

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 Updated Allocation
2. Date of the decision:	26 February 2024
3. The decision maker:	Charlie Stewart, Executive Director of Resources

4. Decision details:

It is the decision of the Executive Director of Resources, having consulted with the Leader of the Council, that the HSF4 scheme be amended to enable the remaining funds of approx. £440,000 to be utilised to support:

- An additional payment to care leavers in the form of Cost-of-Living payment as set out in the original report to Policy Committee dated 10 July 2023
- An additional payment to pupil premium/free school meal families in the form of Cost-of-Living payments as set out in the original report to Policy Committee dated 10 July 2023
- Allocation of any residual funds within the scheme to food bank-type support, administration costs and wider cost of living support.

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 1 April 2023 and the 31 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 scheme has been successfully delivered to date in accordance with the decision of the Policy Committee on 10 July 2023.

This Officer Decision is taken to make additional Cost of Living payments to priority cohorts above that envisaged within the original report. This is possible as the contingency provision can be released and updated forecasts, which show an underutilisation of previously allocated funds, have been made based on the take-up of the application element of the HSF4 scheme.

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

The provision of Cost-of-Living support to other priority cohorts was available via the HSF4 application process.

7. List of open Background Papers:

None

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 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 have been 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 are 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.

10. Legal consideration

None to note

11. Financial considerations

The delegated decision utilises £499,999 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 Corporate Management Team.

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

13. The name of the Committee:	Policy Committee
14. Date of the meeting:	10 July 2023
15. Minute number:	13
16. The delegation given by the Committee:	That the Executive Director of Resources, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to make changes to the delivery of HSF4 to meet changes in demand and maintain compliance with the funding allocation requirements from DWP.
17. The name of any member of the committee who declared a conflict of interest in relation to the decision:	N/A
18. Any councillor or officer required to be consulted prior to the exercise of this delegation and details of their response.	Leader of the Council