

EXECUTIVE 18th November 2021

Report Title	Household Support Fund: Proposed Distribution of Funds 2021/2022
Report Author	George Candler, Executive Director for Place and Economy
Executive Member	Councillor Jason Smithers, Leader of the Council

Key Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1974	

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Household Support Fund document (attached)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The Household Support Fund (circa £5.065m across the County of Northamptonshire) will be distributed, via various packages, to families and individuals in specific hardship over the course of the winter period. The report sets out the local strategy and how Community Resilience/Community Engagement teams will attract appropriate referrals across a wide set of situational needs.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Household Support Fund (HSF), announced by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on 30th September 2021, is the third iteration of the COVID-19 Winter Grant Scheme that was originally launched in November 2020. The DWP has made available these funds *“to support those most in need this winter during the final stages of economic recovery.”*

- 2.2 The DWP has given local authorities a wide discretion on how these funds should be used, which is to support those most in need. *“The expectation is that it should primarily be used to support households in the most need with food, energy and water bills. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to those items and with wider essential costs.”*
- 2.3 The latest fund can be delivered between 6th October 2021 and 31st March 2022. In line with previous iterations, there is a stipulation that a minimum of 50% of the fund must be used to support families with children.
- 2.4 North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) and West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) have been initially allocated a combined sum of £5,065,120. Payment for the grant will be made in arrears, following the submission of spending returns to the DWP in February (for the period to 31st January 2022) and April (for the full length of the scheme). The split of funds is based on population and each authority has been allocated:
- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| North Northamptonshire Council | £ 2,465,491.77 |
| West Northamptonshire Council | £ 2,599,628.73 |
- 2.5 The report appendix provides a background to the HSF fund and how this differs from the 2020 grant. The proposal section provides the key focus of the type of support that is recommended. This support ranges from Holiday School Meal Vouchers for the next 2 term holidays to a fuel bank concept which supports the maintenance of energy within the household over the winter period. The process of identifying the individuals and families in need will utilise the Citizens Advice Bureau, Job Centres and other local voluntary organisations. Management and oversight will be provided by the COVID-19 Programme Team.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Executive:
- a. Note that the Household Support Fund investment is to be managed locally;
 - b. Approves the Proposed Scope and Diversity Distribution Recommendations detailed in 4.1;
 - c. Approves the control and oversight approach set out in the Appendix.
- 3.2 Reasons for Recommendations:
- The distribution of funds must meet the wider communities financial needs, where other grants and funding are not available
 - Where possible the level of duplication of grants for the same purpose must be minimised which is why this year the in-house team is recommended
 - It reflects the ‘Levelling Up’ agenda as defined by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 The attached **Appendix A** proposes that the following beneficiary targets (the number of people to be supported) are reached to acknowledge the increased hardship that families and individuals may experience over the period November 2021 to March 2022. The proposal also reflects the national governments desire to maintain the school child holiday meal system, at least until the end of the year.

Proposed Scope and Diversity of Funds Distribution:

	NNC	Notes
Grant Allocation	£2,508,248	Split by population
2021 School Holiday Food Vouchers	£ 457,110	Equivalent to sum approved for October half term and Christmas school break subject to approval.
<i>Funds Remaining</i>	£ 2,051,138	after committed spend

	NNC	Notes
Grant Allocation c/fwd	£2,051,138	Split by population
Winter Fuel Bank	£ 168,000	8,400 @ £40 emergency energy top-ups
Grant Administration	£ 75,247	Estimated at 3%. Breakdown below
<i>Funds Remaining</i>	£1,807,891	after Winter Fuel Bank and Admin

	NNC	Notes
Grant Allocation c/fwd	£1,807,891	Split by population
Household Hardship Grants	£1,350,780	Funds issued as Hardship Grants
Est. Grant Volumes	5,403	CWGS £250 average award.
<i>Funds Remaining</i>	£457,111	after Household Hardship Grants

	NNC	Notes
Grant Allocation c/fwd	£457,111	Split by population
2022 School Holiday Food Vouchers (Feb/April 2022) (if agreed upon)	£ 457,111	2021 summer volumes, +2% for new year additions – subject to Council approval

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1 Whilst constructing a set of ‘determining rules’ (set nationally) for the recommended distribution of the HSF a clear mandate was maintained that 50% of funds must be received by families with children; noting that other vulnerable groups are already supported by the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable fund and that Practical Support Payment Schemes are in existence to support the isolating population. This is in line with national guidance.

5.2 The alternative option was to follow the principles of last year but this would have created duplicate payments which needed to be mitigated.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

6.1.1 The Household Support Fund is incremental to the base budget for 2021/22. It is recommended that three temporary posts are appointed to in order to manage the fund and provide clear distribution controls to be approved formally. The staffing costs will be extracted from the fund as allowed for in the fund terms. All fund monies are expected to be distributed into the community by the end of the financial year.

6.1.2 There are no direct resources or financial implications to NNC budgets arising from the proposals that are not already covered by the grant.

6.2 Legal

6.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from the proposals.

6.3 Risk

6.3.1 Identified Risks:

- Excess requests, for use of funds, from the assumptions provided and therefore the grant will be exhausted. The mitigation would include utilisation of the other funds available as appropriate
- Duplicate requests may be received. The mitigation will be in the form of a control record, held at the centre, of all beneficiaries receiving the drawdowns from the fund.

6.3.2 There are no other significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

6.4 Consultation

6.4.1 No specific consultations were undertaken.

6.5 Consideration by Scrutiny

6.5.1 Not applicable for this report although the work undertaken could be part of the scrutiny work programme.

6.6 Climate Impact

6.6.1 Nothing specific relating to the recommendations in this report.

6.7 Community Impact

6.7.1 The community impact will be positive. Care will be taken when referrals are assessed to ensure that if the Household Support Fund is not appropriate that other funds/packages are identified and handed over i.e. meal vouchers for persons isolating. Communication across the community regarding the fund, the purpose of the fund and where advice can be sought will be critical to the success of accessing the support. The communications plan is under construction.

7. Background Papers

7.1 Household Support Fund Paper, DW&P (30.9.2021)