

Subject Heading:	COVID Local Support
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Roger Ramsey, Cabinet Member for Finance and Property
SLT Lead:	Jane West, Chief Operating Officer
Report Author and contact details:	Chris Henry Chris.henry@havering.gov.uk
Policy context:	To assist reduce the economic impact of the pandemic on vulnerable households so every child will be fed.
Financial summary:	Proposals to utilise £156,404 of further government funding for children's meals, emergency assistance and administrative costs.
Reason decision is Key	Significant effect on more than two wards
Date notice given of intended decision:	19 April 2021
Relevant OSC:	Overview and Scrutiny Board
Is it an urgent decision?	No
Is this decision exempt from being called-in?	No

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Key Executive Decision

Communities making Havering
Places making Havering
Opportunities making Havering
Connections making Havering

Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

The COVID Local Support Grant will enable the Council to continue to support families with children during the May half-term holidays and help individuals and families who are in financial need under the Emergency Assistance.

In making these recommendations, Services have considered Government Guidance and Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

Recommendations

1. That families eligible for welfare benefit related free school meals receive £15.00 per child to help pay for meals during the May 2021 half-term holiday.
2. That £105,000 is made available to fund meals for up to 7,000 children during the May 2021 half-term holiday from the COVID Local Support Grant.
3. That £17,450 of the COVID Local Support Grant is assigned to Children's Services to administer the May half-term meal payments.
4. That the remaining £33,954 of the COVID Local Support Grant is made available to support low income households with food and utility bills between 17 April 2021 and 20 June 2021 under the Emergency Assistance Scheme policy.

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

Part 3 of the Constitution - Responsibility for Functions: Para. 2.2 (a) (i) relating to taking decisions relating to the Councils finances including but not exclusively budget control.

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

- 1.1 Previously and as a result of the Coronavirus, Government made available to Havering £895,803 funding to help those residents most in need with the cost of food and utility bills between 1 December 2020 and 16 April 2021. This was known as the COVID Winter Grant Scheme.
- 1.2 Government has now made available a further £156,404 to extend the COVID Winter Grant scheme, under the rebranded name of the COVID Local Support Grant, to 20 June 2021. This will enable Havering Council to further support vulnerable families during the period 17 April 2021 to 20 June 2021. Details of the funding allocation are provided in the letter dated 14 April 2021 from the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) and is attached at Appendix A – COVID Local Support Grant Launch letter.
- 1.3 The determination, reporting and guidance on how to spend the COVID Local Support Grant remain the same as for the COVID Winter Grant Scheme in that 80% of the funding must support households with children experiencing or at risk of experiencing poverty during the pandemic. The draft determination and guidance is attached at Appendix B and Appendix C.
- 1.4 Councils are advised to spend the COVID Local Support Grant by 20 June 2021 on meeting the immediate needs of those households who are struggling to pay for food, utility bills and water for household purposes or other related essentials items.
- 1.5 Children's Services seek to ensure that children eligible for free school meals do not go hungry in the May half-term holiday. There are approximately 7,000 children whose families receive welfare benefit. A COVID Local Support Grant funding allocation of £105,000 would make available £15 to all 7,000 households.
- 1.6 To administer the May holiday meals, Children's Services will require £17,450 which can be allocated from the COVID Local Grant.
- 1.7 If May holiday meals payments are not claimed, any remaining funding will be used to offset administrative and Emergency Assistance scheme costs. However, Children's Services will continue to work with Communications to develop targeted messages for Facebook and Living E-newsletter that promote take up of holiday meals.
- 1.8 Havering has its own local welfare assistance scheme known as the Emergency Assistance Scheme and Policy. The Scheme provides emergency support to low income households through cash (BACS) payments for food, essential items and repairs and utility bills. Furniture and white goods are also available under the scheme.
- 1.9 The remaining COVID Local Support Grant of £33,954 can be allocated to the Havering Emergency Assistance scheme for the period 17 April 2021 to 20

Key Executive Decision

June 2021 as it meets the eligibility criteria set out in Appendix B and Appendix C of this report.

2.0 The online application process for May half-term meals and emergency assistance will continue be promoted through schools, Social and Leaving Care Workers, Customer Service Advisers and Council Tax and Benefits staff who will encourage take up from vulnerable households.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

None

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

There is no statutory requirement for a public consultation. The Leader of the Council, SLT members, Children's Services and Exchequer and Transactional Services have been consulted regarding this decision.

NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER

Name: Chris Henry

Designation: Head of Council Tax & Benefits

Signature:



Date: 6 May 2021

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The proposals within this report adhere to the guidance for the COVID Local Support Grant Scheme determination and guidance in addition to promoting the welfare of children in accordance with Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

DWP funding of £156,404 has been provided to cover the extension period from 17 April 2021 to 20 June 2021.

Funds will be utilised as follows:

£105,000	Support for children's meals during May half term (£15.00 per child to support the cost of 7,000 children's meals). <i>The actual costs incurred will depend upon the take-up of this offer by eligible families. However, any remaining funding will be used to offset administrative and Emergency Assistance scheme costs, in the first instance.</i>
£17,450	Assigned to Children's Services to administer the May half-term meal payments
£33,954	Allocated to emergency assistance to cover food and utility bills for low income households.
£156,404	Total estimated spend

Payment of the grant will be made in arrears at the end of the grant period after the DWP have verified management information return required by July 2021.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)

The recommendations in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would directly affect the Council's workforce.

There will be additional verification and processing work arising from the COVID Local Grant for Children's Services. Administrative funding will enable the Service to manage and organise their workloads efficiently.

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Key Executive Decision

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:

- (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender and sexual orientation.

While an Equalities Assessment is not required for this scheme, the Council is committed to the Equalities Duty in the provision and commissioning of its services.

In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants. The recommendations for approval in this report will be essential to support the financial health of families with children during the May half-term holiday.

Key Executive Decision

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Havering council is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of all residents including those most vulnerable. Adequate nutrition impacts on the health and wellbeing as well as development of children. The purpose of this decision is to provide financial support to low income families with children and vulnerable residents to ensure they are adequately fed and warm during the winter months of the Coronavirus pandemic.

The financial support provided to vulnerable households in the borough will have a positive impact on residents' health and wellbeing.

There are no identifiable risks or negative implications to this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A – COVID Local Support Grant launch letter

Appendix B – COVID Local Support Grant – determination (Draft) 14 April 2021

Appendix C – CLSG Guidance v1 DRAFT

Key Executive Decision

Part C – Record of decision

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Decision

Proposal agreed

Delete as applicable

Proposal NOT agreed because

Details of decision maker

Signed

Name:

Cabinet Portfolio held:

Date:

Lodging this notice

The signed decision notice must be delivered to the proper officer, Debra Marlow, Principal Committee Officer in Democratic Services, in the Town Hall.

For use by Committee Administration

This notice was lodged with me on _____

Signed _____