

This record relates to urgent decisions taken by Chief Officers under the Scheme of Delegation to Officers Paragraph 7(2).

RECORD OF URGENT DECISION TAKEN BY Nigel Manvell, Acting CFO

SUBJECT: Allocation of the Household Support Fund for October Half Term Free School Meals

CONTACT OFFICERS: Debbie Abbott and Paul Ross-Dale, Revenues & Benefits Managers

REASONS FOR URGENCY AND WHY NOT PRACTICABLE TO HOLD A SPECIAL MEETING OR URGENCY SUB-COMMITTEE:

The government has provided £2.1m new funding to Brighton & Hove City Council in the form of the Household Support Fund. The Local Authority must decide how to allocate the fund, but one key funding request will be to continue providing Free School Meals during the holidays.

An Urgency Decision is required because fund details were only announced on 7 Oct, after which colleagues from Revenues & Benefits, and Families, Children & Learning attended a government seminar to understand the conditions of the funding and subsequently worked together on proposals and logistics. Consultation has therefore not been possible until now but in order to be able to issue vouchers from 22 Oct 2021 for half term, a decision is required now.

This Decision therefore only deals with partial allocation of the Household Support Fund to ensure provision of support to low income families for the October half term for those eligible for Free School Meals. Further allocations will be brought forward to Policy and Resources (Recovery) Sub Committee on 4 November 2021 for consideration, which will include additional Free School Meals funding and broader community support.

DETAILS AND OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION WITH THE CHAIR/DEPUTY CHAIR OF RELEVANT COMMITTEE AND OPPOSITION SPOKES:

The Chair of Policy & Resources Committee (Cllr MacCafferty) and Opposition Spokespersons (Cllrs Allcock and Bell) were sent the Urgent Decision for approval and comments on the afternoon of 21 October 2021. The chair gave his approval on 21 October 2021 and there was general support from opposition councillors.

DATE OF CONSULTATION WITH CHAIR/DEPUTY CHAIR AND OPPOSITION SPOKES:

21/10/21

THE DECISION:

To approve the allocation of £139,000 from the Household Support Fund to provide Free School Meals for the October half term.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The council's allocation of the Household Support Fund is £2,140,360.89.

There is a broad discretion conferred on local authorities in spending this fund, with some limitations. The grant must be allocated to provide support with the costs of food, energy (for heating, lighting and cooking), water (for household purposes, including sewerage) and other essential living needs in accordance with the Scheme guidance.

At least 50% of the grant must be used for supporting households with children. Up to 50% of the grant can be used to assist other households.

Eligible spend includes:

- Food, either as consumable items, or through vouchers or cash.
- Energy and water bills
- Essentials linked to energy and water, for example sanitary products, warm clothing, soap, blankets, boiler service/repair, purchase of equipment including fridges, freezers, ovens, etc.
- Wider essentials, for example, support with broadband or phone bills, clothing, and essential transport-related costs such as repairing a car, buying a bicycle or paying for fuel
- Housing Costs in exceptional cases of genuine emergency only, where existing housing support schemes such as Discretionary Housing Payments do not meet this exceptional need.

Proposals have been developed in collaboration with Families, Children & Learning, Revenues & Benefits, and representatives from Community Works and the Moneyworks / Advice Matters partnerships. Full details and recommended allocations from the fund will be submitted to Policy & Resources (Recovery) Sub Committee on 4 November 2021. However, one of the recommendations is to continue paying for Free School Meals during the school holidays, as this will be a key element of support for families with financial vulnerability during the winter months and beyond.

The following allocation is to enable the half term October provision to go ahead immediately. Further Free School Meal provision, including related funding for schools and Early Years will be outlined in the full report on 4 November.

Area of Support	Amount	Explanation and notes
Free school meals vouchers	£135,000	(including £15,000 Early Years vouchers)
Provision for SEND	£4,000	
TOTAL	£139,000	

DETAILS OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

There are no alternative options under consideration for this Urgency Decision, but the allocated amount represents only a small percentage of the overall fund. There will be an

opportunity for Policy & Resources (Recovery) Sub Committee to explore the breadth of support planned for the rest of the fund of approximately £2 million.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Council has the power to allocate this proposed additional funding for the uses described in this report. The Acting Chief Finance Officer has the necessary delegations under the Scheme of Delegation to Officers (Part 6 of the Council’s Constitution) to use Urgency Powers after consultation with the Chair of Policy & Resources (Recovery) Sub-Committee and opposition spokespersons.

Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert Date: 21/10/21

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The council has been allocated £2,140,360.89 from the Household Support Fund. The eligible areas of spend are provided under ‘Reasons for Decision’ above and as noted, at least 50% of the grant must be used for supporting households with children with up to 50% of the grant therefore available to assist other households. The grant is required to be utilised by 31 March 2022 and therefore deployment will need to be relatively quick to maximise the use of the funding.

Finance Office Consulted: James Hengeveld Date: 21/10/21

DATE OF NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING TO WHICH THE DECISION WILL BE REPORTED:

Policy & Resources (Recovery) Sub Committee 4 November 2021.

Date: 21 October 2021	
Signed: Acting Chief Finance Officer	<i>R. Llanell</i>
Logged by Democratic Services Officer for Annual Report: Name:	Date:

