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THE CABINET

MEETING, 17TH APRIL, 2023

Councillor Cox	Leader's Portfolio
Councillor Mrs. Fairclough	Deputy Leader's Portfolio
Councillor Haslam	Highways and Transport
Councillor Dean	Stronger Communities
Councillor Muslim	Environmental Service Delivery
Councillor Warren	Regeneration
Councillor Baines	Wellbeing

Other Members in Attendance

Councillor Walsh
Councillor Radcliffe
Councillor Peel
Councillor Mrs. Thomas
Councillor Donaghy
Councillor Haworth
Councillor Hayes
Councillor Sanders
Councillor Heslop

Officers

Ms. S. Johnson	Chief Executive
Ms. H. Gorman	Borough Solicitor
Mr. P. Rimmer	Assistant Director Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services
Mr. T. Glennon	Borough Treasurer
Mrs. V. Ridge	Democratic Services Manager

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Galloway, Grant, Hewitt and Morgan.

Councillor Cox in the Chair.

29. MINUTES

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 27th March, 2023 were circulated and signed as a correct record.

30. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY

The minutes of the meeting of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority held on 24th March, 2023 were submitted for information.

Resolved – That the minutes be noted.

31. HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND, 1ST APRIL, 2023 TO 31ST MARCH, 2024 AND BOLTON'S RESPONSE TO COST OF LIVING INCREASES

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report which sought members approval on expenditure proposals relating to the Household Support Fund (HSF) covering the period 1st April, 2023 to 31st March, 2024.

Members were advised that the Government, via the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), had recently announced £842 million had been made available to County Council's and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need in the financial year. The funding covered the period 1st April, 2023 to 31st March, 2024 inclusive and local authorities had discretion on exactly how the funding was used within the scope set out in the guidance and the accompanying grant determination which were appended to the report.

The report informed members that Bolton had been awarded funding which totalled £5.56 million to cover the financial year 2023/2024 and there was no requirement for the Local Authority to ringfence the funding to resident groups but there

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was an expectation that support was available to a range of residents including families with children, residents with disabilities, pensioners and carers. The eligible spend could include the following, viz:-

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

It was also pointed out that the fund could not be used to provide mortgage support.

The funding must be spent or committed by 31st March, 2024, although unredeemed vouchers could be recycled providing they were used for the same purpose. The Authority could also provide funding to third party organisations including registered charities, food banks and voluntary organisations.

In terms of the proposals for spend, the following was put forward, viz:-

- Provision of supermarket vouchers to families whose children met the qualifying conditions for Free School Meals – this would be aimed at families with children that were both school age and pre-school age (0 to 5 years old). The support would be provided through the May, Summer, October, Christmas and February holiday periods and a voucher to the value of £15 would be issued digitally via the schools and the Council. This would account for approximately £2.15 million of the available grant;
 - Support for Foster Carers – the provision of a £50,000 budget ringfenced to support Foster Carers with increased energy costs;
 - Support for Care Leavers – the provision of a £50,000 budget ringfenced to support Care Leavers with increased energy costs;

- Support for Carers – the provision of a £50,000 budget ringfenced to support Carers with increased energy costs;
- Enhancing the Council's Local Welfare Provision Scheme (LWP) – this would be an application based scheme that provided support in the form of food parcels, gas and electric top ups for those residents on meters, energy vouchers, essential household items and travel costs. It was proposed that using the HSF the Council would provide to 2 weeks food provision and a £50 payment towards fuel costs which would be increased to £100 for couples and families with children. The Council would also continue to support families with essential household items and white goods and the scheme criteria would be relaxed by removing any restrictions that would require claimants to be in receipt of a qualifying benefit. It was also proposed that the Local Welfare Provision (LWP) Scheme be amended and a budget totalling £1.1 million was made available to LWP to cover the period 1st April, 2023 to 31st March, 2024;
- Commissioning Community organisations through the Bolton's Fund – it was proposed to invest £400,000 of HSF in the Bolton's Fund to support a specific round to provide support with food and energy related costs. This would enable third sector organisations in Bolton to submit bids aimed at supporting residents in the community;
- Supporting the provision of Warm Spaces – part of Bolton's Cost of Living Response was aimed at the creation of warm spaces, located across the Borough, where residents could spend time and access a range of support, advice and activities. To step this provision up again from 1st October, 2023 it was anticipated that to facilitate this we would need to provide a range of support including food, hot drinks, activities and a contribution to energy costs and it was proposed that a budget of £100,000 was initially set aside to cover the costs associated with the offer;

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- Money Skills Service – the provision of a £150,000 ringfenced budget to support the work of the Money Skills Service including:-
 - Energy support for residents not on meters;
 - Provision of wider essentials;
 - Event co-ordination; and
 - Money and Debt advice.
- Care and Repair Service – the provision of a £150,000 ringfenced budget to support the work of the Care and Repair Service including support with:-
 - Boiler servicing;
 - Boiler repairs;
 - Boiler replacements; and
 - Support with wider essentials
- Supporting residents with housing costs – the HSF could be used to support residents with housing costs in cases of genuine emergency and there had been a significant increase in residents requesting support in this area. Consequently, it was proposed that a budget of £60,000 be set aside to provide related support;
- Administration costs – there would be administration costs associated with increased LWP demand, an additional Bolton's Fund round, the delivery of cost of living events and publicity and it was therefore proposed that £100,000 be set aside to cover these costs; and
- Winter Contingency Fund – it was proposed that additional funding totalling £1.2 million be set aside to provide further support through the Winter to be approved by the relevant Executive Cabinet Member and the support could include:-
 - Targeted support for Pensioners;
 - Targeted support for residents in receipt of a disability benefit;
 - Additional LWP funding;
 - Additional funding for Money Skills Service;
 - Additional funding for the Care and Repair Service; and

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- Further support for Carers, Foster Carers and Care Leavers.

Resolved – That the proposals relating to the Household Support Fund covering the period 1st April, 2023 to 31st March, 2024, as detailed in the report, be approved.