

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I111749
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1. **TITLE:** Household Support Fund (Phase four)

2. **SERVICE AREA:** People

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To set out the proposals for distributing the fourth phase of the Household Support Fund, provided by the Department for Work & Pensions. It must be used between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.

4 **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

RESOLVED that the Household Support Fund (phase four) be distributed through:

- i. Purchasing supermarket vouchers, or for opted schools to make equivalent arrangements, for children qualifying for Free School Meals in Bracknell Forest primary and secondary schools. Households will receive a £15 voucher per child per week of the holidays.
- ii. Purchasing pre-paid cards or supermarket vouchers to distribute to lowincome households receiving income-based council tax reduction or housing benefit but not the benefits, such as universal credit, which would
- iii. Enhancing the Local Welfare Scheme provision, allowing applications from households in hardship who would not otherwise automatically qualify for the support above.
- iv. Provide application-based grants to the voluntary, community and faith sector organisations to provide direct support to residents.

RESOLVED that the contract as per the strategic procurement plan (appendix A) using the Crown Commercial Framework RM6248. This would provide the required vouchers and payments set out in 2.1 of the report and the scope for further purchases, should additional grant funding be allocated.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

- i. The Household Support Fund (HSF) is provided by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), but local authorities must determine how it is spent within the scope of the guidance issued. The local authority is required by the DWP to create a local eligibility framework to disburse the funding.
- ii. Recommendations have been established based on learning from how the previous equivalent Covid Winter Grant, Covid Local Support Grant and Household Support

Fund was spent.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

The financial hardship officers' group and Members welfare steering group considered a range of options for spending the HSF. It was concluded that these other options would not be as effective as those recommended in terms of efficiently disbursing funds to those most in need, whilst keeping within the guidelines set out by DWP. The proposals follow the previously agreed mechanism in distributing preceding tranches of funding, accounting for the learning from these. Discussions with other councils also show that many are continuing to fund supermarket vouchers and boosting existing support mechanisms such as welfare funds.

9. DOCUMENT CONSIDERED: Report of the Executive Director: People

10. DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: None

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
21 March 2023	28 March 2023