

SCRUTINY ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE	COMMUNITY FOCUS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	22 JUNE 2023	6
HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND			

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

The report provides details of further government grant funding for Household Support. This is the fourth round of Household Support Funding intended to support vulnerable households with essential goods and services in response to the cost-of-living crisis. The latest fund is a further £842 million pounds allocated to upper tier authorities to provide support in the period up to 31 March 2024.

Fylde Council was been notified by Lancashire County Council (LCC) that we will receive a further £540,000 from the fund to support low-income families using similar approaches applied for the previous three rounds of Household Support Fund. This funding was received using urgent decision-making powers due to there being no council meeting in proximity to the funding being received, and the urgency in passporting this to support residents. The Chief Executive used his urgent decision making powers, in consultation with the then Chairman of Environmental Health and Housing Committee together with the Leader of the Council, to prevent loss of continuity with the funding.

As this is a large amount of funding this report is brought before scrutiny in order that it can be appraised of the funding stream, and its use.

SOURCE OF REFERRAL FOR SCRUTINY

Edyta Paxton, Health and Wellbeing Officer

LINK TO RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

[Finance & Democracy 24th January 2022](#) – Approval of a revenue budget increase of up to £150,000 in 2021/22, fully funded from the government grant funding stream for Household Support Grant (Round 1).

[Full Council 4th July 2022](#) - Approval of fully funded budget increase in the sum of £270,000 in 2022/23, fully funded from the government grant funding stream for Household Support Grant (Round 2).

[Full Council 5th December 2022](#) - Approval of fully funded budget increase in the sum of £270,00 in 2022/23, fully funded from the government grant funding stream for Household Support Grant (Round 3).

WHY IS THIS MATTER BEING PLACED BEFORE COMMITTEE FOR SCRUTINY?

As this is a large amount of funding this report is brought before scrutiny in order that it can be appraised of the funding stream, and its use.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUNDING

1. In September 2021, the government announced that vulnerable households across the country would be able to access a £500 million support fund to help them with essentials over the winter period. This funding was provided to LCC with £150,000 allocated to Fylde Council. The grant was to directly help residents who needed it most based on various criteria around income, family size etc. with funds distributed through small payments that supported vulnerable households meet daily costs such as food, clothing, and utilities. The funding was available to individuals and families irrespective of age. The Environmental, Health and Housing Committee has received updated information on the programme expenditure and outcomes.
2. In July 2022, Fylde Council received a further £270,000 from the Household Support Fund through LCC which was to be more targeted at support for the elderly.
3. In October 2022 a third round of Household Support Fund grant was allocated to Fylde council through LCC, a further £270,000 was made available to support households in need up to March 31, 2023, this was allocated on a similar basis to the first round of funding made in September 2021.
4. A fourth round of Household Support Fund grant has been announced by the government with £842 million provided to upper tier authorities to cover the period up to 31 March 2024. Fylde Council was been notified by Lancashire County Council that it would receive a further £540,00 to provide support to vulnerable households for the period running to 31st March 2024. The funds should be spent or committed by 31st March 2024 and should not be carried forward for future use.
5. The Household Support Fund is provided by the Department for Work and Pensions to support those most in need. This fund can be used to help households with children, households with pensioners and other households towards the cost of:
 - a. *Food*
 - b. *Energy / water needs*
 - c. *Essentials linked to energy and water*
 - d. *Wider essentials, where appropriate, such as housing costs and other essential bills*
6. The funding should be used to meet the immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford energy and water bills, food, and related essentials. Authorities can use the funding to support households who are struggling to afford other essentials and in exceptional cases of emergency, the funding can be used to meet housing costs.
7. Authorities have been encouraged to work in partnership with third party organisations to identify individuals and families where there is greatest need. Fylde has taken this approach when allocating the first three rounds of Household Support Fund working with local charities (CAB, Food Bank, Homestart etc) community groups (Well Church, Hope Church, YMCA etc) and Lancashire County Council as well as other neighbouring authorities on initiatives.
8. Appendix 1 to the report provides details of the indicative schemes that the fund will support, many of the initiatives are tried and tested in Fylde from earlier funding rounds. The target population is well known and well informed.
9. Scrutiny members will be provided an update on outcomes of the funding support in six months' time and the guidance of members will be sought on the allocation of future funds should further funding rounds be announced.

Appendix 1 - Allocation of Household Support Fund Round 4 (to 31st March 2024)

- **CAB:** energy bills support through applications £273,000-£289,000
- **CAB:** advisory role, and advice training for leaders of community volunteer groups £53,000
- **Foodbanks:** community support through vouchers and food parcels £60,000-£80,000
- **Homestart:** white goods purchases through signposting / referrals from professionals and partners £10,000
- **Community Cars:** help with transport that can be accessed through referral partners £5,000-£10,000
- Targeted support to disability groups, the elderly and carers would through sign posting and referrals from **One Fylde, Disability first, Empowerment, Age UK**, schools, and the volunteer sector. These groups could signpost directly to CAB, Foodbanks and Homestart start for help.
- **The Housing Service:** multiple schemes as set out below.

£5,000– Aldi vouchers

The fund has been used previously for providing Aldi Vouchers. Payments of £10 or £20 for a single person and £50 for a family have supported clients to purchase food when the food bank is not open usually in an emergency. This scheme has had the biggest impact where households are in B&B prior to going into temporary self-contained accommodation in St Annes, the vouchers have assisted with the extra costs of providing food.

£5,000 – Argos Vouchers

The fund has been used to provide household support packs which included cutlery, bedding, toasters, kettles etc. The provision of such items has been essential when clients move into new accommodation. The use of vouchers to provide household items essential for everyday living has been very successful in previous funding rounds with demand still evident.

£20,000 – white goods and carpets

The ability to assist clients with up to £400 towards cooker/fridge/carpets made a significant difference to households moving into accommodation along with the smaller items support scheme.

£30,000 – Top up Rent in Advance and Bond/RIA for households in employment

The Housing service currently has a high number of households in temporary accommodation whose options for social housing are affected by the lack of turnover in housing stock and private rental levels being unaffordable given their present circumstances. Households in receipt of HB can apply for rent bond or rent in advance from DHP and Vickers Relief. Many can source accommodation slightly above LHA rates, concerns around affordability after 6 months results in applications to DHP and Fylde Council Help 2 Rent scheme being refused. The additional funding has been used to fund a top up from HB levels for 6 months' rent in advance enabling the move into independent accommodation out of temporary accommodation. For households in employment the options for rent bond or RIA are limited to Vicars Relief Charity as they are not eligible for DHP funding. The additional funding would be used to assist these households into independent accommodation and based on affordability would cover the rent bond and rent in advance.