



**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you

## DECISION BOOK

**Issue: 646      Date: 21 DECEMBER 2021**

Decisions set out in the book have been made under delegated powers by the Chief Executive, Executive Directors or the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer, in consultation either with the relevant committee or Lead Councillor.

This issue of the decision book will be in public circulation up until **Friday 31 December 2021**. During that period three Councillors may request in writing to the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services that a decision should be referred either to a committee, or to the Council (as appropriate) for formal resolution.

The decision book is open to public inspection at the Civic Offices between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm, Mondays to Fridays and can be accessed on the Council's website -

<https://democracy.reading.gov.uk/mgListOfficerDecisions.aspx?bcr=1&BAM=0>

The officer reports accompanying the decisions are attached.

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## DECISION BOOK - ISSUE 646 - 21 DECEMBER 2021

### 1. HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND PHASE 2

<u>DECISION</u>	<u>LEAD COUNCILLOR(S)</u>	<u>WARDS AFFECTED</u>	<u>PAGE NO.</u>
1. HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND PHASE 2	COUNCILLOR BROCK	BOROUGHWIDE	1

This report sets out the decision to use Household Support Funding (previously known as the Covid Local Support Grant and the Covid Winter Grant Scheme) to support vulnerable families and individuals.

It is the decision of the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council that Phase 2 of the Household Support Fund be allocated to Reading voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to support Reading residents with ongoing food, warmth and living costs, as laid out in section 4 of this report.

**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**REPORT BY DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

<b>LEAD COUNCILLOR:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR BROCK - LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</b>		
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>21 DECEMBER 2021</b>		
<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND PHASE 2</b>		
<b>SERVICE:</b>	<b>CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICES</b>	<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>BOROUGHWIDE</b>
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**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report sets out the decision to use Household Support Funding (previously known as the Covid Local Support Grant and the Covid Winter Grant Scheme) to support vulnerable families and individuals. The funding amount allocated to the Council by the Department for Work and Pensions is £1,130,648.94. The fund must be spent between 6 October 2021 and 31 March 2022.
- 1.2 In summary, the Grant Conditions are to provide support to households who would otherwise struggle to buy food, pay essential utility bills, or meet other essential living costs or housing costs (in exceptional cases of genuine emergency).
- 1.3 This report provides proposals for the use of Phase 2 funding as set out in section 4.
- 1.4 The following six Decision Books have been completed relating to this funding:
- January (issue 620, dated 7 January 2021)
  - March (issue 624, dated 12 March 2021)
  - April (issue 631, dated 27 April 2021)
  - June (issue 634, dated 17 June 2021)
  - July (issue 637, dated 29 July 2021)
  - October (issue 641, dated 19 October 2021)

## **2.0 DECISION**

**2.1 It is the decision of the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council that Phase 2 of the Household Support Fund be allocated to Reading voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to support Reading residents with ongoing food, warmth and living costs, as laid out in section 4 of this report.**

## **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The DWP (Department of Work and Pensions) have over the past 18 months provided several rounds of grant funding related to provision of food and energy support. The details of these can be found in the previous six decision books.
- 3.2 Following feedback from local authorities to the DWP the funding criteria has been revised to allow a broader range of vulnerable children, adults and families to benefit from the grant. The spending scheme agreed by Council in October (Decision Book issue 641, dated 19 October 2021) takes the new criteria into account.

## **4. PHASE 2 PROPOSALS**

- 4.1 Consultation across services, directorates and with the VCS has taken place in order to identify key priorities for the remaining funding (within the parameters of the grant conditions) that are simple to administer and quick to distribute.
- 4.2 Grant proposals:
- Household essentials and winter clothing for the homeless (£5,000) - St Mungo's
  - Winter clothing and food support for refugees (£5,000) - Reading Refugee Support Group
  - Winter clothing for children and young people (£6,000) - BFfC to distribute £1,000 each to six VCS organisations
  - A white goods scheme (new and repaired/recycled) (£75,000) - Christian Community Action
  - Any remaining funding/underspends to be used to fund either housing arrears, Easter Holiday Activities Fund (top up) or further funding for schemes already identified above

## **5. APPEALS**

- 5.1 Discretionary Support Schemes are not subject to any formal statutory appeals process and therefore there are no appeal rights.

## **6. FRAUD**

- 6.1 The Council will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud - and any resident caught falsifying their records to gain support will face prosecution and any payment issued will be subject to claw back, as will any payments paid in error.
- 6.2 One of the biggest risks for this scheme is impersonation fraud, where fraudsters work through a residential area and falsely claim under the names of eligible

recipients. Risk has been reduced by a targeted scheme to eligible families.

6.3 The DWP advise that Authorities wishing to work with Third Party Organisations to deliver the scheme must carry out suitable due diligence checks to ensure they are viable and able to deliver the support. So, for example, ensuring all charities are registered and taking extra caution if they are new organisations.

6.4 Authorities are also encouraged to ensure checks are in place to verify the identity of those eligible.

## **7. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

7.1 This proposal will contribute to the following key priority set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021 - 2022

- Thriving Communities: by ensuring the most economically disadvantaged families and children receive Government funding to tackle the impacts of the pandemic

## **8. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 None to note.

## **9. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

9.1 Communications appropriate to a targeted scheme will be sent to all those eligible to benefit from the scheme. Schools and our key VCS partners will also promote take up of the scheme and general communications will be provided on our website. There will be minimal social media promotion to mitigate any potential risks of fraudulent claims.

## **10. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

10.1 A full Equality Impact Assessment was completed for the original Decision Book report. There are no additional equalities impacts to note.

## **11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 None to note.

## **12. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 The cost of these payments will be met by Central Government - the Household Support Scheme is ring-fenced funding.

12.2 To simplify the allocation of funding against the criteria outline by DWP, the Council has focused on circa 80% or more of the funding supporting eligible families and individuals with food and energy. The remaining 20% of the fund will be spent during Phase 2 of distribution of monies.

12.3 The Household Support Scheme funding allocation includes reasonable administration costs to enable Authorities to deliver the scheme. Authorities should deduct their estimated administration costs from the total allocation to determine the amount remaining. In all cases, Authorities should keep administrative costs to a reasonable level. Administration costs for each Authority will be published on

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) alongside detail of all spend related to this scheme.

12.4 The table below summarises the overall allocation/spend against the various aspects of the scheme.

Area of spend	Details	Allocation	Status
Food Voucher Scheme	£20p/w per child for 4 weeks based on 5,447 eligible children / individuals	£452,880	October Half Term complete X'mas Holiday launched
BFfC Admin	To co-ordinate Food Voucher Scheme, generate finance/MI returns	£5,000	n/a
Energy Voucher Scheme	£49/household for 5,922 single households on CTRS  £98/household for 1,904 households on CTRS with a child/children  Discretionary Scheme	£505,582	Scheme launched 7 December 2021
RBC admin	To co-ordinate Energy Voucher Scheme and Phase 2 and generate finance/MI returns	£33,638	n/a
VCS Grants (Phase 2)	Additional funds to support food, warmth, energy, and other essential living costs	£91,000	Grants to be issued when Decision Book is approved
Total		£1,088,100	
Funding available		£1,130,649	
Funding remaining	Contingency	£42,549	

12.5 Total spend for food and energy support (exc. admin costs) will total approximately £958,462 (revised from £901,345) depending on final take up of the schemes outlined above. A total of £653,584 (revised from £608,570) will provide support to a minimum of 5,447 (revised from 5,200) families with children. A further £304,878 will provide support to 5,922 (revised from 5,975) other eligible individuals.

### 13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1 There are none.