

Notice of:	Cabinet Member for Levelling Up, People
Decision Number:	PH41/2024
Relevant Officer:	Antony Lockley, Director of Strategy
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Jo Farrell, Cabinet Member for Levelling Up, People
Date of Decision:	7 May 2024

HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND – ROUND 5

1st April – 30th September 2024

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To outline how the Council will support residents with Government funding that has been provided for the Household fund. The total award for Blackpool is £1.745m for the period 1st April – 30th September 2024.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To agree that a number of processes and schemes as outlined below will be implemented to ensure that the fund will support the most vulnerable residents and to meet the overall fund requirements. The budget allocations are based on current estimates and may need revision as the projects progress. This is because the number of children eligible for free school meals will fluctuate, and this accounts for the majority of the proposed spend.

1. Targeted help:

Extension to free school meals

Families eligible for free school meals will continue to receive support during school holidays. Eligible families will receive vouchers that will be distributed by schools. Vouchers will be issued at the rate of £15 per week for each child entitled to free school meals.

Total estimated budget £1,200,000

Care leavers

Vouchers will be provided for the council's care leavers primarily to help with the increased cost of food.

Total estimated budget £45,000

Other council schemes

Targeted support for residents via Social Care, Family Hub schemes etc. Council services will be able to provide short term support to residents that may be struggling with the cost of food etc

Total estimated budget £120,000

Voluntary Sector Schemes

The potential for voluntary sector schemes will be considered if the budget permits later in the period.

Total estimated budget £100,000

2. Application and criteria based help

Discretionary support scheme

Application based for residents facing hardship with energy bills, food etc. Residents will be able to apply for a payment to help with their power and water utility bills.

There is a mandatory requirement in the funding conditions for an application based scheme to be in place. Payments will normally be made direct to the utility provider.

Total estimated budget £200,000

3. Contingency and administration expenses

The terms of the funding allow for contingency and administration expenses

Total estimated budget £80,000

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 Whatever approach they use, Councils must have a clear rationale or documented policy/framework outlining their approach including how they are defining eligibility and how households access the scheme.

The above schemes are considered the most effective methods to reach those people requiring support in a timely manner.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 There is a requirement to provide support to eligible residents as soon as possible and these arrangements are considered the most effective to provide timely support.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is: “Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience”.

6.0 Background information

6.1 The Household Support Fund was originally launched by the DWP on 6 October 2021 and has now been extended with a fifth round of funding until 30th September 2024. In England the money is being given to county councils and unitary authorities.

6.2 For the period from 1st April until 30th September 2024, Blackpool Council has been allocated £1,745,857.53

6.3 Each local authority can draw up its own procedures and targets for awarding payments, as long as they stay within the DWP’s overall guidelines.

6.4 The money should be primarily be used to help pay for food, energy and water bills for vulnerable households, but other costs can also be covered.

6.5 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

7.1 NA

8.0 Financial considerations:

8.1 Funding will be received from Central Government in arrears. The Council will need to fund the cost of the scheme from reserves until such time as reimbursement has been received. The schemes will end on 30th September 2024 or sooner if funds have been spent. All funding must be spent by 30th September 2024.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 The funding is being used in accordance with the requirements laid down by Central Government.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 Overall project management and monitoring will be undertaken by the Corporate Delivery Unit. Monthly budget monitoring and reporting will take place. There will be a monitoring and reporting process for any Voluntary Sector grants.

The individual proposed budgets for each scheme will be revised during the course of the fund as needs may change as the impact of the cost of living on households will fluctuate.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 An Equalities Impact assessment (EIA) initial screening has been completed using benefit data. The funding is intended to benefit those who are more likely to be on low incomes compared to the overall population of Blackpool. The Voluntary Sector grants scheme will allow further flexibility to target minority groups and those people that are unlikely to approach the council direct for support.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 Internet, phone app and voucher schemes will be used where practicable to reduce the need for paper documentation.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 Consultation has taken place with relevant Stakeholders including Education, Finance, Revenues and Benefits, Public Health, and the local Voluntary Sector.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.

**ONLY APPLICABLE FOR REPORTS WHICH WILL EVENTUALLY BE CONSIDERED BY THE
EXECUTIVE/CABINET MEMBER**

15.0 Key decision information:

15.1 Is this a key decision? No

15.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number:

15.3 If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days? No

15.4 If **yes**, please describe the reason for urgency:

16.0 Call-in information:

16.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process? No

16.2 If **yes**, please give reason:

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

17.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):

Date informed:

Date approved:

18.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

18.1 None.

19.0 Executive decision:

19.1 **The Cabinet Member agreed the recommendations as outlined above namely:**

To agree that a number of processes and schemes as outlined below will be implemented to ensure the fund will support the most vulnerable residents and to meet the overall fund requirements. The allocations are based on current estimates and may need revision as the projects progress. This is because the number of children eligible for free school meals will fluctuate, and this accounts for the majority of the proposed spend.

1. Targeted help:

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Families eligible for free school meals will continue to receive support during school holidays. Eligible families will receive vouchers that will be distributed by schools. Vouchers will be issued at the rate of £10 per week for each child entitled to free school meals.

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2. Application and criteria based help

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There is a mandatory requirement in the funding conditions for an application based scheme to be income based. Payments will normally be made direct to the utility provider.

Total estimated budget £200,000

3. Contingency and administration expenses

The terms of the funding allow for contingency and administration expenses

Total estimated budget £80,000

20.0 Date of Decision:

20.1 7 May 2024

21.0 Reason(s) for decision:

21.1 Whatever approach they use, Councils must have a clear rationale or documented policy/framework outlining their approach including how they are defining eligibility and how households access the scheme.

These schemes broadly follow the approach taken during previous rounds of funding and are considered to be the most effective means of reaching those that are most in need of support in a timely manner.

22.0 Date Decision published:

22.1 7 May 2024

23.0 Executive Members in attendance:

23.1

24.0 Call-in:

24.1

25.0 Notes:

25.1