

Decision Notice

Delegated Decision

Decision No:	DD07
Subject:	HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND EXTENSION
Notification Date:	18 July 2022
Implementation Date:	18 July 2022
Decision taken by:	Mike Davis, Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) and Section 151 Officer
Delegated Authority:	<p>(a) Delegation C48 to the Section 151 Officer of Section 6 (Scheme of Officer Delegations) of Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) of the Constitution: ‘To make application for and to accept grants or other assistance on behalf of the Council.’</p> <p>(b) In accordance with Cabinet decision CAB 98 of 1 March 2021, the Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) is authorised, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Digital, to administer funding for local businesses and families as intended by Government.</p>
Decision Type:	Executive Key Decision
Call-In to Apply?	No (<i>due to the tight timescales in ensuring that the monies are received and spent by 30 September 2022, the Chairman of the Council has agreed to suspend call-in</i>)
Classification:	Unrestricted
Reason for the Decision:	To receive and implement Dover District Council’s share of the Household Support Fund Extension in accordance with the Government’s intentions and timetable for the grant.
Decision:	<p>(1) That Dover District Council accepts the award of £411,174 of Household Support Fund from Kent County Council and applies it to make grants to local partners.</p> <p>(2) The decision-maker is of the opinion that this decision is an urgent one, due to the requirement that the monies are spent by 30 September 2022, and should not, therefore, be subject to call-in.</p>

1. Background

- 1.1 Kent County Council has been awarded an £11.065 million Household Support Fund (HSF) Extension from Government. This grant is intended to be used to “support households who would otherwise struggle to buy food or pay essential utility bills or meet other essential living costs or housing costs (in exceptional cases of genuine emergency).”

- 1.2 In terms of type of support, the expectation is that the HSF extension should be used in a similar way as the original HSF scheme, although with a greater emphasis on supporting households with energy bills. Food and water bills also remain priorities. Allocation A is to support pension-age residents with their energy bills. Allocation B is to focus on a range of the most vulnerable households, particularly those unlikely to be known to the County Council. These allocations have been agreed to allow the county to meet the new requirements in this grant.
- 1.3 The intention behind the grant is to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford food, energy and water bills, and other related essentials. Funding can also be used to support households who are struggling to afford wider essentials. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, it can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need (subject to certain conditions set out in the housing support grant).

Eligible spend includes:

- (a) Food.
- (b) Energy and water (including sewerage).
- (c) Essentials linked to energy and water (including sanitary products, warm clothing, soap, blankets, boiler service/repair, purchase of equipment including fridges, freezers, ovens, etc.).
- (d) Wider essentials including, but not limited to, support with other bills such as broadband or phone bills, clothing, and essential transport related costs such as repairing a car, buying a bicycle or paying for fuel.
- (e) Housing Costs in exceptional cases of genuine emergency (eligibility for Discretionary Housing Payments must first be considered and whether the claimant is at statutory risk of homelessness and therefore owed a duty of support through the Homelessness Prevention Grant).

- 1.4 KCC has decided to allocate 43% of the £11 million grant to district councils as follows:

	Allocation of Fuel Support to Pensioners	General Allocation	Total Allocation
Ashford	290,700	83,479	374,179
Canterbury	379,080	89,495	468,575
Dartford	176,700	79,097	255,797
Dover	319,980	91,194	411,174
Folkestone and Hythe	364,150	95,519	459,669
Gravesham	257,130	84,865	341,995
Maidstone	323,430	89,954	413,384
Sevenoaks	241,100	56,161	297,261
Swale	371,460	116,479	487,939
Thanet	516,260	120,206	636,466
Tonbridge and Malling	262,710	64,186	326,896
Tunbridge Wells	217,300	49,365	266,665
Total	3,720,000	1,020,000	4,740,000

- 1.5 Government requires all funding to be spent by 30 September 2022. It is proposed to allocate the funds to support families and pensioners in food and/or fuel poverty crisis by allocation of provisions or vouchers, to reach those residents and households most in need of financial support over the coming months, as follows:

- (a) Dover Foodbank - £40,000
- (b) Deal Foodbank (which includes rural provision) - £40,000
- (c) Sandwich Age Concern – £60,000
- (d) Deal Centre (Age Concern) - £60,000
- (e) Dover Riverside Centre (Friend of Age UK) - £60,000
- (f) Citizens' Advice Bureau Dover District - £50,000
- (g) United Families - £15,000
- (h) Retained by DDC to provide heating and boiler repairs, insulation, energy efficiency measures and other mitigation methods to reduce energy costs - £86,174

2. **Identification of Options**

- 2.1 The options identified are:

- (a) Decline the grant
- (b) Set up a DDC-managed process for applications from individuals
- (c) Use the grant to make payments to local partner organisations

3. **Evaluation of Options**

Decline the Grant

- 3.1 This would mean forgoing £411,000 of support for hard-pressed individuals and families within the Dover district. For this reason, this is not the preferred option.

Set up a DDC-managed process for applications from individuals

- 3.2 This would entail establishing some form of means testing and grant award system. It would require staff resources and all grants would have to be made by 30 September 2022. There is a risk that this would be resource intensive and would struggle to meet the deadline, with possible clawback of the grant. For these reasons this is not the preferred option.

Use the grant to make payments to local partner organisations and retain an element to provide direct heating repairs and other mitigation methods

- 3.3 As set out above, the grant could be awarded to several partner organisations to use for the Government's specified purposes. These organisations are in close touch with the needs of their clients and their work with clients will meet the requirements of the grant, as set out by Government. An element would also be retained for DDC Energy Conservation Officers to make direct heating repairs, improvements and mitigation methods to reduce costs for identified pensioners and the most vulnerable in the district.
- 3.4 By making the awards DDC would meet the Government's timetable and avoid the risk of clawback.
- 3.5 For these reasons this is the preferred option.

4. **Any Conflicts of Interest Declared?**

4.1 None.

5. **Resource Implications**

5.1 The grants will be fully funded by the award from KCC. There are no resource implications.

6. **Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

Provision of more energy efficiency heating and improving the thermal efficiency of vulnerable residents' properties will reduce the need for energy, reduce carbon emissions and help to keep energy costs down.

7. **Corporate Implications**

7.1 Comment from the Director of Finance: Accountancy have been consulted on the financial matters in this report and have no further comments to add. (LS)

7.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Head of Governance & HR has been consulted during the preparation of this report and has no further comment to make.

7.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: This report does not specifically highlight any equality implications. However, in discharging their duties, Members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>

8. **Appendices**

8.1 Appendix 1 – Letter from Kent County Council

9. **Background Papers**

9.1 KCC confirmation letter to C/E dated 9 June 2022.

Contact Officer: Brin Hill, Head of Community and Digital Services