

## Briefing Note – Increasing the value of food and fuel vouchers

May 2023

### Background

1. The Charis food and fuel voucher scheme was introduced by City of York Council during the first household support fund scheme (HSF) from October 2021 to March 2022. It provides food and fuel support to financially vulnerable residents based upon their personal circumstances. It was and continues to be open to all York residents with each application being judged on its own merits. In delivering the initial HSF scheme and all subsequent HSF schemes the council has taken a cash first approach. The Charis food and fuel voucher scheme has allowed for additional support to residents supplementary to the councils York Financial Assistance Scheme (YFAS).
2. The Charis scheme uses Government money, and this was further supplemented by council in 2022 (Budget £50k plus £200k covid funding). The scheme is operated through Charis Grants which provides the vouchers and is used by many councils including North Yorkshire County Council. The vouchers are issued by the council along with its third sector partners including CAY and Peasholme.

### **Increasing the value of vouchers**

3. The HSF schemes followed on from covid support grants (Winter Support Grants) but as the country moved out of pandemic the grants became more focussed on cost-of-living support. The food and fuel voucher scheme allows up to 3 applications however the inflationary pressures compared to the value of the vouchers issued have not stayed inline.
4. This briefing note and attached officer decision recommends the following the increases:

## Food

Standard Award Amounts	Current Amount	Proposed Amount
Single person household	£30	£60
Two or more-person household	£60	£100
Six people or more household	£100	£150

## Fuel

Standard award amounts	Current amount	Proposed amount
Single person household	£28	£56
Two or more-person household	£49	£98

5. The increase will help to reduce the frequency of demand whilst more fairly reflecting the increase in costs over the last 18 months. The balance is that the funds in the Charis scheme are one off and the money will eventually run out so increasing the value will bring this forward, however the existing budget should support the scheme until at least the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2024.
6. After March 2024 residents can still apply for to the YFAS scheme which also includes food vouchers. The YFAS scheme has to a certain extent been protect through covid and to a lesser extent during the cost-of-living crises by the Governments financial support. However, in terms of context the YFAS scheme overspent by approx. £60k in 2022/23 despite the HSF schemes. This overspend included the one off £50k additional support that ends March 2024.