

<b>DECISION-MAKER:</b>	<b>CABINET</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Household Support Fund October 2022 – March 2023</b>
<b>DATE OF DECISION:</b>	<b>13 September 2022</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR KATARIA CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT</b>

<b><u>CONTACT DETAILS</u></b>			
<b>Executive Director</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Executive Director Communities, Culture &amp; Homes</b>	
	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Mary D’Arcy</b>	<b>Tel:</b> 023 8083 4611
	<b>E-mail:</b>	<b>Mary.D’Arcy@southampton.gov.uk</b>	
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Improvement Manager</b>	
	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Sara Crawford</b>	<b>Tel:</b> 023 8083 2673
	<b>E-mail:</b>	<b>Sara.crawford@southampton.gov.uk</b>	

<b>STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY</b>	
<b>NOT APPLICABLE</b>	
<b>BRIEF SUMMARY</b>	
<p>This report concerns the Household Support Fund. The Government has made additional funding available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need to help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living. This funding covers the period 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 inclusive.</p>	
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b>	
<p>Having complied with paragraph 15 of the Council’s Access to Information Procedure Rules.</p>	
	<p>(i) The council accepts and authorises expenditure in relation to the next phase of Household Support Fund funding for 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 inclusive. The actual amount Southampton City Council will receive is currently unconfirmed (as of 31/08/2022) In the region of circa £2 Million is anticipated but not guaranteed. At the time of writing, this is a best estimate only and to be confirmed.</p>
	<p>(ii) To Delegate authority to the Executive Director for Communities Culture and Homes to finalise the details of the payment scheme following consultation with the Executive Director -Finance, Commercialisation and S151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Communities and Customer Engagement and to administer funding in accordance with that scheme.</p>

<b>REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
1.	This report is submitted for consideration as a General Exception under paragraph 15 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the City Council's Constitution, notice having been given to the Chair of the relevant Scrutiny Panel and the Public.
2.	This is being presented under the General Exception due to the limited timescales of Central Government releasing the draft guidance for Local Authorities for Household Support Fund October 2022 – March 2023 and the requirement to implement delivery of a Southampton Household Support Fund scheme in early October.
3.	This funding is being provided to County Councils and Unitary Authorities and forms part of the Government's wider package of support for those most in need, to help with the cost of living. This funding can be used to support some of our most vulnerable households.
4.	Local Authorities have not yet received the final guidance and confirmation of actual amount of funding allocated. This is expected to be communicated by Central Government in the coming weeks.
5.	We will need to mobilise quickly once the funding has been confirmed, therefore delaying the recommendations as outlined in this report, will delay the start of the scheme, and potentially impact on those who may need payments in October 2022.
<b>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED</b>	
6.	The council may consider not accepting this funding. This is not recommended as the fund is designed to assist local authorities to help residents experiencing financial hardship linked to the global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living and to be complementary to the Government's wider package of Cost of Living support.
<b>DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)</b>	
7.	Additional funding has been made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need to help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living. This funding covers the period 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 inclusive. Local Authorities have discretion on exactly how this funding is used within the scope set out in the grant determination and guidance. This guidance has yet to be issued in full.
8.	The expectation is that Councils will exercise discretion in identifying and supporting those most in need, taking into account a wide range of information. That the Fund should be used to support households in the most need, particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support government has recently made available. This may include but is not limited to people who are entitled to, but not claiming qualifying benefits.
9.	There may be groups who are vulnerable to rising prices even though they are supported through these schemes, for example large families or single-income families. It is important to stress that The Fund is intended to cover a wide range of low-income households in need including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers, and people with disabilities.

10.	Energy bills may be of particular concern to low-income households during the period of The Fund and Local Authorities should prioritise supporting households with the cost of energy or offsetting other costs to support with rising energy prices.
11.	The Fund can also be used to support households with the cost of food and water bills, essential costs related to energy, food and water, and with wider essential costs. 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.
12.	Authorities have the ability to deliver the scheme through a variety of routes including providing vouchers to households, making direct provision of food or goods, or issuing grants to third parties (with the exception of grants for advice provision). Information to date is that there will be an expectation that every area must operate at least part of their scheme on an application basis i.e. residents should have the opportunity to come forward to ask for support. There is flexibility on exactly how this can be run, including through third parties rather than directly by the Local Authority.
13.	When administering The Fund Authorities are encouraged to adopt the following principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use discretion on how to identify and support those most in need, taking into account a wide range of information;</li> <li>• use the funding from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford energy and water bills, food, and other related essentials. Authorities can also use the funding to support households who are struggling to afford wider essentials;</li> <li>• in exceptional cases of genuine emergency, the funding can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need,</li> <li>• this includes payments made, or committed to, by the Authority or any person acting on behalf of the Authority, from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.</li> <li>• work together with District Councils and third parties, including where necessary and appropriate other local services. This may include social workers, housing and family support services, and may incorporate intelligence and data from wider children's social care systems to help identify and support individuals, families and households within the scope of The Fund.</li> </ul>
14.	When deciding how to help people, Authorities should consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how they plan to provide support to vulnerable households, i.e. paying into bank accounts, use of cash and vouchers, provision of goods;</li> <li>• any risks associated with these payment methods and issues of potential risk of fraud.</li> </ul>
15.	We currently awaiting the final version of the ' Household Support Fund (1 October 2022 – 31 March 2023): Guidance for County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England' and confirmation of the actual amount Southampton City Council will be allocated.

## **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Capital/Revenue**

16.	The actual amount Southampton City Council will receive from Government is currently unconfirmed (as of 31/08/2022). Our local Household Support Fund scheme will be designed to keep within the funding provided by Central Government and will be robustly monitored accordingly to ensure no overspend occurs and that appropriate returns to government to draw down funding are accurate.
<b><u>Property/Other</u></b>	
17.	None.
<b>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</b>	
<b><u>Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:</u></b>	
18.	S.1 Localism Act 2011 ('General Power of Competence')
<b><u>Other Legal Implications:</u></b>	
19.	The Council must act in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 ("PCRs") when procuring services from third parties to enable delivery of scheme objectives. The Scheme must be designed having regard to the provisions of the Equalities Act 2010 and in particular the Public Sector Equality Duty ('PSED') as set out in s.149 of the Act (the need to exercise functions having regard to the need to eliminate harassment, victimisation and discrimination on the grounds of protected characteristics). An Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken when designing the Scheme to ensure compliance with the PSED.
<b>RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS</b>	
20.	<p>Southampton City Council has experience of administering previous Household Support Fund resources to residents. However, to date we are await the final guidance and confirmation of funding from Central Government. Early indications are that there will be a requirement for some changes to the administration of the scheme, as well as some practical challenges in order to mobilise internal and external resources to be fully operational. This may lead to a delay to full implementation, but officers will review the guidance and requirements and seek to implement a full scheme, following consultation with the cabinet member, as soon as is practical after the 1st October 2022.</p> <p>Although this fund is designed to assist local authorities to help residents experiencing financial hardship linked to rises in the cost of living, there will be restrictions in the type of support that can be provided to residents. It may also be difficult to predict levels of need and demand, and residents' expectations of support available.</p> <p>The funding is finite and therefore must be viewed as being part of the Government's wider package of Cost of Living support and efforts to support residents through this period.</p>
<b>POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS</b>	
21.	The recommendations of this report are entirely consistent with and not contrary to the Council's policy framework.

<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>Yes</b>
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<b>WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:</b>	ALL
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u>	
<b>Appendices</b>	
1.	ESIA
2.	DPIA
<b>Documents In Members' Rooms</b>	
1.	None.
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	
<b>Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out.</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	
<b>Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out.</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Other Background Documents</b>	
<b>Other Background documents available for inspection at:</b>	
<b>Title of Background Paper(s)</b>	<b>Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)</b>
1.	
2.	