

### Policy & Resources (Recovery) Sub-Committee

**Subject:** Interim Report on Covid Funds and the new Household Support Fund

**Date of meeting:** 21 April 2022

**Report of:** Chief Finance Officer

**Contact Officer:** Name: Nigel Manvell  
Tel: 01273 293104  
Email: [nigel.manvell@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:nigel.manvell@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

**Ward(s) affected:** All

Note: The special circumstances for non-compliance with Council Procedure Rule 3, Access to Information Procedure Rule 5 and Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), (items not considered unless the agenda is open to inspection at least five days in advance of the meeting) were that due to a miscalculation of public holidays the report was not completed when the agenda was published.

#### For general release

#### 1 Purpose of the report and policy context

1.1 This report provides an update on expenditure and commitments against the 2020/21 and 2021/22 Contain Outbreak Management Funds and the 2021/22 Household Support Fund and seeks interim approval to release funds from the recently announced 2022/23 Household Support Fund in advance of detailed proposals for allocation coming forward to Policy & Resources Committee in May 2022.

#### 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Policy & Resources (Recovery) Sub-Committee notes the current position on the 2020/21 and 2021/22 Contain Outbreak Management Funds (COMF) and the 2021/22 Household Support Fund.
- 2.2 That Committee Policy & Resources (Recovery) Sub-Committee agree to an interim allocation of £0.100m from the 2022/23 Household Support Fund to augment the Local Discretionary Social Fund in advance of the full allocation of the fund to be agreed at May Policy & Resources Committee.

#### 3 Context and background information

##### Contain Outbreak Management Funds 2020/21 and 2021/22

3.1 The government allocated 5 tranches of Contain Outbreak Management Funds (COMF) during 2020/21 to enable local authorities to provide a range of support during the pandemic. The funds amounted to £6.815m but, in the event, were carried forward in full to 2021/22. The funds could be allocated according to the following allowable categories:

- a) Targeted testing for hard-to-reach groups out of scope of other testing programmes.
- b) Additional contact tracing.
- c) Enhanced communication and marketing e.g. towards hard-to-reach groups and other localised messaging.
- d) Delivery of essentials for those in self-isolation.
- e) Targeted interventions for specific sections of the local community and workplaces.
- f) Harnessing capacity within local sectors (voluntary, academic, commercial).
- g) Extension/introduction of specialist support (behavioural science, bespoke comms).
- h) Additional resource for compliance with, and enforcement of, restrictions and guidance.
- i) Measures to support the continued functioning of commercial areas and their compliance with public health guidance.
- j) Funding Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (marginal costs only).
- k) Targeted support for school/university outbreaks.
- l) Community-based support for those disproportionately impacted such as the BAME population.
- m) Support for engagement and analysis of regional areas to assess and learn from local initiatives.
- n) Providing initial support, as needed, to vulnerable people classed as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable who are following tier 3 guidance.
- o) Support for rough sleepers.

3.2 On 28 April 2021, Policy & Resources (Recovery) Sub-Committee allocated the full £6.815m to priority areas that were compliant with the categories above to be spent during the 2021/22 financial year.

3.3 The government subsequently allocated another round of COMF for 2021/22 of £2.070m. This was allocated via a number of separate decisions as follows:

- i) £0.055m was set aside by Policy & Resources Committee on 1 July 2021 including:
  - £0.020m for a CVS Recovery fund to be allocated by the Members' Advisory Group (MAG), and;
  - £0.035m for one-to-one / small group catch up support/tuition of 1,000 hours to help address attainment gaps.
- ii) £0.300m was set aside by P&R (Recovery) Sub-Committee on 22 July 2021 for a new Brighton and Hove Contact Tracing Service.
- iii) On 12 July 2021 an officer Urgency Decision was made in consultation with the Chair of Policy & Resources Committee to double the financial support for Self-Isolation from £0.100m to £0.200m by using £0.100m from the 2021/22 COMF.
- iv) On 7 October 2021, Policy & Resources Committee agreed to allocate £1.615m to support growing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

pressures caused by the pandemic as recommended by Housing Committee.

- 3.4 Subsequent to these allocations, further decisions were made regarding the re-allocation of COMF monies as follows:
- i) On 4 November 2021, Policy & Resources (Recovery) Sub-Committee re-allocated £0.190m COMF funding that had been applied to schemes subsequently funded by the 2021/22 Household Support Fund. The money was reallocated to top-up the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) budget which was over-subscribed.
  - ii) On 10 February 2022, Policy & Resources agreed to re-allocate £0.600m COMF from underspending schemes such as Covid Marshals to further support pressures on Homelessness and Emergency Accommodation which also helped to alleviate pressures on the Targeted Budget Management (TBM) position and thereby support a balanced 2022/23 budget.
  - iii) On 24 February 2022, Budget Council agreed to a further re-allocation of underspent COMF schemes of £0.138m to support the Housing First scheme in 2022/23 (i.e. through allowable carry forward).
  - iv) On 4 November, Policy & Resources (Recovery) Sub-Committee had agreed to set aside £0.069m to support the Food Strategy in 2022/23 from either recurrent or available one-off funding. This estimate subsequently increased to £0.074m. Recurrent funding was not available but further underspending on COMF schemes has enabled re-allocation of funding to meet this approval (via allowable carry forward to 2022/23). The November report also highlighted further funding requirements for the food strategy in 2022/23 and that potential one-off funding sources should be considered to contribute to this, if available. In this respect, at the time of drafting, there are currently further underspends of approximately £0.075m on COMF schemes which could be re-allocated to food but this cannot be confirmed or approved until the final outturn position for 2021/22 is known in July.
- 3.5 In summary, the total available COMF is £8.885m made up of the 2020/21 and 2021/22 funding announcements. After re-allocating funds in accordance with the later approvals detailed above, the current allocation and projected spend for COMF is as shown in Table 1 below. A more detailed forecast is included at Appendix 1.

<b>Table 1: Current Allocation of 2020/21 and 2021/22 COMF</b>	<b>£m</b>
Outbreak Management and Surge Management	0.340
Extension of Local Welfare Assistance and Hardship Support	0.515
Re-allocation to Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs)	0.190
Neighbourhood & Community Support	0.708
Support for Food Bank and Community Food Provision	0.100
Next Steps Homelessness and Rough Sleeping (P&R 18/03/21)	2.043
Managing the City Safely and Outdoor Events Programme 2021 (P&R 29/3/21)	0.677
Early Years Providers	0.107
Sports and Leisure Facilities (Freedom Leisure) support (P&R 29/3/21)	0.363

Support to Schools (pupil share)	0.703
Underpinning Council Services ensuring operational support for delivery of the Local Outbreak Plan including remote technology	0.418
Additional Homelessness support (Re-allocation TBM Month 9)	0.600
Food Strategy support (4 Nov 21 P&R Recovery Sub)	0.074
Brighton and Hove Contract Tracing Service	0.134
Additional Financial Support for Self-Isolation	0.030
1:1 / small group catch up support/tuition: 1000 hours	0.035
CVS Recovery Fund (for MAG allocation)	0.020
Additional Homelessness & Rough Sleeping support	1.615
Housing First 2022/23 (Budget Council)	0.138
Potential further re-allocation for Food Strategy (pending outturn)	0.075
<b>TOTAL 2020/21 and 2021/22 COMF ALLOCATIONS</b>	<b>8.885</b>

- 3.6 Please note that the final position for COMF expenditure in 2021/22 will not be known until the 2021/22 accounts are closed and carry forward requirements (e.g. to cover schemes where contracted staffing costs extend into 2022/23) have been confirmed. This will be reported as part of the TBM Provisional Outturn report to July Policy & Resources Committee which may provide further opportunities for re-allocation if any additional underspends emerge.

#### **Household Support Fund 2021/22**

- 3.7 The government provided £2.140m new funding to Brighton & Hove City Council in the form of the Household Support Fund (HSF) for 2021/22. The fund was part of the government's Covid response and was intended to provide support for food, fuel and other essential costs over the winter and up to the end of March 2022. The fund cannot be carried forward.

- 3.8 There was a broad discretion conferred on local authorities in spending this fund but with the following limitations:

At least 50% of the grant must be used for supporting households with children.

Up to 50% of the grant could be used to assist other households. Eligible spend included:

- 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; and,
- Reasonable admin or staffing costs.

- 3.9 On 4 November 2021, Policy & Resources (Recovery) Sub-Committee allocated the HSF as follows:

<b>2021/22 Household Support Fund Allocations</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Free School Meals October H/T, Winter Holiday, February H/T, Easter (2022/23) – provision of vouchers	£0.810m
Children’s Centres – vouchers for under 5’s	£0.030m
Schools – additional flexibility	£0.050m
Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) for Feb Half-Term	£0.070m
Funding for Community Centres – support to local residents for food and energy bills	£0.050m
Funding for other organisations supporting groups with protected characteristics or vulnerability	£0.150m
Community Hub provision – to support struggling households not on DWP benefits	£0.100m
Winter Grant Fund package (support via CVS organisations)	£0.090m
Warmth for Wellbeing	£0.070m
Brighton & Hove Food Partnership	£0.090m
Council Tax Reduction Discretionary Fund top-up	£0.200m
Emergency Placement Service Charge – assistance with rent arrears	£0.015m
Local Discretionary Social Fund (LDSF)	£0.415m
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2.140m</b>

3.10 At the time of drafting, the 2021/22 financial year has only just closed with the final issuing of vouchers, particularly via the Local Social Discretionary Fund (LDSF), continuing right up to the deadline on 31 March 2022. In addition, although the Easter Holidays fall after 31 March 2022, the payment over of funds (£0.270m) and issuing of vouchers by the vendor for Free School Meals was made prior to 31 March 2022 and is therefore eligible for the 2021/22 HSF.

3.11 The proposed allocation of the 2021/22 HSF in November was based on the best estimate of likely demands but, in the event, there have been higher demands on LDSF than estimated while some other allocations and requirements were slightly lower than expected. Overall, the 2021/22 HSF has been spent in full and in some areas has been over-subscribed (see 2022/23 HSF below). The final position for each scheme line will not be known until all expenditure has been processed through the accounts and will be reported as part of the TBM Provisional Outturn report to July Policy & Resources Committee. In the interim, the expected final allocation is included at Appendix 2.

### **2022/23 Household Support Fund**

3.12 The recently announced 2022/23 Housing Support Fund covers the first 6 months to September 2022 and is now positioned as supporting people with the cost of living increase. However, the government’s previous focus on providing support to families with free school meals (the Rashford campaign) may mean that the community expectation is for continued support for families through supermarket food vouchers. The overall allocation will be the same as in 2021/22 at £2.140m but the allocation requirements are different.

3.13 The biggest issue with the re-focused HSF is the apparent requirement that 1/3 should be spent on pensioners. However, the city’s proportion of

pensioners is less than 14% of the population. This issue is being raised widely by local authorities and further discussions are being held with DWP in the hope that the guidance may be reconsidered to enable a more proportionate distribution.

- 3.14 Proposals for the full allocation of the 2022/23 Household Support Fund will therefore require further consultation with stakeholders and possible re-working if the guidance changes. It is expected that proposals will be provided to the 12 May Policy & Resources Committee for consideration as part of a 'Cost of Living Response and Household Support Fund 2022/23' report.
- 3.15 In the interim, as noted earlier, the Local Discretionary Social Fund (LDSF) has been over-subscribed compared to the funding made available under the previous 2021/22 Household Support Fund and there is therefore pent up demand for support which continues to present week-on-week. The LDSF is a key resource for crisis and emergency help in the city for low income households on benefits, or those waiting for benefits. To ensure current demands can be met until the full allocation of the Household Support Fund in May, it is recommended to allocate £0.100m to top-up the LDSF to enable demand to be met in the meantime.

#### **4 Analysis and consideration of alternative options**

- 4.1 Not allocating an advance from the 2022/23 Household Support Fund may mean that some people or households applying for support from the Local Discretionary Social Fund cannot be supported in the short term. Allocations from the new fund will be agreed at the May 2022 Policy & Resources Committee but, as with the previous Household Support Fund, it is expected that a significant sum will be reserved for LDSF as this is a key fund for supporting people or households in hardship who may not be covered by Free School Meal vouchers.

#### **5 Community engagement and consultation**

- 5.1 The allocations of COMF and HSF funds were designed collaboratively with officers from across Families, Children & Learning, Welfare, Revenues & Business Support (WRBS), and Housing.
- 5.2 Officers from WRBS also met with partners from Community Works and the Moneyworks / Advice Matters partnerships to discuss the proposals in detail and their feedback was incorporated in the final proposed allocations.
- 5.3 The principles of the HSF, and the general intentions around its allocation were also shared at the Equality and Inclusion Partnership meeting on 20 October 2021.

#### **6 Conclusion**

- 6.1 The report confirms that 2020/21 and 2021/22 Contain Outbreak Management Funds have been allocated in full and, after amending the original allocations for approved re-allocations, are expected to be fully spent. Similarly, the 2021/22 Household Support Fund has been fully allocated and is expected to have been fully expended by the 31 March 2022 as required by the grant conditions. The final positions on both funds will be confirmed in the TBM Provisional Outturn report to Policy & Resources Committee in July 2022.

- 6.2 In order to ensure current demands can be met, an advance allocation of £0.100m from the 2022/23 Household Support Fund is recommended in order to top-up the Local Discretionary Social Fund. Proposals for the full allocation of the fund are expected to be brought to the May 2022 Policy & Resources Committee.

## **7 Financial implications**

- 7.1 The financial implications are set out in the body of the report. The council received an allocation of £2.140m from the Household Support Fund in 2021/22, which must be utilised by 31 March 2022. No carry forward is possible. The report indicates that the fund is expected to have been fully utilised as at 31 March 2022 in accordance with the terms and conditions of the fund.
- 7.2 The council received a number of tranches of Contain Outbreak Management Funding (COMF) for 2020/21 and a further tranche for 2021/22 totalling £8.885m. The report details the allocations and re-allocations and the associated committee approvals. The 2020/21 COMF was fully carried forward to 2021/22. The funds have been fully utilised in accordance with the eligible criteria a) to o) set out in paragraph 3.1 including some commitments in 2022/23, which is possible through allowable carry forward.
- 7.3 The council will receive the same level of funding, £2.140m, for the new Household Support Fund (HSF) covering April to September 2022. However, the new HSF has been refocused to support the cost of living increase rather than Covid. Although official guidance is awaited, draft guidelines indicate that the fund will be targeted across a wide range of support including low income families with children, low income adult households without children, and pensioners. The advance allocation of £0.100m for the Local Discretionary Social Fund is therefore consistent with the draft terms and conditions.

Finance officer consulted: James Hengeveld Date consulted: 11/4/22

## **8 Legal implications**

- 8.1 The key legal and governance implications are to ensure that all funds are distributed in accordance with the funding criteria to avoid any claw back or loss of funding. Clear records of both the decision making and the detail of the allocations will assist with this. As set out in the report, all decisions regarding the allocation or re-allocation of Contain Outbreak Management Funds or the Household Support Fund have been through appropriate governance channels including Policy & Resources (Recovery) Sub-Committee, Policy & Resources Committee or through the use of recorded Officer Urgency decisions requiring agreement of the Chair of Policy & Resources Committee.

Lawyer consulted: Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis Date consulted: 11/4/22

## **9 Equalities implications**

- 10 Contain Outbreak Management Funds were issued to councils to support them in managing the impacts of the pandemic across a wide range of services and interventions. However, the Household Support Fund was awarded to support individuals and therefore a detailed Equality Impact

Assessment was undertaken and provided to the Policy & Resources (Recovery) Sub-Committee on 4 November 2021 to ensure that equality impacts were fully considered in making allocation decisions.

## **11 Sustainability implications**

11.1 There are no sustainability implications arising directly from the report.

## **12 Crime & Disorder Implications**

12.1 Supporting vulnerability and reducing the impacts of poverty and hardship can have positive impacts on the drivers for crime and disorder.

## **13 Public Health Implications**

13.1 Similarly, supporting vulnerability and reducing the impacts of poverty and hardship can clearly have positive impacts on health and well-being, particularly as debt is linked to increased stress and mental health issues and food or fuel insecurity can have direct impacts on health and well-being.

## **Supporting Documentation**

### **Appendices**

1. Contain Outbreak Management Funds 2020/21 and 2021/22 – Detailed Allocations and expected spend
2. Expected allocation of and spend against the 2021/22 Household Support Fund.

### **Background documents**

None



Item	2020/21 and 2021/22 Contain Outbreak Management Fund Allocations	Original Allocations	Approved Re-allocations	Expected Allocation / Spend
		£	£	£
1	Outbreak Management and Surge Management	566,000	(225,507)	340,493
2	Support to address barriers to self-isolation (replaced by PSP funding)	100,000	(100,000)	-
3a	Debt & Mental Health support	45,000	(204)	44,796
3b	Money and Health Case workers	80,000	0	80,000
3c	Debt Advisors	80,000	0	80,000
3d	Local lift-up scheme	175,000	0	175,000
3e	Discretionary Housing Payments (re-allocation of scheme now funded by HSF)	90,000	0	90,000
3f	Discretionary Housing Payments (re-allocation of schemes now funded by HSF)	100,000	0	100,000
3g	Commission innovative digital solutions in the voluntary sector for vulnerable people	50,000	45,252	95,252
3h	Data Insight Project contribution	40,000	0	40,000
4a	Communities Fund Allocation	300,000	0	300,000
4b	Funding for CVS infrastructure support	75,000	0	75,000
4c	Support to small community based organisations	125,000	0	125,000
4d	Healthy Neighbourhood Fund – incl. additional Senior Officer post - CETS team	40,000	(13,543)	26,457
4e	Advice and support for migrant residents	150,000	(28,841)	121,159
4f	Support resilience and recovery of communities - funding a pilot of 3 reporting centres	60,000	0	60,000
5	Support for Food Bank and Community Food Provision	100,000	0	100,000
6	Next Steps Homelessness and Rough Sleeping (P&R 18/03/21)	2,043,000	0	2,043,000
7a	COVID Information Officer Team – 3 staff members for 12 months	190,000	(123,365)	66,635
7b	COVID Marshalls - available seven days per week	450,000	(189,047)	260,953
7c	COVID Event Planning Officer – 1 officer	30,000	(23,660)	6,340
7d	Trading Standards Officer – 1 officer	30,000	4,432	34,432

Item	2020/21 and 2021/22 Contain Outbreak Management Fund Allocations	Original Allocations	Approved Re-allocations	Expected Allocation / Spend
		£	£	£
7e	Health and Safety Officers – 3 officers as H&S resource	90,000	(29,531)	60,469
7f	Training Provision – COVID safe practices for public facing businesses	20,000	5,303	25,303
7g	Provision of PPE to support small businesses who need it for events, arts and tourism	10,000	0	10,000
7h	Additional signage for public places (e.g. temp venues) hand sanitisers and equipment	20,000	0	20,000
7i	Preparing central city streets for the return of the public	120,000	0	120,000
7j	Additional public toilets – placing temporary toilets at key locations	50,000	22,791	72,791
8a	Early Years Providers – estimated 106 Nurseries at £750	79,500	720	80,220
8b	Early Years Providers – estimated 110 childminders at £250	27,500	(1,130)	26,370
9	Sports and Leisure Facilities (Freedom Leisure) support (P&R 29/3/21)	363,000	0	363,000
10	Support to Schools (pupil share)	703,000	0	703,000
11a	Remote Working Capacity and resilience – IT / Ways of Working support	413,000	0	418,340
12a	Brighton & Hove Contract Tracing Service (P&R Recovery Sub-Committee 22/7/21)	300,000	(165,796)	134,204
12b	Financial Support for Self-Isolation (Urgency Decision July 2021)	100,000	(70,000)	30,000
12c	1:1 / small group catch up support/tuition: 1000 hours (Amendment at July 2021 P&R)	35,000	0	35,000
12d	CVS Recovery Fund (Amendment at July 2021 P&R)	20,000	(128)	19,872
12e	Homelessness & Rough Sleeping (P&R 7/10/21)	1,615,000	0	1,615,000
13a	Re-allocation to meet additional Homelessness costs (P&R 10/2/22 – TBM Month 9)	-	600,000	600,000
13b	Food - to fund P&R Recovery Sub commitments (Recommendations 2.5.1 and 2.5.2)	-	74,000	£74,000
13c	Housing First (Budget Council approval)	-	138,000	138,000
14	Re-allocation for Food Strategy (P&R Recovery Sub 4/11/21 – pending outturn)	-	74,912	74,912
<b>TOTAL 2020/21 AND 2021/22 COMF ALLOCATIONS AND SPEND</b>		<b>8,885,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>8,885,000</b>

## Appendix 2

Item	2021/22 Household Support Fund	Original Allocations	Expected Spend
		£	£
1	Funding for other organisations supporting protected characteristics	150,000	148,160
2	B&H Food Partnership	90,000	90,000
3	Community Hub – for support to those not on DWP benefits	100,000	45,000
4	Funding for Community Centres – support to local residents for food and energy bills	50,000	50,000
5	Local Discretionary Social Fund top-up incl. admin costs	415,000	432,987
6	Warmth for Wellbeing	70,000	80,000
7	Discretionary CTR top-up	200,000	200,000
8	Free School Meals October H/T, Winter Holiday, February H/T – provision of vouchers	540,000	540,000
9	Free School Meals – Easter 2022	270,000	270,000
10	Schools	50,000	50,000
11	Children's Centres	30,000	45,000
12	Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) incl. admin costs	70,000	60,000
13	Emergency Placement	15,000	15,000
14	Winter Grant Package	90,000	113,853
	<b>Total 2021/22 Household Support Fund</b>	<b>2,140,000</b>	<b>2,140,000</b>

