

OFFICER DECISION NOTICE



Reading
Borough Council
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This notice is to be used for the following types of officer decisions. (Select one option).

- A.** Decisions taken by officers under a specific express delegation from Council or a Committee.
- B.** Decisions taken by officers under a general delegation from Council or a Committee, which relates to (i) a permission or a licence, or (ii) the rights of an individual, or (iii) a contract or expenditure over £100,000.

1. Title of decision:	Household Support Fund 4
2. Date of the decision:	22 May 2023
3. The decision maker:	Gavin Handford

4. Decision details:

It is the decision of the Assistant Director of Policy, Performance & Customer Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Corporate Service & Resources that £383,000 of the Household Support Fund allocation to Reading from DWP be available to begin the first payment of the allocation element of HSF4 to be made by July 2023, prioritising families with children entitled to free school meals.

It is the decision of the Assistant Director of Policy, Performance & Customer Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Corporate Service & Resources that £116,500 of the Household Support Fund allocation to Reading from DWP be available to commit the necessary administration support for the detailed development and delivery of the scheme.

5. Reasons for the decision:

A Household Support Fund (HSF) grant of £2,261,298 has been confirmed for Reading borough to provide cost of living support to households in the most need; particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support government has recently made available. The grant is funded by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and is to be utilised between 1st April 2023 and the 31st March 2024, or earlier if the funds have been exhausted.

The grant is provided to help families and vulnerable individuals who struggle to pay for basic living costs, such as, energy and water, food, essentials linked to energy and water, wider essentials, advice services, or housing costs.

The decisions above are in line with previous Policy Committee decisions related to previous Household Support Fund grant.

A full report on the approach to allocating HSF4 funding is being presented to the Policy Committee on 10th July 2023. To develop the scheme and prepare to make payments as soon as possible, an interim decision to utilise a proportion of the HSF4 funding is required under officer delegation.

6. Alternative options considered (if any) and rejected:

Waiting to commence the set-up activities for HSF4 until after the full details of utilising the grant are presented and agreed by Policy Committee in July 2023. This approach would delay the provision of support to residents.

7. List of open Background Papers:

HSF4 DWP Guidance Document 2023/24

8. List of confidential or exempt Background Papers:

None

9. Any other matters taken into consideration:

<input type="checkbox"/> Legitimate expectation of consultation	<input type="checkbox"/> Procedural requirements
<input type="checkbox"/> Public Health implications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental or Climate Change
<input type="checkbox"/> Health and Safety	<input type="checkbox"/> Risk Management implications
<input type="checkbox"/> Transparency of Information (FOI etc)	<input type="checkbox"/> Privacy Impact Assessments
<input type="checkbox"/> Human Rights Act Duties	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Equality Impact Assessment
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Parenting	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Safety
<input type="checkbox"/> Regulatory duties	<input type="checkbox"/> EU withdrawal
<input type="checkbox"/> Armed Forces Covenant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other

Details of the matters taken into account:

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

Resources from the Household Support Fund can be utilised by residents to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and therefore reduce their energy costs.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

The Council has routinely engaged with local voluntary and community organisations to understand the impact they are experiencing in supporting residents with the rising cost

of living within the borough. This engagement has enabled the Council to tailor the information and support available to residents who are struggling with the rising cost of living.

The development of the approach and criteria for the application-based element of the Household Support Fund have been guided by the feedback from local voluntary and community organisations on how the rising cost of living can affect residents from a broad range of backgrounds and personal circumstances. For example, over half of the residents being referred to support from the ReadiFood foodbank are single people living alone.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the entire utilisation of the HSF4 grant from DWP. There are no additional equalities impacts to note.

The Household Support Fund is focused on supporting any resident who is experiencing difficulties with the rising cost of living within the borough.

Opportunities to access support from the Household Support fund will be widely promoted across the borough to ensure everyone is aware of them, including to local voluntary and community organisations who have a direct relationship with local communities across the borough.

Elements of the Household Support Fund which is targeted towards families eligible for free school meals and older people in receipt of Housing Benefit is also expected to support other protected characteristics within the borough.

Monitoring of the take up of the Household Support Fund will include Equalities information to determine if any changes to the scheme and support available to access it need to be amended during the year.

10. Legal considerations

None to Note

11. Financial considerations

The delegated decision utilises £499,500 of the £2,261,298 HSF4 grant provided to the Council. There is no impact on the Council's revenue budget.

12. Internal consultations

Details of the HSF4 proposals have been discussed with the Council's Social Inclusion Board.

Sections 13- 18: To be completed only for Decision A (express delegation from a Committee)

13. The name of the Committee:	
14. Date of the meeting:	Click or tap to enter a date.
15. Minute number:	
16. The delegation given by the Committee:	
17. The name of any member of the committee who declared a conflict of interest in relation to the decision:	
18. Any councillor or officer required to be consulted prior to the exercise of this delegation and details of their response.	