


Report to:	Cabinet		
Date of meeting:	6 th February 2023		
Report of:	Sue Johnson Chief Executive	Report Number:	32759
Reporting Officer:	Phil Rimmer Assistant Director Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services	Telephone Number:	01204 331541
Contact Officer:	Phil Rimmer Assistant Director Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services	Telephone Number:	01204 331541
Report title:	Household Support Fund, 1 st October 2022 to 31 st March 2023		
Not confidential			
This report does not contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the press or members of the public.			
Purpose:	To seek approval on expenditure proposals relating to the Household Support Fund covering the period 1 st October 2022 to 31 st March 2023.		
Recommendations:	Cabinet is recommended to approve the proposals		
Decision:	N/A		
Background documents:	 FINAL Household Support Fund Guidan		
Consultation with other officers			
Finance	Yes	25.01.23	Tony Glennon
Legal	Yes	25.01.23	Helen Gorman
HR	No	Insert date	
Procurement	No	Insert date	
Climate Change	No	Insert date	
Equality Impact Assessment	Yes	25.01.23	Rebecca Albrow
(a) Pre-consultation reports Is there a need to consult on the proposals?			No
(b) Post consultation reports Please confirm that the consultation response has been taken into consideration in making the recommendations.			No

Vision outcomes Please identify the appropriate Vision outcome(s) that this report relates or contributes to by putting a cross in the relevant box.	1. Start Well	X
	2. Live Well	X
	3. Age Well	X
	4. Prosperous	
	5. Clean and Green	
	6. Strong and Distinctive	

1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The Government, via the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), has recently announced £421 million has been made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need this winter during the final stages of economic recovery.
- 1.2. This funding covers the period 1st October 2022 to 31st March 2023 inclusive. Local Authorities have discretion on exactly how this funding is used within the scope set out in this guidance and the accompanying grant determination. Energy bills may of particular concern to low-income households during the period of the scheme and Local Authorities should especially consider how they can support households with the cost of energy. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to energy and with wider essential costs.
- 1.3. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, it can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is providing funding to County Councils and Unitary Authorities (including Metropolitan Councils and London Boroughs), under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, to administer the scheme and provide assistance to households most in need. It is important to stress this covers a wide range of low-income households, particularly those that cannot increase their income through work, to prevent escalation of problems.
- 1.4. Authorities can deliver the scheme through a variety of routes including providing vouchers to households, making direct provision of food, or issuing grants to third parties (except for debt advice provision). The DWP considers that Local Authorities have the local ties and knowledge, making them best placed to identify and help those most in need.
- 1.5. The Guidance states that Local Authorities should deliver at least part of the support via an application process to ensure that all residents have the opportunity to request support.
- 1.6. Rather than focus on one specific vulnerable group, the DWP have stated that Authorities should use the wide range of data and sources of information at their disposal to identify and provide support to a broad cross section of vulnerable households in their area.
- 1.7. Authorities should particularly consider how they can support residents that have not previously received Cost of Living Support. Support is not restricted to vulnerable households in receipt of benefits.
- 1.8. Bolton has been awarded funding totalling £2,780,316.57
- 1.9. Unlike previous HSF Guidance, there is no requirement for the Local Authority to ringfence the funding to particular resident groups but there is an expectation that

support is available to a range of residents including families with children, pensioners and households that have a member with a disability.

1.10. Eligible spend can include:

- Energy and water
- Food
- Essential linked to energy and water
- Wider essentials
- Housing costs

1.11. The fund cannot be used to provide mortgage support or to fund advice services including debt advice.

1.12. Reasonable administrative costs can be covered by the fund including staffing, advertising, web page design, printing application forms and small IT changes.

1.13. Funding must be spent or committed by 31st March 2022, although unredeemed vouchers can be recycled providing they are used for the same purpose.

1.14. The Authority can also provide funding to third party organizations including registered charities, food banks and voluntary organizations.

2. PROGRESS FOR THE PERIOD 1st OCTOBER 2022 TO 31st JANUARY 2023

2.1. Provision of Supermarket vouchers to families whose children meet the qualifying conditions for Free School Meals (FSM).

Vouchers have been provided to cover the October and Christmas holiday periods. The budget has also accounted for the February half-term holiday.

• Expenditure

October 2022	15,072 vouchers	£227,080
December 2022	15,062 vouchers	£451,860
February 2023	15,257 vouchers	£228,855
Care Leavers	230 vouchers	<u>£ 34,500</u>
		£942,295

2.2 Enhancing the Council's Local Welfare Provision Scheme (LWP)

It was agreed to invest £500,000 into the Council's Local Welfare Provision Scheme for the period 1st October 2022 to 31st March 2023. This was to be added to the Council's investment of £200,000 for the same period providing an overall budget of £700,000.

- **Expenditure and awards**

Expenditure for the period 1st October to 31st December is £508,000 leaving a remaining budget of £192,000.

Gas awards	1,353
Electric awards	1,329
Food awards	1,307
Household Items	230

2.3 Commissioning Community organisations through the Bolton's Fund

The Bolton's Fund opened a Household Support Fund round of bidding in October 2022. A total £200,000 was available with agencies able to use 20% of the funding to cover running costs. The round was significantly oversubscribed with bids exceeding a value of £400,000 highlighting the level of demand.

In total, 14 organisations were successful in securing funding and the details are set out in the table below.

Bolton Lads and Girls Club	Family Essentials Service will provide food, household items, clothing, and utilities support for vulnerable families.	£ 42,240.00
Fortalice Ltd	Provide food and hygiene essentials to low-income households who have experienced domestic violence.	£ 10,320.00
Bolton Community Furniture Store Ltd	To supply white goods and furniture	£ 17,363.50
Bolton Guild of Help	Supporting low-income families with help towards energy costs and other essential needs	£ 25,000.00

Flowhession Foundation	Provide winter packs and core bill support as part of their 'warm hub' offer	£ 6,720.00
Westhoughton Assist Service	To support the demand for food support and energy	£ 4,000.00
Paws for Kids Endeavour Project	Support with the cost-of-living crisis for three of existing projects	£ 16,382.00
Crescent Food Bank	Provide low-income households with food aid and essential appliances support.	£ 23,775.00
High Hopes for Halliwell being	To give out food vouchers/parcel	£ 3,600.00
Baby Basics Bolton and Bury	To provide vulnerable parents with baby essentials that they need to keep them safe.	£ 16,852.50
Urban Outreach	Provision of food hampers	£ 20,000
Halliwell Befriending Service	Cost of living support	£ 2,400
Bolton Carers Support	To provide essential and equipment to keep unpaid carers and the people they care for warm and fed	£ 6,900
Brightmet Community Group	Provide food and support for those accessing the community locker	£ 4,447

2.4 Supporting the creation of Warm Spaces

Bolton's Warm Spaces Project has been managed by Libraries and Museums and has resulted in multiple Warm Space locations across the Borough. Funding was structured on a sliding scale based on the number of days a Warm Space venue was able to operate through the week. Details of the locations and funding levels are set out in the table below.

Postcode	Organisation	Nutrition	Energy	Total
BL1 4AG	Bolton Lads and Girls Club	1440	1000	2440
BL6 5TG	Blackrod Sports and Community Centre	1440	1000	2440
BL1 2AS	Bolton Methodist Mission R/C	480	400	880
BL6 RN	Oldham's Café (Antioch Network Manchester)	240		2440
BL3 4TY	Grace Church Bolton	480	400	880
BL1 2AS	Ephrata Church Community	720		720
BL4 8AJ	St Gregories School	240	200	440
BL6 6AA	Holy Trinity Horwich Parish Church	240	200	240
BL1 1QN	Listing Lounge 1Point(North West) Limited	720	600	1320
BL1 5RR	St Peters Halliwell (CAP)	240	200	440
BL1 5TE	St Andrews Hope Centre	480	400	880
BL4 7PQ	Farnworth Baptist Church Food Bank	1440	1000	2440
BL5 3DS	The Hub at Westhoughton	1440	1000	2440
BL6 5DX	of St Katharine's Parish Blackrod	240	200	440
BL1 3NE	Changing Life Directions	720		720
BL36HU	Bolton Toy Library	1440		1440
BL5 2NG	Senior Solutions Wash acre	480		480
BL4 9SN	The Officials New Bury Vision Group	480		480
BL1 6LL	The Flowhesion Foundation	1440		1440
BL4 7BG	Believe Achieve CIC	1440	1000	2440
BL1 1SB	The Directors Octagon Theatre Trust	720	600	1320
BL1 2AS	Third Space Bolton	720	600	1320
BL3 6UE	Bolton Deane & Derby Cricket Social	720	600	1320
BL3 3BT	Great Lever Connected	1440	1000	2440
CF23DH	The Church of the Nazarene Brownlow FD	1440	1000	2440
BL3 4LG	First Church of the Nazarene	480	400	880
BL3 6AB	Good Companions	1440	585	2025
BL4 8JU	Kearsley Mount Methodist Church	600	720	1320
BL2 6QE	Kings Peoples Church	1440	1000	2440
BL1 1QD	Harmony Youth Project	1440		1440
BL4 8LR	St John Fisher and Schoensalt Shrine Kearsley	480	400	880
BL5 1ER	ST Vincent Presbytery Over Hulton	240	200	440
BL6 6HT	Brazeley Community Centre Horwich	1440		1440
BL6 6NT	St Johns Methodist Church Horwich	480	400	880
BL2 1JP	Haulgh Hub Bradford St	840		840
BL18PA	StPaulsChurchAB	840	700	1540
BL1 2DQ	Bethal Evangelical Church (Clarence St)	240		240

BL4 8ND	Kearsley Parks Veterans Bowling Club	720	600	1320
BL5 5QS	The Bridge Church Horwich	720	600	1320
BL1 1RZ	Age Well in Breightmet	200	240	440
BL4 8EA	Grosvenor Estate Resident Association	480		480
BL4 7AG	Ageing Well Farnworth	480	400	880
BL2 1JX	The Bridge Bradford St	600	500	1100
BL4 9HP	Supported Steps	1440	1000	2440
Various	Precious Gems	1080		1080
BL1 2LU	Adullam Bolton Bridges	720		720
BL2 1JF	Bolton Hindus Age Inspiration	1440		1440
BL6 6JW	Bolton Wanderers in the Community	720	600	1320
BL3 5PA	Khidma Ladies Community Group	1320		1320
BL1 6NL	Astley Bridge Baptist Church	1440		1440
BL2 6DM	Lancashire Wildlife Trust	720	600	1320
BL6 6JP	New Chapel Unity Church	360		360
BL1 3BE	St Lukes Church	960	800	1760
BL1 6DY	Four Seasons Allotment	480	400	880
				69345

2.5 Supporting residents with housing costs

It was anticipated that based on the Discretionary Housing Payment budget for the financial year 2022/23 there would be a need to provide a budget via the Household Support Fund to support residents with housing costs. A budget of £100,000 was set aside and to date £49,527 has been awarded leaving an outstanding budget of £51,473 through the 31st March 2023.

2.5 Administrations costs

A total of £75,000 has been set aside to cover administration costs including the cost of events and publicity & marketing. It is not anticipated that this budget will be exceeded.

2.6 Financial breakdown

HSF Budget	£2,780,316
Vouchers to support children eligible for FSM	£ 942,295
Increase to LWP budget	£ 500,000
Bolton's Fund	£ 200,000
Warm Banks Project	£ 69,345
Housing Costs	£ 100,000
Administrations costs	£ 75,000
Total	£1,886,956

This leaves a remaining budget of £893,676.

3. PROPOSALS FOR ALLOCATING THE REMAINING BUDGET

3.1 Targeted support to Pensioners

Under HSF 2 a third of the funding had to be allocated to Pensioners. Under HSF 3 there is no requirement to ringfence funding but there is an expectation that Pensioners will still receive support.

All residents can apply for support via the Local Welfare Provision Scheme, but we propose to target Pensioners in receipt of Council Tax Support. There are approximately 10,000 Pensioners that fall into this category so a £30 voucher would equate to £300,000 of expenditure.

3.2 Targeted support to residents with a disability

Although there is no ringfence requirement in HSF 3, LA's are encouraged to provide support to residents with a disability. Local Welfare Provision is available to all residents, but we propose to target this group with specific funding.

It is proposed that a budget of £300,000 is set aside to provide some additional support in this area.

3.3 Investment in Bolton Councils Care & Repair Service

Bolton's Care and Repair Service supports residents with boiler repairs, servicing and replacements.

It is proposed that a £25,000 budget is allocated to the service to continue to provide support through to 31st March 2023.

3.4 Further investment in Local Welfare Provision

Bolton's Local Welfare Provision Scheme currently provides a range of support on application including 2 weeks food provision, energy top-ups for residents on meters (£100 for a single resident and £200 for a couple/family) and the provision of essential household items. It is recommended that LWP continues to provide this level of support

There is approximately £200,000 remaining in the allocated LWP budget to cover the period 1st January 2023 to 31st March 2023. It is anticipated that based on current demand and expenditure that this budget will be exhausted by February 2023.

Based on current expenditure levels it is proposed that the remaining HSF budget totalling £268,617 is invested in Bolton's LWP Scheme.

3.5 Vouchers for FSM children over the Easter holidays

The Easter holidays fall the first 2 weeks in April 2023 and consequently fall outside of HSF 3 which ends on 31st March 2023. Funding would need to be released during March 2023 to ensure that the vouchers reached families before the holidays.

The cost of providing a £30 voucher for each child during this period would be approximately £450,000.

The Government has already announced that there will be an extension of HSF for 2023/24 with an overall budget of £842M. Based on previous allocations this would equate to a £5.56M budget for Bolton with draft guidance is expected to be received in February 2023.

Consequently, it is proposed that the Council's Local Welfare Provision budget for the financial year 2023/24 totalling £400K is used to cover the cost of the Easter Vouchers and that this is replaced in 2023/24 with the use of the Household Support Fund.

4. **IMPACTS AND IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Financial

None

4.2 HR

None

4.3 Climate Change

None

4.4 Other

None

5 **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)**

5.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the council has a general duty to have due regard to the need to:

1. **eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
2. **advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and

3. **foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

5.2 It is important to consider how the proposals contained within this report may impact positively or negatively on protected characteristics. It was determined that the proposals, which consider the DWP Guidance, provide financial support to financially vulnerable groups regardless of their protected characteristics. Consequently, it is not anticipated that the proposals within this report will have a differential impact on any of Bolton's diversity groups. A full EIA is therefore not required at this stage.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1** There was no requirement to consult.

7 VISION 2030

- 7.1** The proposals are aimed at providing financial support to residents in the Borough and consequently will help to support a number the key Vision 2030 outcomes of Starting Well, Living Wells and Ageing Well.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1** Cabinet is recommended to approve the recommendations

Appendix 1

Equality Impact Assessment – Screening Questions

Title of report or proposal:
Household Support Fund, 1 st October 2022 to 31 st March 2023, and Bolton's Response to cost of living increases

Directorate:	Corporate Resources
Section:	Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services
Date:	27 th January 2023

Public sector bodies need to be able to evidence that they have given due regard to the impact and potential impact on all people with 'protected characteristics' in shaping policy, in delivering services, and in relation to their own employees.

Under the Equality Act 2010, the council has a general duty to have due regard to the need to:

1. **eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
2. **advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
3. **foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

By completing the following questions, the three parts of the equality duty will be consciously considered as part of the decision-making process.

Details of the outcome of the Equality Impact Assessment must also be included in the main body of the report.

Screening Questions

1. Describe in summary the aims, objectives and purpose of the proposal, including desired outcomes.

1.1. The Government, via the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), has recently announced £421 million has been made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need this winter during the final stages of economic recovery. This funding covers the period 1st October 2022 to 31st March 2023 inclusive and aims to provide financial support to residents to assist with a range of cost-of-living expenses, in particular costs relating to energy and food.

2. Is this a new policy / function / service or review of existing one?

Review of an existing approach.

3. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the proposal?

Bolton residents, with a targeted approach for delivery to protected group. A range of third-party organisations are also primary stakeholders.

4. In summary, what are the anticipated (positive or negative) impacts of the proposal?

It is anticipated that a significant number of Bolton residents will benefit from the support that will be provided via the DWP's Household Support Fund. This will take the form of vouchers, energy top up payments, essential household items and food.

It is not anticipated that there will be any negative impacts, as support will be available to all Bolton residents and will be based on their financial situation and the range of welfare benefits they are in receipt of.

Bolton Council will work with a range of stakeholders to ensure that those that are eligible for support are targeted in line with the HSF Guidance. Engagement will be monitored throughout the programme period for take-up and evaluated, where possible, for none-engagement to understand if barriers are preventing particular groups from accessing.

5. What, if any, cumulative impact could the proposal have?

It is felt that there will be a positive cumulative impact based on the various levels of support available to resident's and the financial support that will be provided to the third sector organisations that are successful in accessing the Bolton's Fund

Contact Officer

Name: Phil Rimmer

Date: 26th January 2023

Directorate Equalities Lead Officer

Name: Rebecca Albrow

Date: 27th January 2023
