

Report of the Director Customer and Communities

Household Support Fund April – September 2022

Summary

1. This paper presents the Household Support Fund (HSF) scheme April to September 2022 to the Executive Member for Finance & Performance in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing & Safer Neighbourhoods for approval.

Recommendations

2. The Executive Member is asked to approve:
 - a) the council's HSF scheme (Annex A).
 - b) allocation of £50k in funding to food vouchers (Paragraph 9 and Annex A)
 - c) the delegation of discretion to pay claims made within the broader scope of the scheme guidance as set out by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (Annex B) to the Head of Customer & Exchequer Services.

Reason: To provide financial support to the city's most financially vulnerable residents through the April – September 2022 arising from the ongoing cost of living increases.

Background

3. On 23 March 2022, the government announced in the Spring Statement that the Household Support Fund (HSF) would be extended from 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022.
4. The purpose of the scheme is to help to support households in the most financial need arising from the current cost of living increases

particularly those including children and pensioners who would otherwise struggled with energy bills, food and water bills. At least one third of the total funding must be spent on families with children and at least one third must be spent on pensioners. In terms of type of support, the expectation is that the HSF extension (April – Sept 22) should be used in a similar way as the original HSF scheme, with a greater emphasis on supporting households with energy bills. Food and water bills also remain. The Government guidance is set out at Annex B.

5. The total funding including any administration costs for City of York Council is £1.037m. The funding is paid retrospectively in July 2022 and October 2022 following management returns and all funding must be spent or committed by 30th September 2022.

HFS Scheme

6. This is the fourth government scheme following the Winter Support Grants (WSG) from December 2020 to April 2021, the Local Covid Support Grant (LCSG) from April 2021 to September 2021 and the initial HSF scheme October 2021 to March 2022. The scheme allows as far as possible to mitigate the necessity for all potentially qualifying customers to have to make a claim. The previous HFS scheme made grant payments directly to families with children claiming Council Tax Support (CTS) and under the new scheme this can be extended to pensioners claiming CTS. The scheme still requires that proper security checks are undertaken before making any payment.
7. The HFS scheme is set out at Annex A of this report and will facilitate support payments to all qualifying families and pensioners experiencing financial difficulties. Whilst those families and pensioners already identified will receive payment automatically any resident in the city can apply for support through the online application process. This includes families with or without children and whether a couple or a single person. The level of support are set out at Table 1 below:

Table 1

Families with dependent children

Household	Children	Amount £ (x1)
Family (single)	1	150
Family (single)	2	175
Family (single)	3	200
Family (single)	4+	225
Family (couple)	1	175
Family (couple)	2	200
Family (couple)	3	225
Family (couple)	4+	250

Households over state pension age

Per household	Amount £100
---------------	-------------

Households receiving enhanced PIP

Per household	Amount £100
---------------	-------------

8. The scheme is there to support those with financial difficulties with food and support around heating and other utility bills. A resident does not have to be in receipt of DWP benefits to claim and each claim will be considered on its own merits. Any resident who does not qualify will be signposted to other support both internally and externally including the York Financial Assistance Scheme (YFAS).
9. The previous HSF scheme provide funding support for heating vouchers. The council budget 2022/23 provided further £50k of funding for the heating voucher scheme. The new HSF scheme recommends that £50k of the funding is allocated to food vouchers using the same voucher scheme as the fuel vouchers. The purpose is to ensure that there is more capacity across the city to manage food poverty by the council and its third sector partners through to September 2022.

Analysis

10. The difference between this scheme and the former HSF scheme is that it importantly brings financially vulnerable pensioners into focus. The impact of this is that the funding previously provided to families will be considerably reduced and this means that all qualifying customers who we pay directly under the scheme will be paid once before summer school holidays as opposed to two payments as in the former scheme. The direct application for all other residents will open after the approval of the scheme.
11. Whilst it may seem to be a considerable gap between approval and payment this is arising due to additional pressures in administering the Energy Rebate to over 70,000 customers of which approximately 20,000 do not pay by direct debit so will need to apply for their rebate. However most of the qualifying households for the new HSF scheme will qualify for the energy rebate so will receive £150 during April and May in advance of HSF payments during June and July.
12. In addition to this there is continuing support through the York Financial Support Scheme (YFAS) and access to fuel vouchers following the council's budget commitment of a further £50k of funding.

Consultation

13. This is a Government scheme and there was no consultation with City of York Council on its design. There is, however, some latitude within the scheme on how it is delivered and the council has consulted with its Advice York partners as part of the Equalities Impact Assessment (Annex C) on how it will be delivered. The scheme has been discussed with the council's charity, voluntary and community sector partners (Advice York) and reflects their thoughts in terms of getting money to families and pensioners as quickly and simply as possible

Implications

- 14.

Financial

There are no financial implications as this is Government grant not council budget. The council does not receive new burdens in respect of this scheme but can take reasonable administration costs that are reported through the management return. The council

costs are estimated at £50k. Any risk around not spending the grant is outlined in Paragraph 15 below.

Human Resources (HR)

There are no HR implications.

Equalities

This report will impact on all communities equally. Equalities Impact Assessment attached at Annex C

Legal

No implications

Crime and Disorder, Information Technology and Property

No implications

Risk Management

15. The key risk associated with this paper relates to ensuring that the scheme is delivered within and up to the financial value of the Government grant received. This is managed by basing the scheme on existing data around vulnerable family numbers in the city and taking a prudent approach to the grant payments.

Author responsible for the report:

David Walker
Head of Customer &
Exchequer Services

Chief Officer responsible for the report:

Pauline Stuchfield
Director Customer and Communities

**Report
Approved**



Date
27/04/22

Specialist Implications Officer(s):

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Financial Strategy 2022/23 to 2026/27 - _ Budget papers presented to Executive 7/2/2022 and Full Council 17/2/2022 available at:

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MId=12800&Ver=4>

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=331&MId=12807&Ver=4>

Annexes

Annex A – HSF Scheme

Annex B – DWP Guidance

Annex C - EIA