 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).</p>
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	<p>Not to approve spend to provide funding through the Local Welfare Provision. This is not recommended. The Household Support Fund is expected to support households in most need. Part of the Household Support Fund criteria is to provide residents with access to support through an open application process. By not proceeding we will not meet the guidelines set out by the DWP.</p>
Details of any declarations of interest made:	<p>None</p>

Signed:
Head of Communities

Date: 21/11/24