

<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE</b>	<b>DATE</b> 3 December 2021
<b>TITLE</b> Greenwich Together for Winter – Household Support Grant	<b>WARD (S)</b> All
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b> Director of Children’s Services	<b>CABINET MEMBER</b> Business & Economic Growth; Finance and Resources; Children and Young People
<b>DECISION CLASSIFICATION</b> Key decision Exempt from call in Urgent decision for the reasons set out in paragraph 2 Non-exempt report	<b>IS THE FINAL DECISION ON THE RECOMMENDATION(S) IN THIS REPORT BEING MADE AT THIS MEETING?</b> Yes

I. **Decision required**

This report makes the following recommendations to the decision-maker:

- I.1 To agree that the Department for Work and Pension’s Household Support Fund allocation can be used in accordance with section 5 of the report for:
- delivery of new Targeted Payments to support those at risk over the winter period including children on Free School Meals during the School Holiday periods.
  - support the delivery of existing support schemes related to the conditions of the grant
- I.2 To utilise the grant to cover payments made during the October half term period.
- I.3 To award a Food Poverty grant (paragraphs 5.15-5.16) to Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency
- I.4 To award the Stay Warm, Stay Safe grant (paragraphs 5.17-5.18) to Charlton Athletic Community Trust as part of supporting Fuel Poverty.

- 1.5 To agree to the allocation of £100,000 to the Winter Support Grant Scheme (paragraphs 5.19-5.20);
- 1.6 To delegate authority to the Director of Children’s Services, in consultation with the Director of Finance, to decide on the award of the £100,000 allocation to the Winter Support Grant Scheme, which is therefore to be the subject of a separate decision report in early 2022 .
- 1.7 Note that the cost of the measures outlined will be met in full by the government, including the cost of administration.

**Agreed / ~~Not Agreed~~:**

**Date: 3 December 2021**

Signed.....  
Debbie Warren, Chief Executive

**2. Reason for Urgency**

- 2.1 The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the lives of Greenwich residents and more widely. As part of supporting the recovery from the pandemic the Government announced the launch of a new Household Support Grant. The aim of the fund is to support vulnerable households with a focus on addressing essential costs such as energy and food.
- 2.2 The final guidance on the grant conditions including allocation was issued to Local Authorities on 5 November. This has enabled Officers to confirm proposals for spend in line with the Department for Work and Pensions guidelines, including recommended payments to children on Free School Meals (FSM) over the winter holiday periods.
- 2.3 An item was subsequently placed on the Key Decision Forward Plan. However, when taking into account:
  - 28 days’ notice to be given for a key decision;
  - 5 clear days’ notice to be given before the decision is taken; and
  - Call in to expire;

this would only enable the delivery of the schemes set out in this paper to commence at the earliest from 5pm on 21 December. Given the impact of Covid on vulnerable household's health, social and economic wellbeing there are clear grounds for extreme urgency that mean it would not be prudent, nor in the public/taxpayer's interest to delay support until this date to households. Delivering the schemes set out in this report earlier than 21 December would enable the provision of extra financial support to start prior to the Christmas holiday period.

- 2.4 For the reasons set out above, the Chief Executive has agreed both that the decision proposed is reasonable and is to be treated as a matter of urgency because any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would prejudice the public interest.
- 2.5 Given that the decision is urgent and cannot be reasonably deferred, the agreement of the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been obtained under paragraph D16 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules in the Constitution that the decision be taken without giving the notice referred to in paragraph 2.3 above.

### 3. **Links to the Royal Greenwich high level objectives**

- 3.1 This report relates to the Council's agreed high-level objectives as follows:

- A Healthier Greenwich
- A Great Place to Grow Up
- Economic prosperity for all
- A Great Place to Be
- A Strong Vibrant and Well-run Borough

### 4. **Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 4.1 This report sets out recommendations for the allocation of the DWP Household Support Fund Scheme.

### 5. **Introduction and Background**

- 5.1 On Thursday 30 September the Department for Work and Pensions announced extra targeted financial support for those in need over the winter period with further details to be released. The policy intention of the grant is that it should provide assistance to vulnerable households.

- 5.2 Draft guidance and allocations were shared with Local Authorities on Wednesday 6 October. In Greenwich the grant totals £2,378,692.91 and the spending period can begin from 6 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. Final guidance was then subsequently issued on 5 November 2021 confirming the allocation and time period.
- 5.3 This guidance sets out the expectations that funding is used to support households in the most need with food, energy and water bills. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to those items and with wider essential costs.
- 5.4 The guidance provided confirms the following:
- At least 50% of funding is ring-fenced for families with children.
  - The funding is to cover the whole winter period from 6 October 2021 up until 31 March 2022.
  - The scheme is not intended to cover payment of rent or other housing costs but in exceptional cases of genuine emergency it can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need.
  - LAs will be required to collect certain data on the beneficiaries of the funding (e.g. number and composition of the households/individuals receiving support).
  - The money can be used in a variety of different ways such as “including providing vouchers to households, making direct provision of food, or issuing grants to third parties (with the exception of debt advice provision)” (DWP Guidance).
- 5.5 The final guidance also sets out how Local Authorities should develop a ‘local eligibility framework and approach’ to enable the distribution of the grant to support those most in need. This report sets out Greenwich’s framework and approach to distributing the funding in order to maximise the use of the grant locally to help residents.

### **Proposed Greenwich Approach**

- 5.6 In Greenwich we will be building from a position of strength, with a well-established Food Poverty and Holiday Hunger programme and direct support through provision such as the Emergency Support Scheme delivered by RBG’s Advice and Benefits Service. This is in addition to the work that takes place through local voluntary and community

organisations and the food and hospitality sector. The approach of building off the existing infrastructure enables the benefits of the funding to last beyond the grant period. The utilisation of the local Greenwich infrastructure such as the Emergency Support Scheme and Community Hub means that households can be linked in to a network of local services that can provide support beyond the scope of the funding. This includes on areas such as mental health, childcare and housing.

- 5.7 In order to utilise the grant in a way that meets the need of a range of residents, it is proposed to distribute the funding across a number of areas set out below. As with the previous Covid Winter Grant, we will be co-ordinating the different initiatives under the single programme of 'Greenwich Together for Winter'.

### **Household Support Fund Scheme – Provision**

- 5.8 It is proposed to allocate the grant funding to the areas of work as set out in this section. Each scheme is allocated up to a specified amount of funding. There are a variety of ways households will access support and in developing the wider programme of initiatives, we have recognised that there is not one approach that works well for all groups. Changing circumstances may also mean that more households may become eligible for support and others may not require it anymore. As this is the case, we have allocated more than the total grant amount across all the schemes with the intention of reviewing take up over the programme and adjusting allocations as required to meet needs. This approach will ensure that all the grant allocation is utilised for the full benefit of Greenwich households.

### **Targeted Support Payments**

- 5.9 It is recommended to allocate up to £2,000,000 on the delivery of targeted payments to vulnerable households. This will enable payments to be made directly to groups in supporting the provision of food and help tackling fuel poverty by supporting with utility costs to ensure children, young people and households are warm and well-fed this winter.
- 5.10 The following payments are proposed for different groups.

Targeted Group	Funding	Estimated Cohort	Description
Children and Young People Taking Up Free School Meals	£15* per week per child for the two School Holiday Periods	10,000 – 11,000 children	Funding of £15 per week per child is allocated to all those currently in receipt of a FSM within a Greenwich School. This funding will be for covering payments made during the October half term and to be used for future FSM payments to be made for Christmas, February half term and Easter <sup>1</sup> .
Children and Young People Eligible for Free School Meals by not taking it up	£15* per week per child for the School Holiday Periods		Funding will be allocated to those eligible for FSM but not currently taking this up. This funding will be publicised directly to eligible households as an incentive to drive greater take up of entitlement where this is not happening.
Children Under 5	£100* per child	4,500-5,000 children	In providing support for children in Free School Meals it is recognised that there is a gap with those children not at school age. It is therefore proposed to make a targeted payment to vulnerable households with children under 5. This payment will be aligned with work to increase the number of Healthy Start beneficiaries in the borough.
Care Leavers	£250* per Care Leaver	250 – 300 young people	Care Leavers have experienced a number of challenges throughout Covid and are a particularly vulnerable cohort. As

<sup>1</sup> While the grant period is to 31 March 2022, the funding for the Easter Holiday is paid the week before, which is the last week of March. In line with DWP conditions this is therefore within scope of the grant.

			Corporate Parents the Council has a responsibility to these young people and this funding will provide each Care Leaver with support with food and utility costs over the winter period.
Children in Nil Recourse to Public Funds Households	£100* per household	150 households	This funding will support those households with children that are Nil Recourse to Public Funds Households.

\* The final confirmed amount will be determined once the total number of households eligible has been finalised.

- 5.11 Funding had been provided to FSM pupils for the October half term to support households during the holiday period. It is recommended to use funding from the Household Support Fund to cover this expenditure for this holiday period.
- 5.12 The targeted payment groups set out in the table above will be reviewed in January and subject to availability of funding, additional groups may be added.

### **Emergency Support Scheme**

- 5.13 The Council already delivers an emergency support scheme to provide discretionary support to local residents in difficult times. Residents may choose to engage with the Emergency Support Scheme (ESS) as a means of accessing help over the winter period. As we want to provide services around the needs of our residents and the objectives of the DWP Grant align with the principles of the ESS, it is proposed to allocate £100,000 and any unallocated funding from the grant to support the Emergency Support Scheme. This will ensure the maximisation of the grant but also ensure assistance can be provided through an existing pathway than many vulnerable households access.
- 5.14 As part of the additional funding the criteria for accessing the Emergency Support Scheme will be reviewing to enable greater support to be paid. Support as part of the scheme will also include the replacement of white

goods through wear and tear. In exceptional circumstances it may also include support payments linked to housing in line with the grant criteria.

### **Food Poverty**

- 5.15 It is recommended to award up to £100,000 to Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency to fund the provision of food to Greenwich Food Pantries and the Food Bank. The funding will purchase fresh fruit, vegetables and ambient food for each of the four Food Pantries and the Greenwich Foodbank. This will top up the donations and the surplus food that each organisation depend upon, ensuring a safe, steady supply of nutritious food for residents who are experiencing food insecurity.
- 5.16 In Greenwich, there are four Food Pantries. Three are jointly funded by Feeding Britain and Family Action and are based in Thamesmead, Charlton Athletic Football Club and Eltham Green Church. The fourth pantry has been established for over three years and is based in Charlton delivered by Peabody (previously Charlton Triangle). A Food Pantry (sometimes called a Food Club) aims to provide good quality food at a low cost, while also reducing food waste. Members pay £3.50 to purchase £15 worth of food. However there has been challenges related to the supply and quality of food. The Pantries support residents to move out of food insecurity and away from Food Bank reliance. Food Pantries and the Greenwich Foodbank have been experiencing food supply issues, this is also happening regionally across London, due to a lack of surplus food within the system and a lack of donations. Greenwich Foodbank have recently had to purchase food to top up their stock levels. Supermarkets are experiencing supply issues therefore there is a lack of surplus food being donated to those organisations who rely upon surplus. Pantries rely upon surplus food but the food which is currently being received tends to be high in fat, salt and sugar, of poor quality and there is a lack of culturally acceptable food. Buying a steady supply of fruit, vegetables and ambient food would ensure food quality and nutritious supply of food. GCDA have already been purchasing food for the Foodbank and have well established links with local wholesalers that puts them in a unique position to deliver the provision at speed locally.

### **Fuel Poverty: Stay Warm, Stay Safe**

- 5.17 It is recommended to award up to £100,000 to support the Stay Warm, Stay Safe campaign. Stay Warm Stay Safe supports Greenwich residents with the provision of extra services and support for those who may be at

risk during cold weather. This funding is recommended to be awarded to Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT) who co-ordinate the Scheme through the Community Hub. Funding will then be awarded directly to households through Hub or via South East London Community Energy (SELCE) to fund energy efficiency home measures.

- 5.18 The Greenwich Community Hub, which is delivered by CACT, has acted as a single point of support of support for residents during Covid-19 and therefore the grant funding distributed through this route will help to ensure timely support to those in need. This award of a grant is in line with the conditions set out by the DWP and will ensure that residents from households including those without children, will be able to access support through an established pathway to keep them warm this winter.

### **Winter Support Grant Scheme**

- 5.19 It is recommended to allocate up to £100,000 to the provision of a Winter Support Grant Scheme. The open quotation process for this scheme is proposed to run in January 2022 with the aim of providing grant assistance to organisations that are supporting vulnerable households who may need support. This grant scheme must include organisations providing some element of food provision but also other items to help during the period e.g. warm clothes etc.
- 5.20 As this provision would be delivered during February and March 2022, this report is recommending the allocation of funding to this area of work. As outlined above the grants would be awarded following an open quotation process, and would be targeted at supporting local organisations. This report recommends delegating authority to the Director for Children's Services, in consultation with the Director of Finance, to decide on the award of the £100,000 grant allocation, which would therefore be subject to a separate decision report in early February 2022.

## **6. Available Options**

- 6.1 The decision maker may choose to:

### **Accept the Recommendation**

- 6.2 Accept the recommendation of the report and allocate funding as detailed in section 6, together with the grant award and delegation in paragraph 1. This will ensure the delivery of support to households in Greenwich. Where allocations have been made to third parties as part

of this report, the Local Authority has taken steps to ensure that decisions and the rationale for allocations is set out.

### **Reject the Recommendation**

- 6.3 Reject the recommendations of this report. This option is not recommended as it will lead to households, particularly those taking up free school meals, with no additional support during holiday periods. Due to the impact of this on the health and wellbeing of those children and households that constitute some of Greenwich's most vulnerable residents, this option is not recommended.

### **Do Nothing**

- 6.4 Do nothing. This option would lead to vulnerable households within Greenwich not receiving additional support during the Christmas holiday and winter period. It would lead to funding needing to be returned to the DWP and not benefiting residents. For this reason, this option is not recommended.

## **7. Preferred Option & Reason for Recommendations**

- 7.1 The preferred option is to accept the recommendations in this report and agree the allocation of the Household Support Fund in line with section 6, together with the grant award and delegation in paragraph 1. These proposals have been developed by a cross-Council group within the short timescales with the objective of providing a range of support to those in Greenwich in need of support across the winter period. They also build off existing infrastructure for providing support to residents. This enables more efficient and sustainable delivery of funding out to households. In addition avenues such as the Emergency Support Scheme, Community Hub, Food Bank and Food Pantries are embedded within the community and can support households into other local services to support around broader needs where needed.

## **8. Consultation Results**

- 8.1 These proposals have been developed through an established cross-Council task and finish group that includes representation from Children's Services (Strategy, Performance and Commissioning), Health and Adults (Public Health), Finance (Advice and Benefits) and Communities and Environment (Communications and Leisure). This group was initially established as part of the Covid Winter Grant overview and has since developed to support the Holiday Activities and

Food Programme. It is proposed to build on the group in providing oversight on the allocation of the Household Support Grant.

## 9. Cross-Cutting Issues and Implications

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<p><b>Legal</b> including Human Rights Act</p>	<p>Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, the Council has power to do anything that individuals generally may do. This includes the payment of grants.</p> <p>Under Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) of the Council’s Constitution, the power to make grants is delegated to either the Leader, relevant Cabinet Member or Chief Officer depending upon the value.</p> <p>Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) of the Council’s Constitution also delegates to the Chief Executive the power to act on behalf of the Leader, Cabinet Member, Cabinet or Chief Officer in respect of any of their functions on a matter which in her opinion is urgent. For the reasons described in paragraph 2 of this report, and for the sake of expediency to ensure that all matters can be covered in one urgent report, the Chief Executive has decided to take this decision herself. She is authorised to agree the recommendations in paragraph 1.</p>	<p>Eleanor Penn, Assistant Head of Legal Services (Planning &amp; Procurement), 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021</p>
<p><b>Finance</b> and other resources</p>	<p>This report requests the Decision Maker to agree to the recommendations highlighted at the beginning of this report (1.1-1.7). The total grant allocated to Greenwich is £2.378m, of which 50% is ringfenced to families with children. The funding covers the period 6<sup>th</sup> October to</p>	<p>Carolyn Knowles Head of Accountancy and Business Change HAS and CS, 26<sup>th</sup> November 2021.</p>

	<p>31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. Point 1.6 recommends that the approval of the grant awards (section 5.17 and 5.19), be delegated to the Director for Children’s Services in consultation with the Director of Finance.</p> <p>There are no other financial implications within this report.</p>	
<b>Equalities</b>	<p>Equalities implications have been considered as part of the allocation of the Household Support Fund. The funding will particularly benefit the protected characteristic of age due to the grant conditions being targeted at families with children.</p> <p>As the funding is to provide additional support on existing schemes, it is not expected that any protected group will be negatively impacted by the allocations within this report. Existing schemes will continue to be offered and where groups do not qualify under for particular provision as part of this funding allocation they will be directed to where support can be provided.</p> <p>The equalities implications of decisions will consider to be reviewed as part of the programme of work.</p>	<p>Dave Borland Integrated Commissioning Director (Children’s Services), <i>26 November 2021</i></p>
<b>Climate Change</b>	<p>This award will support the Council’s carbon neutral plan as it will encourage the usage of food surplus thereby diverting from waste. It will also support the delivery of energy efficiency measures that support a reduction in usage.</p>	<p>Dave Borland Integrated Commissioning Director (Children’s Services), <i>26 November 2021</i></p>
<b>Social Value</b>	<p>Social value is delivered through this award through the delivery by locally based organisations. Additionally the Community Grants scheme will require</p>	<p>Dave Borland Integrated Commissioning Director</p>

	providers to submit information for evaluation on how they plan to deliver social value as part of their provision.	(Children's Services), 26 November 2021
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## 9. **Report Appendices**

9.1 The following documents are to be published with and form part of the report:

- Household Support Fund: – Guidance for County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England

## 10. **Background Papers**

10.1 None

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