

REPORT FROM: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES (INTERIM)

TO: EXECUTIVE

DATE: 30 MAY 2024

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HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND 5

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To approve the HSF 5 programme and give delegated authority to the Director of Resources, in conjunction with The Leader of the Council, to determine any future amendments to the programme and/ or a continued 2024/25 scheme should HSF 5 be extended beyond September 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) Approve the proposed delivery model for HSF 5 as set out in the report
- (2) Delegate authority to the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to agree future amendments to the programme and/ or determine a local Pendle scheme should there be a further extension to HSF September 24- March 2025.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To enable effective delivery of HSF 5 and give sufficient flexibility to allow all funds to be spent in accordance with the Guidance

ISSUE

1. The Household Support Fund Scheme has been operating since September 2021. From September 2021 to March 2024, Pendle Council has received £2.09m HSF to support vulnerable households. The guidance allowed for the administration of the scheme and a proportion of the funding has been used internally and by partners to fund the associated staffing costs to deliver the scheme.

Household Support Fund Round	Pendle allocation
Household Support Fund 1 (November 2021 to March 2022)	£270,000
Household Support Fund 2 (April 2022 to October 2022)	£340,000
Household Support Fund 3 (November 2022 to March 2023)	£430,000

Household Support Fund 4 (April 2023 to March 2024)	£961,000
Household Support Fund 5 (April 2024 to September 2024)	£417,000
TOTAL	£2,418,000

2. HSF 4 (2023/24) supported over 10,000 households; 8,600 benefitted from direct payments and 2,000 received food and wider essentials support from the third-party providers.
3. In March 2024, Government announced a 6 month extension for HSF, commencing April 2024. Lancashire County Council (LCC) has been awarded £9,678,235 for 2024/25 of which Pendle's allocation is £417,026.
4. As Local authorities were informed of the HSF extension in March 2024, PBC was unable to secure approval or delegated authority, as previously agreed for the other HSF schemes, prior to the March 2024 announcement.
5. HSF 5 remains similar to previous schemes; the funding from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024 is to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford household essentials including energy and water bills, food, and wider essentials. Authorities can also use funding to support households with housing costs where existing housing support does not meet this need, and to supplement support with signposting and advice. It is up to districts to determine eligibility criteria for their scheme.
6. Previous HSF schemes have consisted of the following elements:

Elements	2023/24 spend
Direct payments to those of CTS	£666,000
Application based scheme (administered by East Lancas Citizens Advice)	£40,000
Community organisations (food support and advice)	£182,000
Admin	£53,000
Discretionary Housing Payment top up	£20,000
TOTAL	£961,000

7. It is proposed that Pendle's HSF 5 scheme is similar to previous schemes, following the same delivery model; direct payments for particular cohorts in receipt of Council Tax Support (CTS) and utilising the community, voluntary sector to access and support households in need.
8. Through discussions with neighbouring districts, opportunities have been identified for joint schemes to streamline systems and criteria, enabling better use of resources and administration processes. As a result of this, it's proposed that the Citizens Advice application scheme is a joint scheme with Rossendale Council.

9. A further addition for the HSF 5, again aligned to delivery models in neighbouring districts, is the crisis fund, administered by a third party. Unlike the Citizens Advice application scheme, which is open to all Pendle residents in financial hardship, the crisis fund would operate as a referral scheme with organisations referring vulnerable residents in desperate need for specific essential items such as white goods or transport costs for medical appointments. These are items which are not covered in the Citizen's Advice application scheme.
10. HSF 4 awarded over two thirds of the funding to direct payments, allocating £75 vouchers to all on CTS. However, if this ratio was applied to HSF5, it would mean the voucher award would only be £35, which is considered insufficient to provide any meaningful financial support.
11. To ensure direct award payments are meaningful, it is proposed that HSF 5 will target pensioners in receipt of CTS. By targeting this cohort, previous award levels can be sustained; it also offers opportunity for longer term support by aligning HSF5 with the LCC Over 75s Benefit Take Up campaign, which all voucher recipients will be informed of.
12. With Pendle's high levels of childhood poverty, the most effective way of reaching those families in significant need is through Pendle's community and voluntary organisations. Such organisations have been instrumental in delivering HSF. Given the level of funding available to Pendle for HSF5, it is proposed that a higher proportion of the grant is distributed to the community voluntary sector than previous HSF rounds as this will be more effective in supporting households than allocating low value direct cash payments.

Elements	Proposed 2024/25 allocation	Comments
Direct payments to those of CTS	£201,000	Target particular cohort on CTS as the award level would be insufficient if awarded to all on CTS. Propose all those of pensionable age in receipt of CTS receive direct payment of either £70 or £75, to be determined by June CTS statistics. To be supplemented with information on the LCC Over 75s Benefit Take Up campaign.
Application based scheme (administered by East Lancas Citizens Advice)	£27,000	Joint scheme with Rossendale Council
Community organisations (food support and advice)	£124,000	Link in with faith organisations to widen reach to vulnerable households
Crisis Fund	£20,000	Referrals would come into PBC for approval then passed to third party for processing
Discretionary Housing Payment top up	£20,000	To address the short fall of DHP funding
Admin	£25,000	6% of the grant
TOTAL	£417,000	

13. Executive is asked to approve delivery model for HSF 5 and give delegated authority to the Director of Resources, in conjunction with the Leader of the Council, to determine any continued 2024/25 HSF scheme, should the scheme be extended beyond September 2024.
14. Given the short term nature of the HSF 5 programme, it is imperative that PBC commences its HSF 5 programme beginning of June 2024. Delegated authority is also sought to make any adjustments to the HSF 5 scheme to enable funds to be reprofiled, to ensure effective and timely management of this short term funding.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: As set out in the report.

Financial: LCC has allocated PBC HSF 5 funding to the value of £417,000 up until September 2024.

Legal: None arising from the report.

Risk Management: None arising from the report.

Health and Safety: None arising from the report.

Sustainability: None arising from the report.

Community Safety: None arising from the report.

Equality and Diversity: None arising from the report.

APPENDICES

None

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS