

Subject:	Update on Covid Winter Grant		
Date of Meeting:	21 January 2021		
Report of:	Interim Executive Director Families, Children & Learning Acting Chief Financial Officer		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 The report provides an update on the allocation of the Covid Winter Grant which was awarded to the council to provide support to residents with food and bills up to 31 March 2021.
- 1.2 The Policy & Resources Committee requested this update on progress at its last meeting on 3 December 2020.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the committee note the remaining allocation of the Covid Winter Grant through a series of methods, including a grant application process for community and voluntary sector organisations direct awards to groups working with specific cohorts of children and young people and discretionary awards.
- 2.2 That the committee note the amount of grant funding already allocated in line with the recommendations from the committee held on 3 December 2020.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Following the decision of the Policy & Resources Committee on 3 December 2020, progress has been made on the distribution of £25 supermarket food vouchers to all children and young people eligible for free school meals and the early years pupil premium.
- 3.2 It is estimated that this will cost in the region of £0.678m. Schools and education settings began to generate voucher codes for families on 11 December and this was completed by the end of term. At the time of writing the report, £0.400m has been committed in vouchers to families.
- 3.3 Having taken account of the provision of supermarket food vouchers for the February half term and the administrative costs associated with this, it is

anticipated that there will be £0.185m of grant funding to be distributed. This represents 22% of the overall grant.

- 3.4 It was determined to direct the remaining funding for the support of families with children and young people, including pregnant parents who find themselves at the edge of other sources of support such as Free School Meals.
- 3.5 This has been undertaken using a combination of funding to support discretionary allocations of assistance and funding to support other organisations working in the city to support these families, while aiming to link family members to other supportive initiatives.
- 3.6 Efforts have been made to limit the bureaucratic burden on receiving grant monies on organisations/of undertaking outreach work with these families.
- 3.7 It was noted that specific focus needed to be placed on the youth cohort (post 16/above statutory school age) due to concerns that they were potentially missing out on the support previously agreed by committee. It was agreed that existing grant programmes such as the youth grants will be reviewed to consider how support for food can be incorporated in their appraisal process.
- 3.8 The remaining Covid Winter grant funding was allocated across three areas. The split between Early Years, and schools and colleges, was kept in line with the proportion issued to Free School Meal and Early Years Pupil Premium numbers.
 - Early Years £0.011m
 - Schools and colleges £0.084m
 - Organisations £0.09m
- 3.9 The Early Years team kept the value of supermarket food vouchers at £25 per child and will be able to allocate these through referrals by Health Visitors and midwives.
- 3.10 The School Meals team will maintain the allocation of £0.084m and will receive referrals from schools. An example of how this additional funding will be used includes providing additional support to families with school aged children affected by the late announced staggered return of secondary aged pupils in January 2021.
- 3.11 A request was made to consider how other local voucher schemes in the city could be incorporated into allocations made outside of the Christmas and February half term holidays. This will be progressed after a review of the effectiveness and use of the system put in place in December 2020.
- 3.12 The allocation to organisations equates to approximately 10% of the overall grant allocation. The council advocates for the additional value of projects that share meals / food skills as part of their work with children, young people and their families. Having children and young people involved in cooking and eating together or adding food work to groups such as the Young Carers or Allsorts offers more than just the food in terms of health and wellbeing. This will also aid being able to work with pace because of the existing connections with the relevant communities.

3.13 £0.090m has been allocated to support groups with protected characteristics. £0.040m was granted to support young people via the following providers, as detailed below:

- £0.010m for the east and north of the city (Trust for Developing Communities)
- £0.005m for the west of the city (Hangleton and Knoll project)
- £0.005m for central areas of the city (Brighton Youth Centre)
- £0.005m for LGBTQ+ young people (Allsorts)
- £0.005m for BME young people (Black and Minority Ethnic Young People's Project)
- £0.005m for disabled children and young people (Extratime)
- £0.005m for families with a child/dren with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (Amaze)

3.14 These groups will be reporting via the usual mechanisms in place including, where relevant, their 6 monthly narrative and Aspire reports.

3.15 It was considered that grants up to £0.005m will allow more projects working at a very local level to be funded and we know of the efficiency of these groups to have a beneficial impact with relatively low levels of funding.

3.16 To allocate the remaining £0.050m, the Communities, Equalities and Third Sector team is running a small grants scheme (up to £0.005m (i.e. £5,000) per award) for community and voluntary organisations in the city.

3.17 The criteria is projects working in Brighton and Hove to help ensure that vulnerable people and families are warm and well fed this winter. This might, for example, include the provision of warm clothing, help paying heating bills or helping families to cook nutritiously on a limited budget. Details available: <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/city-support-and-grants/winter-funding-community-and-voluntary-organisations>

3.18 The council's Revenues & Benefits team provided input into how grants can be allocated, particularly on the "other" groups / categories to ensure there is a strong link through to Local Discretionary Social Fund and the Community Hub.

3.19 In summary, the remaining 22% of the grant has been assigned as outlined in the table below.

Stream	Amount £m
Early years - Children Centre food bank & vouchers Jan – March 2021	0.011
Schools and college – vouchers	0.084
Community and voluntary sector outreach and support Jan-March 2021	0.090
Total	0.185

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The grant was issued with requirements about the proportion of funding that can be used for certain purposes.
- 4.2 At least 80% of the total funding was required to be ring-fenced to support households with children, with up to 20% of the total funding to other households experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, poverty during the pandemic. This may include households not currently in receipt of DWP welfare benefits.
- 4.3 At least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to provide support with food, energy and water bills for household purposes (including drinking, washing, cooking, central heating, and sanitary purposes) and sewerage. Within this condition there is flexibility about the proportion of support allocated to food and to bills.
- 4.4 Up to 20% of the total funding can be used to provide support with other essentials clearly linked to the scheme conditions (including sanitary products, warm clothing, soap, blankets, boiler service/repair, purchase of equipment including fridges, freezers, ovens, etc.), in recognition that a range of costs may arise which directly affect a household's ability to afford or access food, energy and water.
- 4.5 The scheme is not intended to cover payment of rent or other housing costs because these are not directly related to food or utility bills and other benefits and support is available to cover these costs. Nor is it intended to be used for the provision of general advice on managing debt and/or financial hardship. The provision of Free School Meals during term time is not expected to be covered by the Covid Winter Grant because other funding is available for this and local authorities were requested to avoid duplicating provision where possible.
- 4.6 Within these parameters the grant could have been allocated in alternative ways, but this approach provides discretionary awards to families, support to specific groups and a grant process for other organisations.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The approach has sought to reflect the knowledge of specific teams in how best to provide support direct to families using existing groups and grant processes.
- 5.2 The Brighton and Hove Food Partnership has contributed to the development of proposals and sought to remind the group of the need to work at a local level, achieving added value and the impact that grassroots can have with relatively little additional funding.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The council was provided with £0.865m Covid Winter Grant funding for allocation before the 31 March 2021. £0.678m was previously allocated to provide supermarket food vouchers of £25 per child per week over the Christmas and February half term holidays.

- 6.2 This report details how the remaining £0.185m has been allocated with a focus on supporting families with children and young people, including pregnant parents, who find themselves at the edge of other sources of support.
- 6.3 A total of £0.095m will be provided to the Early Years and Free School Meals team to provide discretionary allocations following referrals from relevant groups/agencies.
- 6.4 The remaining £0.090m will be allocated to organisations through either a grant basis or direct allocation. The latter will be used to ensure that specific groups are provided with support via groups who work with them such as Amaze, Allsorts and BMEYPP. The invitations for grant allocations will be judged according to the following criteria: projects working in Brighton & Hove to help ensure that vulnerable people and families are warm and well fed this winter. This might, for example, include the provision of warm clothing, help paying heating bills or helping families to cook nutritiously on a limited budget.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The Department of Work & Pensions Covid Winter Grant Scheme determination provides an allocation of funding of £0.865m to Brighton & Hove City Council. The grant must be fully utilised in 2020/21. The proposals in this report are consistent with the published grant conditions and guidance.

Finance Officer Consulted: Nigel Manvell

Date: 11/01/21

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The Council will need to ensure that the grant funding is allocated in accordance with the terms of the Covid Winter Grant funding agreement and – subject to that agreement – is able to organise the distribution as set out in this report.

Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert

Date: 11.01.21

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and informed the targeting of specific allocations to organisations working with groups who have protected characteristics rather than putting the full allocation out to a grant application process.
- 7.4 It is expected that request for discretionary support will also be made by organisations and agencies who work closely with the families impacted by inequality.
- 7.5 The allocation of additional grant funding to be allocated by 31 March 2021 is an additional support for the council to allocate to families who may be greater affected by seasonal factors over winter. By keeping referral processes to a minimum and using a voucher scheme that provides a range of shops in a geographically diverse group of shops it is expected that families will be able to

maximise the benefit of the scheme to provide themselves with food and support as required.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.6 It is expected that direct allocations to groups working with specific groups of children and young people will be used to build into their work stronger links to the role food plays and support for wider outcomes such as health and wellbeing.
- 7.7 This will also aid being able to work with pace because of the existing connections with the relevant communities.
- 7.8 The criteria for grant applications illustrates that groups may want to be looking at how help can be used to support families to cook nutritiously on a limited budget which will provide future benefit on food purchasing habits.

Brexit Implications:

- 7.9 Support for families to cook nutritiously on a limited budget could support families to avoid any impact on food costs and supply following the UK's exit from the EU.

Any Other Significant Implications:

Public Health Implications:

- 7.10 The recommendations seek to ensure families can receive support to be provided with food during the winter and to provide organisations the ability to incorporate food preparation and eating together or education on constructing nutritious meals on a budget that will have future health benefits.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

- 1. Equality Impact Assessment