

WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

RECORD OF OFFICER EXECUTIVE DECISION

TITLE:	HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND
Decision Taken By:	Mark Fitton – Strategic Director of Adults & Communities (DASS)
Cabinet Member	Cllr Karen May (Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities)
Decision Made*	To approve the use of the Household Support Fund 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025 for Worcestershire as outlined below.
Is this Report Exempt as per Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	No
Decision taken under the following delegation:	<p>The 30 March 2023 Cabinet report for Household Support Funding contained the following delegation:</p> <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>“b) Delegated the implementation of the delivery of the Household Support Fund including the allocation of any extension to the grant within the terms applicable to it, to the Strategic Director of People in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities and in liaison with the Chief Finance Officer.”</p> <p>Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 30th March, 2023, 10.00 am - Worcestershire County Council (moderngov.co.uk)</p>
Division(s) Affected	Countywide
Date of Decision*	8 October 2024
Summary of Decision*	<p>Following on from the announcement of a further Household Support Fund scheme in a press release on 2 September 2024 and formal confirmation being sent by the Department of Work and Pensions on 24 September 2024, the following proposals have been developed in conjunction with key delivery partners including; District Councils, Worcestershire Advice Network and Act on Energy.</p> <p>There are some minor changes to the guidance for the latest round of funding, therefore this new fund implementation will remain broadly in line with the delivery plan from the last six month</p>

programme with some seasonal related variations and investment into information and advice as preventative activity.

The total grant allocation is **£3,949,139** over six months and the activity breakdown is proposed as follows:

Food - £1,056,000

Holiday food vouchers in October and February half term and the Christmas holidays for children in receipt of free school meals, plus an additional allocation to each district council specifically for food.

Energy - £815,000

Continue the energy support scheme through Act on Energy for support with energy costs, energy debt and new heating systems for eligible households. Additional top up payments for those with high energy use medical devices will be added in, and additional funds to the off grid post office voucher scheme, delivered through Worcestershire Advice Network. The Money Management Advisors employed through the Citizen's Advice in the county will also be extended for a further six months supporting eligible residents with energy debts. Home energy checks will also continue to be available to older vulnerable residents, plus wider advice and signposting as relevant, delivered by the two Age UK's in the county.

Food/Energy/Wider essentials – £497,500

Continue the Post Office voucher scheme delivered through Worcestershire Advice Network, including support for low income households for pensioners, carers, and those residents with a disability. Cash vouchers of £75 - £225 are available depending on number of criteria met. New Pension Credit recipients will also receive a one off £75 Post Officer cash voucher. One off winter payments for shared lives carers and care leavers are also included.

District Councils funding – £899,139

Plans for district spend will be submitted in October for inclusion in the DWP delivery plan which will cover a range of activity across all eligible spend areas including; food banks, vouchers schemes, discretionary social welfare schemes and voluntary sector grants.


Administration, staffing and contingency - £256,500

Costs towards staff support, contract and administration costs for schemes and contingency funding to cover demand over the winter. This is a larger contingency than previous schemes due to the unknown impact of the winter fuel payment changes and potential increase in applications across schemes.

Information, advice and prevention - £425,000

A number of schemes split their administration costs between advice and administration to ensure capacity is in place to provide some longer-term advice rather than the one-off voucher only. In addition, there is a proposed allocation per district area of additional prevention activity through information and advice provision which will be delivered through WAN partners, contracted through the county council. A further allocation per district is also included to

	<p>support warm spaces or equivalent activity (including food, to be agreed locally at district level).</p> <p>District Council allocations are as follows, and calculated using the Index of Multiple Deprivation figures, (as agreed by District Council Chief Executives in February 2023).</p> <table> <tr> <td>Bromsgrove</td> <td>£96,573.50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Malvern Hills</td> <td>£132,645.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Redditch</td> <td>£185,964.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Worcester</td> <td>£168,543.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wychavon</td> <td>£130,168.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wyre Forest</td> <td>£185,245.50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>£899,139.00</td> </tr> </table>	Bromsgrove	£96,573.50	Malvern Hills	£132,645.00	Redditch	£185,964.00	Worcester	£168,543.00	Wychavon	£130,168.00	Wyre Forest	£185,245.50	Total	£899,139.00
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Reason(s) For Decision*	<p>Tier one authorities (County or Unitary Councils) are required to deliver the Household Support Fund grant. The new programme was confirmed by the Department of Work and Pensions on 2nd September 2024 and the guidance and budget confirmed on the 24th September 2024 with a 1st October 2024 start date. A formal decision on the delivery is required before the new programme can commence.</p>														
Alternative Options Considered and Rejected	<p>Do nothing – if a delivery plan is not considered and approved, the funding from the Department of Work and Pensions would not be available to support Worcestershire residents in relation to the increase cost of living.</p> <p>No other options were considered following engagement with lead partners. The currently delivery plan has been agreed as the most effective way to support residents within the short delivery period of six months.</p>														
Summary of any financial implications	<p>There are no direct financial implications as this programme of activity, delivered through the Household Support Fund Grant, is fully funded through the external grant from the Department of Work and Pensions</p>														
Summary of any legal implications	<p>Worcestershire County Council has a statutory duty regarding children and are generally responsible for Local Welfare Assistance. The Department for Work and Pensions has provided this funding to the Council under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, to administer the Household Support Fund and provide assistance to households most in need. Local Authorities have a discretion on exactly how this funding is used but it must be within the scope set out in the grant conditions and guidance documentation provided by the DWP. The expectation is that it should primarily be used to support households in the most need particularly those including children, pensioners, disabled residents and carers who would otherwise struggle with energy bills, food, water bills, other essential household costs and housing costs in exceptional circumstances.</p>														
Consultation process and results	<p>The Chief Financial Officer and the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Communities have been consulted on this decision.</p>														

	District Council Chief Executives have also been consulted alongside District Council lead officers for the programme and key stakeholder delivery partners.
Equality duty Implications	The impact assessments completed as part of the Cabinet report for Household Support Fund delivery in 2023/24 approved on 30 March 2023 remain current and up to date, as the delivery activity remains the same.
Social Value Implications	There are no social value implications.
Any Conflict of Interest declared by a consulted Cabinet Member/ any dispensation granted*	None
Background documents*	Cabinet report for Household Support Fund delivery in 2023/24 approved on 30 March 2023.
Signature	
Reference/Date Published	For use by Democratic Services only
Monitoring Officer Review needed	Yes/No (delete as appropriate)

*Legal Requirement