

**Bracknell Forest Council
Record of Decision**

Work Programme Reference	I103704
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1. **TITLE:** Household Support Grant Distribution and Procurement

2. **SERVICE AREA:** Chief Executive's Office

3. **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

The distribution of the Household Support Fund

4 **IS KEY DECISION** Yes

5. **DECISION MADE BY:** Executive

6. **DECISION:**

- i. supermarket vouchers be purchased, or for opted schools to make equivalent arrangements, to provide support over the Summer and October Holidays to children qualifying for Free School Meals in Bracknell Forest schools and the equivalent under 5s. Households will receive a £15 voucher per child per week of the holidays. As detailed in 5.4(a)
- ii. pension age households who are in receipt of pension credit or council tax reduction are provided with a one-off supermarket voucher in June of £100. As detailed in 5.4(b)
- iii. the remaining funding of approximately £15,000, and the value of any unredeemed vouchers, be used to target low income working age disabled and carer households without children, and care leavers with a supermarket voucher of £50. As detailed in 5.4(c). If more funding is available, the decision to increase this value is recommended to be delegated to the Chief Executive.
- iv. the Discretionary Fund element of the Council Tax Energy Rebate is initially used to provide financial support to working age and pensioner households occupying properties in Council Tax Bands E-H who currently receive income based council tax support and also to care leavers, as set out in paragraph 5.10.
- v. authority for agreeing proposals to allocate the remainder of the Discretionary Fund element of the Council Tax Energy Rebate be delegated to the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Learning, advised by the Members Welfare Steering Group.

7. **REASON FOR DECISION**

1. To seek endorsement on each of the recommendations to enable the rapid and widespread distribution of the funding to households in the community.
2. The Household Support Fund has been provided by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), but the local authority must determine how it is spent within the

scope of the guidance that has been set out. The local authority is required by the DWP to create a local eligibility framework to disburse the funding. 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.

3. In addition to the mandatory Council Tax Energy Rebate which is payable to households in Band A to D properties who pay their energy bills, as directed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, there is also a Discretionary Fund. Councils are required to individually determine how to allocate the Discretionary Funding to households that are energy bill payers but not covered by the main scheme. Bracknell Forest's allocation is £184,650.
4. Financial Hardship is increasing and has seen a drastic increase due to the pandemic and cost of living increases. Therefore, making these recommendations aims to help alleviate the financial pressures this is causing for people. Presenting the two funds together aims to align with work across the council, maximise the reach of the funding and minimise unwanted duplication.

8. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

1. The financial hardship officers group considered other options for spending the household support fund, but it was concluded that these 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. Several other options have been considered, including grants to voluntary and community sector organisations and fuel support for households on pre-payment metres but these are more complex and labour intensive. The proposals follow agreed practice in distributing previous tranches of this funding.
2. A range of approaches have been considered for the disbursement of the Energy Rebate Discretionary Funding, including having a completely flexible application process that any household can apply for. However, the absence of any defined criteria would mean that assessment of eligibility would be both complex and subjective and would require more resources to effectively distribute the funding. The existing Hardship Fund is well established, and it is felt that this remains the best route to direct households in acute financial hardship towards.

9. **DOCUMENT CONSIDERED:** Report of the

10. **DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** None

Date Decision Made	Final Day of Call-in Period
24 May 2022	31 May 2022