

Report subject	Acceptance of the Household Support Fund 5
Meeting date	23 April 2024
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>On 6 March 2024 in the Spring Budget the Chancellor announced that the Household Support Fund (HSF) would be extended for a further six months, from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024, with a further £421m of funding. As has been done for previous schemes, the fund will be made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need due to the Cost-of-Living situation.</p> <p>BCP Council has been awarded an allocation of £2,653,367.04 by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Council is requested to formally accept the funding in line with the Council's Financial Regulations to enable plans to be put in place to support residents.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <p>Council accept the Household Support Fund 5 allocated to BCP Council by the Department for Work and Pension in line with the Council's Financial Regulations.</p>
Reason for recommendations	To ensure that residents in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole who are struggling as a result of the Cost-of-living situation have access to support via the Household Support between April 2024 and September 2024.

Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Millie Earl, Deputy Leader for the Council and Portfolio Holder for Connected Communities
Corporate Director	Jillian Kay, Corporate Director for Wellbeing
Report Authors	Cat McMillan, Head of Community Engagement and Community Safety
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. On 6 March 2024 in the Spring Budget the Chancellor announced that the Household Support Fund (HSF) would be extended for a further six months, from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024, with a further £421m of funding, of which BCP has been awarded £2,653,367.04. As has been done for previous schemes, the fund will be made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need. This is the fifth round of Household Support Funding that Local Authorities have been asked to deliver.
2. In terms of type of support, the expectation is that the HSF extension should be used in a similar way as the original HSF schemes, although, with a greater emphasis on supporting households with energy bills. Food and energy and water bills also remain priorities. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to those items and with wider essential costs.
3. Support should be available from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024 and authorities should aim to have arrangements in place as quickly as possible to support vulnerable households throughout the grant period.
4. Previous rounds of the Household Support Fund have supported over 110,000 households in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole with a range of measures such as flexible food vouchers for eligible families during school holidays, food and energy vouchers issued through Citizen's Advice BCP, replacement white goods and boilers, energy efficiency measures and grants to community food settings (food banks, pantries etc) and other measures as necessary. The work is overseen by the multi-agency Together We Can Steering Group which was established during the pandemic and has continued to operate to support our communities.
5. Council is requested to formally accept the Household Support Fund so that plans can be put in place for the delivery of support in line with the guidance.

Options Appraisal

6. 1- Accept the Household Support Fund to enable support to be put in place for those struggling with the current Cost of Living situation.
7. 2- Do not accept the Household Support Fund- no funding is available to support those struggling with the current Cost of Living situation. No alternative funding has been identified to mitigate this.

Summary of financial implications

8. Funding is claimed retrospectively in arrears at the end of quarter 1 and quarter 2 upon submission of a detailed monitoring report which is signed off by the Chief Finance Officer. All four previous rounds of Household Support Funding have been successfully claimed in full.
9. Under reference EA4 of Part H, of the Council's Financial Regulations, acceptance of any funding over the value of £1 million must be approved by Council.

Summary of legal implications

10. This decision relates to the acceptance of the Household Support Fund, which is in line with the Council's Financial Regulations which form part of the Council's Constitution.

Summary of human resources implications

11. The Household Support Fund is delivered through the Community Initiatives team at BCP Council and full cost recovery for staff time is claimed as part of the Fund.

Summary of sustainability impact

12. Part of the fund is used to deliver support for 'energy' which includes replacement of white goods and boilers which are inefficient in their energy use, the installation of insulation goods, distribution of heated blankets and energy efficiency talks and booklets through the Local Energy Advice Partnership.

Summary of public health implications

13. The primary function of the Household Support Fund is to help residents affected by the Cost-of-Living situation with support around food and energy. Those most severely impacted are residents living in areas of deprivation. The support provided helps residents to stay warm and have access to food which supports a public health approach towards the wider determinants of health.

Summary of equality implications

14. An Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken for the first round of the Household Support Fund and is regularly reviewed and updated as the situation and/or grant guidance changes. It was identified that the fund has significant positive impacts for a wide range of individuals, such as children, people living in areas of deprivation, elderly residents, homeless etc. This is not an exhaustive list as anyone can find themselves in need of support as their situation changes and through the multi-agency Together We Can Partnership information is shared about any emerging needs so that we can consider how this might be addressed through the funding.

Summary of risk assessment

15. There is the risk that we are both over and undersubscribed with applications for support. The actual spend is monitored over time to ensure that budgets can be reallocated as required if we experience this. We have now successfully delivered

four rounds of HSF funding within budget allocations and have a well-tested model. All spend is made in line with the Council's Procurement and Financial Regulations.

Background papers

16. [Get help with the cost of living from your local council - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/get-help-with-the-cost-of-living-from-your-local-council)
17. [Cost of living help | BCP \(bcpcouncil.gov.uk\)](https://bcpcouncil.gov.uk/cost-of-living-help)

Appendices

There are no appendices to this report.