



EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

REPORT OF:	Executive Member for Housing & Public Health
LEAD OFFICERS:	Strategic Director of Adults and Health
DATE:	Thursday, 10 October 2024

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:	Adults Social Care & Health
WARD/S AFFECTED:	(All Wards);
KEY DECISION:	Y

SUBJECT: EB Household Support Fund Round 6

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 In September 2024, the Government announced it would be extending the Household Support Fund (HSF) for a fifth time, making this the latest extension, known as round 6. The announcement was for a 6-month support package, running until March 2025, to the same level as previous rounds. For Blackburn with Darwen this is a further £1.619m.
- 1.2 The Council has successfully delivered the HSF since October 2021 in partnership with a range of voluntary, community and faith sector organisations who work together to provide a strength-based approach to support our residents.
- 1.3 This report seeks to gain ongoing support for the delivery of the HSF grant programme as described in the body of the report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

- 1.1 Agree to the distribution of the Household Support Fund Round 6 as set out in the report.
- 2.2 Give delegated authority to the Strategic Director Finance and Resources and the Strategic Director Adults and Health, in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Public Health, to amend the distribution of the grant should that be considered necessary given local circumstances (after having engaged with DWP regarding the Council's revisiting of its Delivery Plan during the Fund Period, as required by national guidance).

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the beginning of October 2021, the Government announced a new HSF (round 1) worth over £500m would be made available to Upper Tier Local Authorities to support those households most in need over the winter period to March 2022.
- 3.2 Details of the grant allocations and supporting information on how the grant should be used were released to Councils on 7th October 2021 and a report on this matter was considered by the Executive in November 2021 where the distribution of the fund was agreed. Blackburn with Darwen Council received £1.619m and at the close of the scheme on 31st March 2022, all of the funding had been used as planned.
- 3.3 As part of the Spring statement 2022, the Government announced an extension to the HSF (round 2) by providing a further £500m for the scheme as part of a package of measures to support those affected by the rising cost of living. The Council's share of this additional funding was £1.619m and the grant funding had to be used by 30th September 2022.
- 3.4 As part of the Chancellors' cost of living statement on 26th May 2022, the Government announced a further extension of the HSF (round 3) from 1st October 2022. Again, this grant funding had to be used by 31st March 2023 and the Council received a further £1.619m as part of the £500m scheme.
- 3.5 As part of the Chancellor's Autumn statement on the 17th of November 2022, the Government announced a further £1b nationally to extend the HSF for a further 12 months (round 4). This grant funding must be used by 31st March 2024. On the 20th of February 2023 the Council received confirmation that a further £3.238m had been allocated to BwD as part of the £1b scheme. This equates to the same level of funding as previously received but covers a 12-month period rather than the 6-month periods of the previous schemes.
- 3.6 As part of the Chancellor's Spring statement on the 6th of March 2024, the Government announced a further extension to the Household Support Fund (round 5), from 1st April 2024. The grant funding is to be used by 31st September 2024 with the Council receiving a further £1.619m.
- 3.7 In September 2024, the Government announced it would be extending the Household Support Fund (HSF) for a 5th time, making this latest extension, round 6. The announcement was for a 6-month support package, running until March 2025, to the same level as previous rounds. For Blackburn with Darwen this is a further £1.619m.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

- 4.1 The original objective of the Fund was to provide support to vulnerable households in most need of support over the winter period. As the economy recovers, it has been recognised that further support is required to support communities as the cost-of-living crisis begins to impact further beyond recovery from the pandemic.
- 4.2 Councils have been required to develop a 'local eligibility framework and approach' to enable the distribution of the grant funding.
- 4.3 Guidance on the use of the Housing Support Fund Round allows local authorities to use their own intelligence needs to target the support, but in line with the following principles:
- Use discretion on how to identify and support those most in need, considering a wide range of information.

- Use the funding to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford energy, food and water bills, and other related essentials. It 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.
- Councils have the flexibility to work with multiple organisations to provide a local delivery network that supports vulnerable households with a broad range of support.
- Councils can claim for reasonable administrative costs incurred in administering the Scheme.

4.4 It has been widely accepted that the HSF should consider those who may be impacted by the withdrawal of the Winter Support Payment for residents of pensionable age.

4.6 The Council has a demonstrable track record of developing and implementing welfare support schemes and the delivery of the previous 5 rounds of Household Support is an illustration of this. Households have been supported through a range of measures including, for example, support with bills, including Council Tax, provision of food and debt and welfare support as part of a wraparound service, advice, and guidance. The council has also successfully fully allocated all funds available from the 5 previous rounds.

4.7 The grant will be utilised based on the criteria and building on the frameworks that have been used for delivery to date. Details of eligibility criteria, types of support and the application process are set out on the council's Household Support Fund webpage (<https://www.blackburn.gov.uk/cost-living-support/household-support-fund>). It will continue to focus on the most acute pressures faced by residents over the next six months, it is proposed to use the HSF in the following key areas (next page).

Area of Support	£m
Residents support given out through the resident application process, includes support with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utility bills • Winter Fuel Payment • Crisis food • Emergency White Goods • Support and Advice services 	0.80
Support for subsidised school meals – enabling schools to support low income/vulnerable families who do not qualify for Free School Meals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will be a targeted approach to schools most in need 	0.22
Council Tax support, in the form of a credit, in lieu of supporting other cost of living pressures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted households currently on Council Tax support 	0.40
Support for the Food Alliance sustainable Food Hub model	0.05
Miscellaneous smaller grants to 3 rd sector partners to provide support	0.069
Costs of Administering the Scheme	0.08
Total Household Support Fund	1.619

4.8 As with previous HSF rounds, by taking a whole system, partnership, and strength-based approach, the Council will have the opportunity to reach some of the most vulnerable households in the community thereby complying with the objectives of the Scheme.

4.9 As ever with these types of grant allocations, the Council is required to provide the DWP with statements on the use of the grant and arrangements are in place to satisfy this requirement.

4.10 The delivery of round 6 will continue alongside other support including developing employability skills, debt, benefit and housing advice and mental health and wellbeing advice and support alongside supporting the Food Alliance and its vision for a sustainable food offer in the borough and exit plan for when the HSF ceases.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no policy implications arising directly from this report

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The Council has been allocated £1.619m from Round 6 of the Household Support Fund. Details of the proposed of the funding are as set out in the report.

6.2 The grant is only receivable once expenditure has already incurred and therefore presents a financial risk to the Authority.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Although there are no legal implications arising directly from the contents of this report, the Local Authority must act in accordance with the Government's guidance on the HSF and comply with its requirements (e.g. submitting the required statements of grant usage and MI returns). Therefore, there will need to be adequate systems in place for all decision making and recording of allocations to ensure that funds are distributed in accordance with the funding criteria and compliance requirements are satisfied, to avoid any claw back and minimise the risk of fraud.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no other resource implications arising from the contents of this report.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

10. CONSULTATIONS

None arising from the contents of this report.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

VERSION:	1
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CONTACT OFFICER:	Andrew Haythornthwaite, Alyssa Smith
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DATE:	16/10/2024
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BACKGROUND PAPER:	None
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