

OFFICER DELEGATED DECISIONS FORM

State the Delegated Authority that you are relying on in order to make this decision: e.g. specific (identified in constitution) or general

Following approval at the Individual Executive Meeting on the 2 December 2020, delegated authority to approve modifications to the Winter Grant Payment and Financial Assistance and Advice Support Payment was given to the Section 151 Officer.

Subject of decision: *Household Support Fund Grant*

Allocations of grant funding continue to be made consecutive to the initial Covid Winter Grant launched in 2020 in response to the announcement by Central Government on 8 November 2020, and subsequent Covid Local Support Grant. The funding is provided for by the DWP to provide direct assistance to vulnerable households and children.

That the Section 151 Officer approve new arrangements for the disbursement of awards to Middlesbrough residents during the period that the Council is to be further funded for, to 31 March 2022.

Text of decision: e.g. can include monies received by the Council, list any terms agreed, brief summary of the policy – Do not include any confidential information.

Although the most recent Covid Local Support Grant provided for awards to be made to vulnerable households to 30 September 2021, DWP announced on 06 October 2021 that further funding is to be provided through the Household Support Fund Grant to allow continued delivery of support during the second half of the 2021/2022 financial year. The funds will be distributed in line with earlier policy objectives around the Winter Grant Scheme and the Covid Local Support Grant, including the stipulation that at least 50% of the total funding must be spent on families with children.

The Council's approach will be modified to process awards against 3 principal headings: - Children, Adults and Circumstances.

Children

Free School eligibility continues to be used as a basis to define eligibility, but vouchers worth £25 will be issued on a per child basis through arrangements made with schools or direct to parents through Paypoint. A specific link to Free School Meals is not intended, and the payment is made to support costs for not only food, but to include an element towards energy costs during the winter period. Where eligible during the November, Christmas and February holidays, there will be an entitlement of approx. £100 in total per child, however the final payment in February will be based on remaining funds.

An application process will be implemented for households where siblings of school age are eligible to allow access to Paypoint vouchers for pre-school children, too.

Children's Services will be able to recommend issue of a voucher for other children, as justified by circumstances indicating a need for scheme support.

OFFICER DELEGATED DECISIONS FORM

An allocation of £20,000 will exist to allow Children's Services the ability to requisition replacement White Goods where a social worker deems this is critical because existing equipment is broken or condemned. This will further ensure funding is utilised on helping children with immediate assistance where necessary over the winter months.

Adults

Adult Social Care is to provide a list of adults known to it where support is warranted. Vouchers will be distributed by Social Workers, issued by Paypoint or payment made by other means according to the needs of the individual.

All accounts with a then current Working Age Council Tax Reduction award will be credited with £25 ahead of Christmas to allow taxpayers a payment holiday so that other essential costs can be covered to that value.

It is proposed that a Christmas 2021 hot meal event will be organised to repeat the provision made for Christmas 2020. Funding of £10,000 will be provisionally allocated and if not required, funds will be assigned to fund other applications made under 'Circumstances'.

Circumstances

A tiered structure for payments of £40, £60 and £75 for single applicants, couples, and families with children not in receipt of an award through the Children area criteria will be used, respectively. Application will be open to all who can demonstrate that they are struggling to meet essential payment obligations and are borderline crisis or special circumstances.

Recommendations for an award will also be accepted from trusted partners so that those already recognised as in need will have no need to supply evidence or make a detailed application, and issue of funds can be fast-tracked.

Eligibility will be dependent though on a liability existing for rent or council tax. Awards will be paid by BACS and will have to cease once available funding is exhausted.

Applicants' financial position will be reviewed in line with Resident and Business Support Welfare Strategy to ensure that other appropriate support and assistance is made available where this is appropriate.

Unspent funds

In the event that there remains available excess funding during or towards the end of the scheme period then these will be allocated using either or both of:

- Top up of Circumstances awards made
- Further allocations to council tax accounts

Reason for Decision

OFFICER DELEGATED DECISIONS FORM

<p>The DWP is providing additional funding to support vulnerable households that is much needed against a background of reduced income and increased costs for many in Middlesbrough.</p>
Other options considered (if any)
NA
Has an Impact Assessment been completed Yes/No – if yes please attach to the decision.
No
Declarations of Interest by any member or relevant local government body
N/A
Who have you consulted as part of the decision making process e.g. Head of Service, Executive Member, Community Association, Surveyor?
N/A
Date of decision
5 November 2021.
Service area
Finance Directorate.
Name of Delegated Officer making decision - i.e. Officer who is designated the power in the Constitution
Mr Ian Wright, Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer.
Name of the Officer making the decision – if power has been sub-delegated to another Officer.
NA.
List of background papers (do not list if contain exempt/confidential information)

OFFICER DELEGATED DECISIONS FORM

Signed:

Mr I Wright

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'I Wright', is placed over a light grey rectangular background.

Dated: 5.11.21