

Record of individual Cabinet member decision

Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Decision made by	Councillor Maggie Filipova-Rivers
Key decision?	No
Date of decision (same as date form signed)	24 June 2024
Name and job title of officer requesting the decision	Jayne Bolton Community Wellbeing Manager
Officer contact details	Email: jayne.bolton@southandvale.gov.uk
Decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To utilise £41,307 Household Support Fund 5 (HSF5) funding from Oxfordshire County Council for local welfare allocation in the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024. To utilise £135,465 Discretionary Housing Payments, (DHP) for residents for the financial year 2024/25. To accept this funding and enter into a funding agreement with Oxfordshire County Council (appendix one) The delegation of authority to the Head of Communities to approve and make minor amendments to the funding agreement. The delegation of authority to the Head of Communities to accept and utilise further local welfare funding from Oxfordshire County Council and to enter into funding agreements as required, subject to a maximum of £75,000 income and in consultation with the Head of Finance. The delegation of authority to the Head of Communities to make minor amendments to the Household Voucher Scheme Policy (appendix two) and to approve any further associated policies and amendments to them pertaining to the HSF. The delegation of authority to the Head of Finance and s151 officer to approve the associated grants policy and to approve any further associated policies and associated amendments to them pertaining to DHP (appendix four)
Reasons for decision	<p>Residents across the district are continuing to feel the impact in the cost of living pressures and despite a range of measures to support households from central government, not all needs will be met and many households will be put under severe pressure this summer/autumn.</p> <p><u>Cost of Living Measures</u> To date, the council offers the following measures to assist with the cost-of-living crisis:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Four rounds of the Household Support Fund, delivered as a voucher scheme in partnership with local advice centres and community partners.(appendix three HSF4 Insight report) - Funding for Voluntary and community sector organisations across the district through the Food and Warmth Grant scheme with awards in total of £73,500 - Community Connectors advise, signpost and refer residents who are struggling to local charity organisations, food banks and voluntary groups. <p>Extending the HSF and DHP scheme to September 2024 for HSF and March 2025 for DHP will provide further vital financial support through the summer and into the autumn to support our residents with the cost of living.</p> <p>Household Support Fund</p> <p>The Household Support Fund (HSF 1) launched on 6 October 2021 to support households struggling to afford food, energy, and household essentials. Funds were made available to Oxfordshire County Council as the upper tier local authority who made allocations available to the city and district councils for local welfare arrangements. The acceptance of these funds and the grant policy which governed these local arrangements was agreed by both Councils 2021 11 03 ICMD HSF SOUTH / FINAL.</p> <p>The fifth Household Support Fund Extension (HSF5) was announced in March 2024. A further £421 million has been made available for Local Authorities in England to support those most in need due to the significant rises in living costs.</p> <p>As with the previous four rounds of HSF, Oxfordshire County Council receive the Household Support Fund with the expectation that they will make funding available to lower tier authorities as appropriate for the circumstances of the area.</p> <p>For HSF5 the allocation of funding made available to the council from Oxfordshire County Council for welfare distribution will be £41,307.</p> <p>Discretionary Housing Payment Support</p> <p>Capacity to manage the DHP scheme will be made within the current Revenues and Benefits Client team and each case will be individually vetted and considered on its own merits to avoid any potential for fraud or misuse of the limited funds available.</p> <p>The DHP allocation of funding made available is £135,465.</p>
<p>Alternative options rejected</p>	<p>To not accept the HSF allocation and DHP allocation or utilise funding from Oxfordshire County Council.</p> <p>There is a risk that vulnerable households will experience higher levels of</p>

	deprivation due to the cost-of-living pressures. There is a reputational risk in not accepting the funds and not using the councils' position to support vulnerable households.
Climate and ecological implications	Whilst there are no direct implications in accepting the funds from Oxfordshire County Council, we are aware that vulnerable households are struggling to afford their energy bills due to cost of living pressures, there is an opportunity to offer a more sustainable support for residents beyond emergency, short term needs. To tackle the issue of spiralling energy costs, we will make sure that households are made aware and signposted to Better Housing Better Health (BHBH), via the council's websites and other agencies to help significantly reduce energy bills in the long term. The email containing the HSF vouchers will include a link to the website and contact details for BHBH.
Legal implications	<p>The funding agreement will be entered into with Oxfordshire County Council (appendix one). The draft funding agreement has been drawn up by the county council covering the onward distribution of the grant monies and reporting requirements.</p> <p>The funds should only be used towards the projects as defined in the agreement as Household Support Fund, unless a different purpose is first approved and authorised by Oxfordshire County Council.</p> <p>No grant will be paid unless and until Oxfordshire County Council is satisfied that such payment will be used for proper expenditure in the delivery of the Project.</p> <p>The Grant period is defined as the period for which the Grant is awarded and ending 30 September 2024 for HSF and 31 March 2025 for DHP.</p> <p>The funds must be spent during the grant period and any unspent funds must be returned to OCC.</p> <p>Due to the urgency with which the fund needs to be open, officers request that HSF5 can open ahead of the final funding agreement being completed. The funds are claimed in arrears as per previous agreements and the two public sector bodies have worked on this basis for the previous agreements. The funding agreement will need to be completed before being able to claim the funds and whilst this is in train the fund is at risk. However, given that the funding agreement is substantively the same as for all previous household support funds, the risk in proceeding ahead of the agreement is deemed to be minimal.</p>
Financial implications	<p>Household Support Fund 5 welfare allocation- £41,307</p> <p>The household support fund is claimed retrospectively from the county council who claim from DWP. Therefore, the council will be using funds not yet received.</p> <p>Officers will ensure that careful budget monitoring is undertaken to ensure that funds are not overspent.</p>

	<p>There are no further financial implications to the council as this is funding provided by DWP to allocate to residents.</p> <p>It should be noted that financial reporting on the allocation of this grant remains through Oxfordshire County Council.</p> <p>The Community hub team will oversee the distribution of support vouchers and manage relationships with referring agencies. Staff costs will be covered by the existing funding arrangements for the community hub.</p> <p>The County Council will transfer funds following submission of district management information listed in Schedule two of the agreement (appendix one).</p> <p>Spend will be closely monitored to ensure that the total number of voucher awards are only allocated up to the value of the fund.</p> <p>A further £62,465 (subject to review) has been requested via a 2023-24 carry forward to further support this scheme.</p> <p>Discretionary Housing Payment</p> <p>There are no financial implications as Oxfordshire County Council are funding the Discretionary Housing Payment and Council Tax Support funding provided by DWP to city and district councils; £135,465 funding for the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) which has already been received in 2023/2024.</p>			
Equalities implications	<p>Whilst there are no direct implications in accepting the funds from Oxfordshire County Council, we are aware that vulnerable households are struggling to afford their energy bills due to cost of living pressures will be directed supported in the short and longer term through the Household Support Fund.</p>			
Other implications	<p>None</p>			
Background papers considered	<p>Appendix one – Oxfordshire County Council Funding agreement (currently draft) Appendix two – Household Support Fund Policy 2023 (to be updated) Appendix three – HSF4 Impact Report Appendix four – Discretionary Housing Payment Policy</p>			
Declarations/conflict of interest? Declaration of other councillor/officer consulted by the Cabinet member?	<p>N/a</p>			
List consultees		Name	Outcome	Date
	Ward councillors			
	Legal	Pat Connell	Agreed as	14/06/2024

	legal@southandvale.gov.uk		amended	
	Finance Finance@southandvale.gov.uk	Nicole Tyreman	Comments noted and document updated	14/06/2024
	Climate and biodiversity climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk	Heather Saunders	In agreement and encouraged by the signposting to BHBH.	04/06/2024
	Diversity and equality equalities@southandvale.gov.uk	Lorne Grove	In agreement and adequately addresses the key equality implications.	04/06/2024
	Procurement Procurement@southandvale.gov.uk	N/A	N/A	
	Human resources hradminandpayroll@southandvale.gov.uk	N/A	N/A	
	Property property@southandvale.gov.uk	N/A	N/A	
	Health and safety healthandsafety@southandvale.gov.uk	N/A	N/A	
	Communications communications@southandvale.gov.uk	Gail Buckle	Noted and ok from a comms point of view	04/06/2024
	Senior Management Team		Agreed	19/6/2024
Confidential decision? If so, under which exempt category?	No			
Call-in waived by Scrutiny Committee chairman?	No			
Has this been discussed by Cabinet members?	No			
Cabinet portfolio holder's signature To confirm the decision as set out in this notice.	Cllr Filipova-Rivers: Date: 24 June 2024			

ONCE SIGNED, THIS FORM MUST BE HANDED TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES IMMEDIATELY.

For Democratic Services office use only		
Form received	Date: 24 June 2024	Time: 0947
Date published to all councillors	Date: 24 June 2024	
Call-in deadline	Date: n/a	Time: