

## RECORD OF DECISION MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

### **PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

Any interest to declare/ or conflict and any dispensation granted for the Officer or Executive Member  
**[NO]**

Any conflict with any Member of the Panel and the bodies concerned **[NO]**

**SERVICE DIRECTORATE:** Legal and Community

#### **1. DECISION TAKEN**

1.1 Approval to use the Oct 24 to March 25 Household Support Fund phase 6 (£50,000 + £5k admin) to continue a district wide food education project that was delivered from April 23 to Sept 24 using Household Support Fund phases 4 and 5, *and* energy support.

#### **2. DECISION TAKER**

2.1 Executive Member for Community and Partnerships, Cllr Val Bryant, in consultation with the Service Director – Legal and Community.

#### **3. DATE DECISION TAKEN:**

**17.10.24**

#### **4. REASON FOR DECISION**

4.1 £55,000.00 Household Support Fund phase 6 has been allocated to North Herts Council from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) via Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) for the period October 2024 to March 2025. The funding is to be used to support vulnerable households experiencing food and energy poverty.

#### **5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

5.1 There are no other reasonable alternative options.

#### **6. CONSULTATION (INCLUDING THE EFFECT ON STAKEHOLDERS, PARTNERS, AND THE PUBLIC)**

6.1 The Leadership Team have considered the proposals as part of the pre Decision approval by the Executive Member.

#### **7. FORWARD PLAN**

7.1 This decision is not a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

#### **8. BACKGROUND/ RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS**

8.1 Previous district/borough Household Support Funding from 2021 to 2023 provided supermarket vouchers to low-income households distributed by partner organisations. This support continues countywide through Citizens Advice and Hertshelp and vouchers provided through schools to families in receipt of free school meals for school holiday support.

- 8.2 In July 2023, a delegated decision was taken to utilise phase 4 of the fund to provide a district wide food education programme from April 2023 to March 2024 to support households to gain the knowledge, skills and confidence to cook low cost healthy meals, in anticipation of this level of support being withdrawn.

When Household Support Fund phase 5 was announced in March 2024, a further delegated decision was taken in May 2024 to continue these food education programmes for a further 6 months. In addition, a programme of energy efficient cookery courses was introduced which provided participants with air fryers/slow cookers and knowledge in how to utilise them.

From July 2023 to September 2024:

- 8.2.1 177 households received monthly food boxes benefitting 684 individuals and providing 7115 healthy meals from 1423 boxes. Only 6 households dropped out.
  - 8.2.2 731 individual children attended a food education session for under 5's, totalling 1457 attendances.
  - 8.2.3 14 food education sessions were offered to carers supporting 20 individuals and totalling 104 attendances.
  - 8.2.4 31 food education sessions were provided for disabled adults supporting 51 individuals and totalling 582 attendances.
  - 8.2.5 37 food education sessions were offered to older adults, supporting 211 individuals and totalling 487 attendances.
  - 8.2.6 Projects were delivered in partnership with Age UK Hertfordshire, First Garden Cities Homes, Carers in Hertfordshire and numerous pre-schools, nursery classes and community groups.
  - 8.2.7 10 energy efficient cookery courses were offered supporting 103 individuals.
- 8.4 On 2<sup>nd</sup> September the Chancellor announced Household Support Fund phase 6 October 2024 to March 2025 would be funded at the same value as phase 5. With winter looming and the government announcing the universal withdrawal of the winter fuel allowance for all pensioners, HCC directed districts on 2 October to utilise the £50k funding for phase 6 for energy support and food support. The % split HCC require between food and energy support is yet to be confirmed but is anticipated to be 50/50. To continue to deliver a programme of this scale under very short timescales, the Community Wellbeing Team wish to:
- 8.4.1 Invite new referrals to the food box scheme for households who prefer not to access face to face food education classes, containing low cost, healthy ingredients, and recipes for 5 dinners, 5 breakfasts and snacks for a household of 4 to 5 people. Current households received 12 months of support so will not be eligible to be referred again.
  - 8.4.2 Continue to deliver a programme of air frying and slow cooking courses to our deprived communities, including rural locations, working with housing associations and other partners to target those who need it most and supply participants who commit to the programme with an appliance to reduce their energy use in the home.
  - 8.4.3 Work with Citizens Advice to identify pensioners who are no longer eligible for a winter fuel payment and will experience fuel poverty as a result of its withdrawal and provide direct payments for their energy bills.

## 9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Executive Member has delegated authority to make these Executive decisions under section 14.6.9(b)((ii)A 5 of the constitution, in consultation with the Service Director: Legal & Community. That decision will be subject to a 5 clear working day

call-in period, following publication in the Members Information Service (MIS) and on the Council's website.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 50% (£25,000) of the 2024/25 Household Support Fund 6 Oct 24 to Mar 25 funding is to be used for food support in the form of food education programmes and food boxes. This will directly delivered by the Community Wellbeing team at the Council.
- 10.2 50% (£25,000) is to be used for energy support in the form of direct payments for energy costs to pensioners who as a result of losing their winter fuel payment will experience fuel poverty. Payments to Citizens Advice will be staggered and if by early February 2025 it looks unlikely they will be able to use the full allocation, the Community Wellbeing team will work with Citizens Advice and other community partners such as housing associations to identify other households experiencing fuel poverty.
- 10.3 *Both 10.1 and 10.2 could change when HCC confirm the final split required between food and energy support. In which instance this decision covers a default allocation to that set out by HCC.*
- 10.4 A purchase order has not yet been received from HCC but the final allocation of £55k has been confirmed.

## **11. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.
- 11.2 The funding criteria means there is a short timeframe for us to use the allocated money to deliver essential support to vulnerable households. Therefore, there is a potential reputational risk associated with not using the full allocation and not delivering the maximum support possible. This decision notice aims to mitigate the risk by allowing experienced officers to make the required preparations and commence delivery quickly.
- 11.3 To mitigate the risk of our key external partner, Citizens Advice, not being able to utilise the full funding for energy support by the end of March, regular monitoring of spend will be undertaken and other options in 10.2 utilised early in 2025 if needed.

## **12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2 This proposal will target households in the district who are in greatest need and experiencing food and fuel poverty.

## **13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and "go local" policy do not apply to the matters contained within this report, as there are no recommendations on procurement.

**14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 To support both an increase in the consumption of low cost vegetables and assist with food safety, the programme will focus on cooking with vegetarian ingredients, which is reported by the Vegetarian Society to contribute to reduced carbon emissions.
- 14.2 Air frying and slow cooking have been identified as energy efficient in comparison to oven cooking and in particular as electrical appliances emit less carbon than gas equivalents.

**15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 15.1 The work will be overseen by existing members of the Community Wellbeing Team.

**16. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 16.1 None.

**17. APPENDICES**

- 17.1 None.

**NOTIFICATION DATE**

Signature of Service Director Consulted .....

Date 17.10.24

Signature of Executive Member for Community and Partnerships

Decision Taker .....

**Please Note: that *unless urgency provisions apply* EXECUTIVE decisions cannot be implemented until 5 clear working days have elapsed after the decision has been taken to allow for scrutiny call-in.  
Call-in does not apply to NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**