

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	28 July 2022
Subject:	External grant funding to support the cost-of-living crisis		
Report of:	Assistant Director of Communities	Wards Affected:	All
Cabinet Portfolio:	Cabinet Member for Communities & Housing		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide the Cabinet with an overview of how the Council has allocated the various grants from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to support residents with the cost-of-living crisis and to highlight the additional measures that have been introduced to in light of the emerging priorities.

Recommendation(s):

(1) It is requested that Cabinet note the content of the report .

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

n/a

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

There are no additional revenue costs identified within this report. The report captures how the Local Authority has spent the various DWP grant allocations.

(B) Capital Costs

There are no additional capital cost identified within this report

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):	
The various grants have been administered internally	
Legal Implications: none	
Equality Implications:	
None	
Climate Emergency Implications:	
The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	No
Have a neutral impact	Yes
Have a negative impact	No
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	No

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: The funding has been allocated in accordance with the grant guidance and existing council policies for supporting residents who are subject to financial hardship.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities:
Commission, broker and provide core services:
Place – leadership and influencer:
Drivers of change and reform:
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:
Greater income for social investment:
Cleaner Greener

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD6871/22.) and Head of Regulation and Compliance (LD5071/22.) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

Contact Officer:	Steve Martlew
Telephone Number:	
Email Address:	Steve.Martlew@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

N/A

Background Papers

There are no background papers.

1.0 Introduction / Background

- 1.1 During the first Covid lockdown in 2020 the Department for Work and Pensions issued Local Authorities with grant funding. The grant (£1.218m) was entitled Covid Winter Grant and spend was restricted for food and affordable warmth items only. The period of the first grant was September 2020 to March 2021.
- 1.2 The grant continued from April 2021 to September 2021 (£1.153m), although was re branded as the Covid Local Support Grant. Grant stipulations remained restricted to food and affordable warmth.
- 1.3 Sefton used the majority of Covid Winter Grant/Local Support Grant to provide food vouchers to children who qualified for free school meals (FSM) over the Christmas, half term and summer holidays. Any remaining funding supported the affordable warmth and ELAS teams (Emergency Living Assistance Service).
- 1.4 In October 2021 the DWP announced a new grant called Household Support Fund (HSF) to run from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. The size of the grant increased substantially (£2.435m). The grant conditions remained largely the same, but there was a greater emphasis on energy costs.
- 1.5 In April 2022 the DWP extended HSF from 1 April 2022 to 30 September and the value remained the same (£2.435m). However, the grant conditions changed with the requirement for:

- 33% of the grant to be spent on households with children
- Up to 33% of the grant spent on households without children
- 33% of the grant to be spent on households containing pensioners.

The focus remains on food, affordable warmth, help with utility bills and other essential households' items. In addition, resources have also been allocated to develop projects designed to identify sustainable sources of food to reduce residents' reliance on food banks.

- 1.6 In deciding the priorities for spend the Cabinet Member for Communities & Housing was consulted at all stages.
- 1.7 Throughout the process the Council has been required to submit various delivery plans for approval by the DWP who have also received regular monitoring reports. At all stages, plans have been agreed by the DWP and the grants have been spent in accordance with the relevant internal and external control measures and grant guidelines.
- 1.8 The DWP have informed LAs that HSF will continue from 1 October 2022 although no further details have been released with regards to grant conditions or values.

2.0 Grant Expenditure Profiles

2.1 Covid Winter Grant

Table 1 shows how Covid Winter Grant was used.

Item	Value
Free School Meals	£652,536
Affordable Warmth Team	£145,737
ELAS	£206,336
ASDA Vouchers	£75,706
Small Projects – Baby Baskets, Vouchers for Family Well Being Centres, Food parcels for Light for Life, etc	£71,187
Admin & Management	£66,067
Total	£1,217,569

2.2 Local Support Grant

Table 2 shows how Local Support Grant was used.

Item	Value
Free School Meals	£944,700
ELAS	£128,039
Affordable Warmth Team	£23,118
Admin & Management	£57,639
Total	£1,153,496

2.3 Household Support Fund – October 2021 – March 2022

Table 3 shows how HSF for the period was used

Item	Value
Free School Meals	£1,300,625
ELAS	£619,210
Foodbank – contribution to foodbanks	£35,000
Winter safe packs – contribution to Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service to provide packs to households	£20,000
Affordable Warmth Team	£65,634
Energy Project Plus – provide meter top up vouchers to be distributed by Energy Project Plus	£11,000
ASDA vouchers	£162,000
CVS Winter Coat project – to provide 480 winter coats	£48,000
Winter Pyjamas distribution via Family Well Being Centres	£6,000
Admin & Management	£167,905
Total	£2,435,111

2.4 Household Support Fund – April 2022 – September 2022

Table 4 shows how HSF for the period is programmed to be spent.

Item	H/Holds with Children	H/Holds without Children	Pensioners	Admin & Mgt	Total
Free School Meals	£917,385				£917,385
Uniform	£57,670				£57,670
Council Tax Reduction Claimants			£822,000		£822,000
ELAS		£390,000			£390,000
Foodbank		£30,000			£30,000
MFRS Risk Packs		£20,000			£20,000
Affordable Warmth		£18,000	£18,000		£36,000
Energy Project Plus		£10,000	£10,000		£20,000
Admin & Management				£142,056	

Sustainable food projects					
Total	£975,055	£468,000	£850,000	£142,056	£2,435,111

3.0 The Future of the Household Support Fund

- 3.1 As previously highlighted the DWP have informed LA's that HSF will continue for the second half of the year although no details have been received.
- 3.2 Feedback from LAs to the DWP colleagues is that the continual 6 monthly allocation of funding is not helpful for longer term, more sustainable commissioning.
- 3.3 Most LAs are using HSF for similar projects which is reactionary to the problems our residents are facing rather than being used for a more proactive, prevention and intervention focus.
- 3.4 It is likely that future HSF will be spent on similar projects to support our communities during the winter of 2022/23. As in all previous cases the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities will be consulted with before spend is agreed/committed.

4.0 Additional pressures & support measures

- 4.1 In recognition of the scale of the cost-of-living crisis and emerging pressures, additional time limited support services have been introduced. These emerging pressures include the significant increase in requests for support from the Councils Emergency Limited Assistance Service and support with access to housing and welfare and benefits. In light of these pressures, it has been possible to introduce additional time limited support to residents utilising both core funding and external grant aid.
- 4.2 In deciding the priorities for spend the Cabinet Member for Communities & Housing has been consulted all stages.
- 4.3 Additional support includes the introduction of a Housing Options Researcher post based within the Housing Options Team to carry out a triage service for people contacting the service. The service is currently receiving around 2000 calls a month, which is approximately 120 a day, many of whom need signposting to another service.
- 4.4 Officers have also aligned the Welfare Rights Team with our Housing Options Team to support the many residents who are approaching the service having encountered financial difficulty due to the cost-of-living crisis. In addition, a Money Advisor post has been introduced to provide advice to those threatened with homelessness to prevent homelessness taking place.
- 4.5 Also due to the huge demand on the homelessness service the homeless prevention element of our work has been overtaken by homeless presentations. In April 2021 there were 201 homeless presentations, the highest number in the last 12 months. To respond to this increased demand, a Housing Options Prevention

Officer has been introduced. This post, working in conjunction with the wider team, will hopefully help with capacity to carry out more prevention work and slow the number of presentations down and reduce the pressure on temporary accommodation.

- 4.6 Additional support to residents is also being provided by partner's Light for Life who currently provide a valuable service in Southport and from July will provide the same service in Bootle. They offer housing advice and carry out homeless prevention work on the Councils behalf. They also offer much more in terms of rough sleeper outreach, work with people with No Recourse to Public Funds as well as offering a multi-agency / disciplinary hub in Southport.

5.0 Summary

- 5.1 The Council has been allocated a number of grants by the DWP to focus on supporting residents with food and affordable warmth. We have maximised the use of these grants in delivering a number of projects. The Council has also used both core budgets and external grants to support the wider pressures that the cost-of-living crisis has placed upon residents and support services.