

BARNSLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CORE SERVICES

TITLE: HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT GRANT OCTOBER 22 TO MARCH 23

REPORT TO:	CABINET
Date of Meeting	19 October 2022
Cabinet Member Portfolio	CORE SERVICES
Key Decision	No
Public or Private	Public

Purpose of report

To provide an overview of the conditions for use of the 3rd iteration of the Household Support Grant (HSG), and proposed spending plans covering the period October 22 to March 23 to support those in most need through the winter period.

Council Plan priority

The proposals in this report will contribute towards:

Healthy Barnsley – reducing inequalities in health and income across the borough, by providing targeted support to those in most need with the cost-of-living crisis.

Growing Barnsley – supporting people to have safe, warm and sustainable homes through provision of energy grants and the affordable warm homes programme.

Sustainable Barnsley – provision of more energy efficient and sustainable methods of heating.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:-

1. **Note the grant conditions associated with the use of the Household Support Grant, as set out in section 2.1 to 2.4.**
2. **Agree to the proposed spending plan set out in section 2.5.**
3. **Agree to proceed with the priority schemes as outlined in 2.5.3**
4. **That the Service Director Finance S151 Officer make any necessary changes to the scheme following receipt of final guidance and funding allocation.**

1.0 **BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 In September 2021 the Government announced a funding package of £500M to help vulnerable households fund essential costs over the winter period covering October 21 to March 22. In March 22 the fund was extended by a further £500M to cover the period April to September 22. To date Barnsley has received £4.7M Household Support Grant for the borough.
- 1.2 A further extension to this grant has been committed with another £2.3M expected to be received for Barnsley to cover the period October 22 to March 23. This paper is to provide an overview of the spending plans for use of this funding allocation.

2.0 **PROPOSAL**

2.1 Conditions of Grant

- 2.1.1 Draft guidance has been released by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), final guidance is anticipated to be issued sometime before the 1st October 22.
- 2.1.2 The funding allocation has yet to be confirmed but is anticipated to be similar to previous rounds, being £2.3M. Funding is to cover the period October 22 to March 23. No funding can be carried over from this or previous periods.
- 2.1.3 Schemes must be in place for 1st October 22 and spending plans must be submitted to the DWP by 28th October 22.
- 2.1.4 Previous rounds have required ringfencing in terms of targeting support at specific cohorts of households, in this round no ringfencing has been stipulated, LA's have the discretion on exactly how the funding can be used, within the scope of DWP guidance.
- Funding should be used to support those that are not eligible for other government support:
 - Those not eligible for the cost-of-living payments & energy rebate schemes
 - Those who may have become eligible after the qualifying date
 - Those claiming Housing Benefit only
 - Those who cannot access the £400 energy support payments
 - Those eligible for benefits but had a nil award in the qualifying period due to, for example, a fluctuation in income
 - The Fund is intended to cover a wide range of low-income households including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers, and people with disabilities.
 - Local Authorities should prioritise supporting households with costs associated with:
 - *Energy* – providing support that can make a quick but sustainable immediate and long-term impact to energy costs.
 - *Food & Water* – support with the cost of food and water bills

- *Wider Essentials* – support with other household bills not linked to energy and water
 - *Housing Costs* – in exceptional circumstances where other support schemes are not available
- LA's can deliver the scheme through a variety of routes including providing vouchers to households, making direct provision of food or goods, or issuing grants to third parties.
 - At least part of the scheme should be on an application basis.
 - LA's must have a clear rationale or documented policy/framework outlining their approach including how they are defining eligibility and how households access the fund.

2.2 Reporting Requirements

- 2.2.1 2 returns are required to be submitted to the DWP setting out actual delivery for the period Oct to Dec and Jan to Mar, with returns to be submitted in January and April 23.
- 2.2.2 Additional management information is required than in previous rounds to allow DWP to assess how LAs are using the fund to support households. For example, reporting on actual output delivered by community groups. We will work with the Councils Internal Audit colleagues to ensure robust controls are in place for spending and reporting arrangements.

2.3 Funding Allocations

- 2.3.1 Final funding allocations will be confirmed sometime in September but are expected to be similar to previous rounds at £2.3M.
- 2.3.2 Funding allocations will be paid in arrears following receipt of data returns. Tranche 1 will be paid in February / March 23 and Tranche 2 paid in June / July 23.

2.4 Communications

- 2.4.1 DWP guidance stipulates the following:
- The Authority must, as appropriate and practical, reference that the grant is funded by the Department for Work and Pensions or the UK Government.
 - Local Authorities must make public their plans for The Fund

2.5 Spending Plan

- 2.5.1 On the 7th September a paper was presented to Senior Management setting out a number of proposals to support households with the cost-of-living crisis, included in this paper were a number of schemes that were proposed as being eligible to be funded from this round of Household Support Grant. As detailed guidance has now been provided, below sets out the final proposed schemes that are eligible to be funded, along with some additional schemes that meet the criteria of the grant.
- 2.5.2 The proposals have been split between priority schemes that are required to be progressed in accordance with DWP guidance and other schemes that have more flexibility, whilst still being restricted to tight delivery timescales.

2.5.3 Priority Schemes

- **Energy Rebate Scheme:** To provide £150 energy rebates via a bank transfer, to those households who were not entitled to the Government's £150 Council Tax energy rebate. This scheme is designed to support those in Council Tax bands E and above not on LCTS, that can demonstrate financial hardship, and those who became eligible for council tax on or after 2nd April 22. This would be delivered on a means tested, application basis.
- **Cost of Living Payment (part 1a):** To provide £326 cost of living payment (bank transfer) to those in receipt of qualifying benefits who were not eligible for the first Government cost of living payment due to becoming eligible after the qualifying date. This scheme would be delivered on an application basis, applicants would need to demonstrate they become eligible between 26th May and 31st August 22.
- **Cost of Living Payment (part 1b):** To provide £150 cost of living payment (bank transfer) to those in receipt of a disability benefit that were not eligible for the Government scheme due to becoming eligible after the qualifying date. This scheme would be delivered on an application basis, applicants would need to demonstrate they become eligible between 26th May and 31st August 22.
- **Cost of Living Payment (part 2):** To provide £650 cost of living payment (Post Office Vouchers) to those in receipt of Housing Benefit but did not qualify for the Government cost of living payment. This payment would be made via automatic award and not application based. Proposed to make this payment in 2 instalments similar to the Government scheme, with the first payment by 31st October 22 and the second 31st January 23.

2.5.4 Other Schemes

- **Support to residents:** This would be delivered by community groups who would be required to bid for grant funding setting out how they would help people in the community over the winter period in line with the grant conditions. This would include a continuation of existing community schemes that are already funded from the April to September HSG.
- **Christmas Holiday Clubs:** Provision of holiday club places through the Healthy Activities programme for non-free school meal children.
- **Local Welfare Assistance:** Funding to ensure the continuation of the existing scheme to the end of the financial year, which would otherwise run out in December. Providing support to those in financial hardship with the cost of essential bills and white goods.
- **Free School Meals:** The Healthy Holiday government funded scheme only provides provision during Easter, Summer, and Christmas school holidays. To ensure vulnerable children are supported across all non-term time periods there is an opportunity to provide a £15 voucher to families during the October 22 and February 23 holidays to cover the cost of food.
- **Affordable Warmer Homes:** To contribute towards the overall Affordable Warmer Homes programme (subject to a separate Cabinet report). Providing residents with financial support to help with energy debts, and inefficient heating systems by providing sustainable solutions

that help to reduce energy consumption therefore reducing energy bills, this would make an immediate and long-lasting sustainable impact to addressing fuel poverty.

- 2.5.5 The funding allocation allows for reasonable administration costs to enable Authorities to deliver The Fund. No staffing admin costs are currently assumed in the above schemes, it is assumed the admin burden can be absorbed within current resourcing arrangements.
- 2.5.6 Due to the tight timescale to deliver the above schemes, the requirements of DWP to have schemes in place from 1st October, and the need to get funding out to support residents over the winter period, necessary arrangements have been made to deliver priority schemes in anticipation of approval whilst this report has been progressed through the governance system.

3.0 IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Financial

- 3.1.1 Consultations have taken place with the Council's Service Director Finance (Section 151 Officer).
- 3.1.2 The Household Support Grant is a ring-fenced grant which the Council administers on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions, the grant must be spent in line with the guidance and grant determination letter provided by DWP (summary details set out in section 2.1). There are no implications to the Councils medium term financial strategy.
- 3.1.3 Spending plans and data returns are required to be submitted to DWP as set out in section 2.2, which require Section 151 Officer approval.
- 3.1.4 Grant allocations will be received in arrears following satisfactory submission of data returns as referred to in section 2.3.
- 3.1.5 Any underspend of funding allocations will be returned to the DWP and can not be used for other purposes or carried over into periods past March 23.
- 3.1.6 The Councils Internal Audit will be consulted on the arrangements for processing and monitoring spend and outputs to ensure robust controls are in place to meet the requirements of DWP and mitigate the risk of fraud.
- 3.1.7 The table on page 6 summarises the financial implications associated with this scheme.
- 3.1.8 The Affordable Warmer Homes scheme is part of a wider programme which is subject to a separate Cabinet report. It is proposed to contribute an element of the HSG towards this scheme to reduce reliance on Council reserves.

Scheme	Provider	Lead Directorate	Application	Funding	Delivery
Priority Schemes					
Energy Rebate Scheme £150 payment to those not eligible for CTAX rebate	Council - B&T	Core	Yes	£93,550	Mar 23
Cost of Living Payment (1a) £325 payment to those who did not qualify for the first Gov't COL payment	Council - B&T	Core	Yes	£200,000	Mar 23
Cost of Living Payment (1b) £150 to those who did not qualify for the first Gov't COL payment	Council - B&T	Core	Yes	£60,000	Mar 23
Cost of Living Payment (2) £650 Voucher to those not eligible for the Gov't COL payment 933 households	Council - B&T	Core	No	£303,225	Oct 22 Jan 23
Total				£960,000	
Other Schemes					
Supporting residents with help towards food, fuel, clothing, white goods, household goods.	Community Groups	Public Health & Communities	Yes	£500,000	March 23
Christmas holiday clubs for non-free school meal families	Existing Holiday Club providers	Public Health & Communities	No	£60,000	Dec 22
Local Welfare Assistance top up	Council – Housing Options Team	Public Health & Communities	Yes	£64,000	Mar 23
Free School Meal vouchers (October & Feb) £15 Voucher to 11,200 children	Council - B&T	Core	No	£168,000 £168,000	Oct 22 Feb 23
Affordable Warmer Homes	Council / BH	Growth & Sustainability	Yes	£380,000	Mar 23
Total				£1,340,000	
TOTAL SPEND				£2,300,000	

3.2 Legal

3.2.1 The use of the HSG is subject to conditions determined by the DWP.

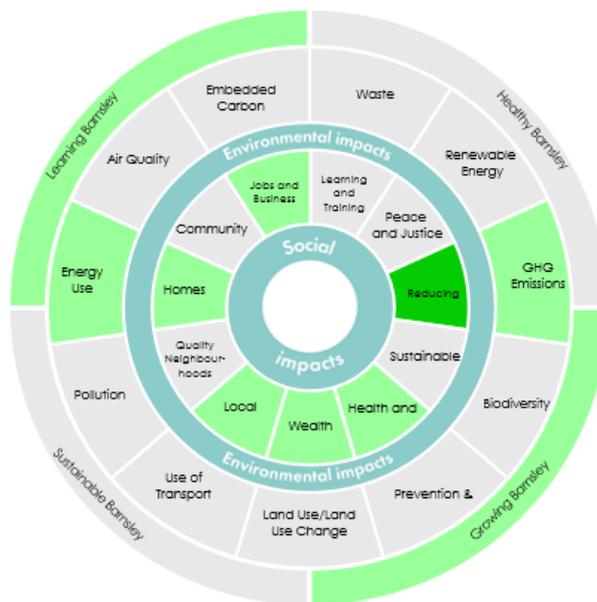
3.2.2 There are no Subsidy Control implications as no one individual recipient will receive funding in excess of the threshold being £315,000.

3.3 Equality

3.3.1 The proposals set out in this report for maximisation of the Household Support Grant are determined within the parameters set out by the DWP, therefore are in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty and no concerns over unlawful discrimination.

3.4 Sustainability

3.4.1 The sustainability decision-making wheel has been produced for this project and the overall impacts are positive, particularly around reducing carbon emissions, reducing poverty and improving health and well-being of residents.



3.4.2 Pollution from the insulation manufacturing process along with embedded carbon in the supply chain are highlighted as areas of negative impact. However, work is on-going with the procurement team to address how we can build a more sustainable supply chain going forwards.

3.5 Employee

3.5.1 There are no employee implications associated with this report, schemes will be administered within existing resources.

3.6 Communications

- 3.6.1 Timely and accurate information will be communicated to residents via the appropriate channels, press releases, social media, council websites and direct engagement with key stakeholders.
- 3.6.2 As set out in section 2.4, the Authority must, as appropriate and practical, reference that the grant is funded by the Department for Work and Pensions or the UK Government in any communications.

4.0 CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Consultations have taken place with representatives of Finance, Communities, Housing and Sustainability Business Units when forming spending plan proposals to ensure schemes are developed and targeted at that support those in most need, within the scope of the DWP guidance.

5.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 5.1 There are no other options due to the Household Support Grant being a ring-fenced government fund. LAs are best placed to administer this fund on behalf of central government.
- 5.2 Alternative spending plans could be explored; however, these would take time to develop and implement and we are bound by time restrictions to have plans developed and in place for 1st October 22.
- 5.3 Should any of the proposals outlined in this report not be delivered or realise any underspend on the grant funding, alternative options will be explored through the provision of direct payments and/or additional cash vouchers, targeted at those in most need to ensure funding is maximised to support borough and not returned to central government.

6.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The recommendations associated with this report are intended to ensure that the Council and partners are positioned to be able to effectively administer and deliver the requirements of DWP and maximisation of the HSG to support residents of the borough.

7.0 GLOSSARY

HSG – Household Support Grant
DWP – Department for Work and Pensions

8.0 APPENDICIES

Appendix A – Financial Implications

9.0 REPORT SIGN OFF

Legal consultation & sign off	Legal Services officer consulted and date Jason Field 28/09/22
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