

# Birmingham City Council

## Report to Cabinet

14<sup>th</sup> December 2021



**Subject:** Use of Household Support Fund

**Report of:** Sue Harrison, Director Education and Skills/Director for Children's Services

**Relevant Cabinet Members:** Councillor Sharon Thompson – Vulnerable Children and Families  
Councillor Paulette Hamilton – Health and Social Care  
Councillor Tristan Chatfield – Finance and Resources

**Relevant O&S Chairs:** Councillor Narinder Kaur Kooner – Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Councillor Mick Brown – Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Cllr Mohammed Aikhlaq - Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Report author:** Lisa Fraser, Assistant Director Education and Early Years

Are specific wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Is this a key decision?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference:		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential :		

## **1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report sets out Birmingham's allocation under the government's Household Support Fund.
- 1.2 It seeks approval for the proposed use of the remainder of Birmingham's allocation not already used for holiday free school meal vouchers for eligible families.

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Cabinet
  - 2.1.1 approves the use of the Household Support Fund as set out in 3.8 – 3.11 below.
  - 2.1.2 delegates the management of the distribution to the Director Education and Skills and the Director Adult Social Care in consultation with the Director of Council Management.
  - 2.1.3 Approves the direct award of contract to BVSC via a Single Contractor Negotiation for the management and administration of the localities funds (worth £4m) to provide financial assistance to vulnerable households in crisis, at cost of £250K, until 31 March 2021 for 4 months.
  - 2.1.4 authorises the City Solicitor (or delegates) to execute and complete all necessary legal documents to give effect to the above.
  - 2.1.5 Approves the transfer of £3.529 million to Birmingham Children's Trust to provide financial assistance to vulnerable families with children until 31 March 2022 for four months.

## **3 Background**

- 3.1 In October 2021, Birmingham City Council was allocated £12.791m from the Department for Work and Pensions in respect of the government's Household Support Fund.
- 3.2 The Household Support Fund seeks to help vulnerable households with essentials over the coming months as the country continues its recovery from the pandemic.
- 3.3 The Household Support Fund will be distributed by councils, who can directly help those who need it most. Under the terms of the fund, at least 50% of the total funding must be spent on families with children. Suggestions made by government for use of this fund include for small grants to meet daily needs such as food, clothing, and utilities.
- 3.4 The government's guidance on use of the fund states that councils have the flexibility to identify which vulnerable households are in most need of support and apply their own discretion when identifying eligibility.
- 3.5 In October, a Chief Officer report approved the use of £1.22m of the fund for one week of supermarket vouchers for families eligible for free school meals during the October 2021 half-term school holiday.

- 3.6 In November, a Chief Executive report approved the use of the fund for two weeks of vouchers for the Christmas holidays at a cost of £2.500m.
- 3.7 This report seeks approval for the use of the remainder of the fund, as set out below.
- 3.8 £4.000m to Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC) as a package of grant assessment, distribution, processing and payments, across Birmingham's ten districts available to all age groups and households utilising existing welfare support channels.
- 3.8.1 BVSC's Housing Support Fund will cover small crisis grant and voucher based financial assistance to citizen's faced with financial hardship.
- 3.8.2 This will deliver financial payments in the region of £100 per household with a maximum £200 payment, reaching between 17,500 to 35,000 households across the city.
- 3.8.3 The hardship payments will be delivered through existing locality-based arrangements providing outreach-based welfare support, advice and assistance to vulnerable communities across the city.
- 3.9 £0.850m to be distributed by Adult Social Care as follows:
- 3.9.1 £0.150m Home from Hospital fund to support with bedding, toiletries and clothing.
- 3.9.2 £0.250m Emergency fund for fuel payment to support vulnerable adults identified by social work teams
- 3.9.3 £0.450m Top up to local Welfare Provision
- 3.10 £3.262m to Birmingham Children's Trust to distribute as follows:
- 3.10.1 £1.222m to distribute as hardship payments to families with children across the early help networks
- 3.10.2 £0.730m to families with No Recourse to Public Funds
- 3.10.3 £0.550m to Care Leavers
- 3.10.4 £0.200m for section 17 (children in need) activities
- 3.10.5 £0.030m for food vouchers
- 3.10.6 £0.220m for independent living grants
- 3.10.7 £0.310m for personal allowance payments
- 3.11 £0.959m for administration/management costs incurred by BVSC, Birmingham Children's Trust and Birmingham City Council related to the distribution of the fund.

#### **4 Options considered and Recommended Proposal**

- 4.1 Do nothing now. The impact of this will be a delay in the use of Birmingham's Household Support Fund allocation to support vulnerable households over the winter months and possibly mean not all of the allocation is used. The government's

guidance to councils states that funds should be spent or committed before 31 March 2022 and cannot be held over for future usage.

- 4.2 Competitively tender for the services: this is not the preferred option as BVSC are the only organisation with the experience and the networks in place to deliver the project in the time available. This Fund is available until 31 March 2022 and it is anticipated that most of the funding will be distributed during December and January. Preferred option – approve the use of the Fund as set out above. This will ensure that Birmingham's allocation is used to support vulnerable households over the winter months in accordance with the government's guidance on the use of the fund.

## **5 Consultation**

## **6 Risk Management**

## **7 Compliance Issues:**

### **7.1 How are the recommended decisions consistent with the City Council's priorities, plans and strategies?**

7.1.1 Outcome 2, Priority 1: We will improve protection of vulnerable children and young people (including those with Special Educational Needs and Disability).

7.1.2 The distribution of Birmingham's allocation of the fund proposed in this report takes account of the guidance issued by the government for use of the Household Support Fund.

### **7.2 Legal Implications**

7.2.1 The Council must ensure it complies with the terms of the Household Support Grant. The proposed ways of spending the grant (as set out in this Report) are in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grants.

7.2.2 The Council should enter into Grant Agreements or SLA's to ensure that grants given to outside bodies are spent in accordance with the terms of the Household Support Fund.

### **7.3 Financial Implications**

7.3.1 In October, a Chief Officer report approved the use of £1.220m of the Household Support Fund for one week of supermarket vouchers for families eligible for free school meals during the October 2021 half-term school holiday.

7.3.2 In November, a Chief Executive report approved the use of the fund for two weeks of vouchers for the Christmas holidays at a cost of £2.500m.

7.3.3 The total Household Support Fund grant allocation for Birmingham City Council is £12.791m.

7.3.4 This report seeks approval for the distribution of the remainder of Birmingham's allocation under the fund.

**7.4 Procurement Implications (if required)**

7.4.1 A Single Contractor Negotiation under Standing Order 2.5 is the recommended route for these services as market investigation demonstrates that there is only one contractor that can meet the council's requirements due to the reasons set out in 4.1 above.

**7.5 Human Resources Implications (if required)**

7.5.1 The distribution of the fund set out in this report will be overseen by the Director Education and Skills and the Director Adult Social Care.

**7.6 Public Sector Equality Duty**

**8 Appendices**

**9 Background Documents**