



URGENT DELEGATED DECISION

Date: 9 August 2022

Request to the Head of Paid Service to exercise delegated authority as per Responsibility of Functions in Part IV, page 28 of the Constitution.

“To determine any matter within the referred or delegated powers and duties of a Committee / Sub Committee / Board / Working Group which is so urgent that a decision must be made before the next meeting of that Committee / Sub-Committee / Board / Working Group is due to be held.”

Limits on delegation: -

- Before making a decision using this delegated power, the Head of Paid Service shall consult with and take cognisance of the views of the Chairman (or in his absence the VC) of the relevant Committee / Sub-Committee etc; and
- Any decision taken by the Head of Paid Service under this delegated power shall be reported to Members within five working days of the decision being taken.
- During the COVID-19 Pandemic we have also committed to consult with the Leader of the Opposition on such decisions.*

** The Leader of the Opposition was unavailable for the meeting, but was provided with all relevant documentation*

Usual Decision Maker: -

This decision would have been taken by Prosperous Communities Committee / Corporate Policy and Resources Committee.

This decision needs to be made and implementation commence, before these Committees are due to meet in order that the most vulnerable residents can be financially supported as quickly as possible.

The decision is in response to receiving additional Government Funding (via Lincolnshire County Council) as part of an extension to the scheme called the Household Support Fund (HSF) originally implemented to support vulnerable families during Covid but now supporting families through the cost of living increases currently being experienced, with round two allocations having to be spent before 30 September 2022.

Call-in does not apply.

Background

The background to this decision is as detailed in the report titled “**Household Support Fund 2**” which is appended to this decision.

Reason for Urgency and Rationale for use of urgent Delegated Decision

An urgent decision was required to seek approval to use this additional funding in accordance with the Scheme devised across Lincolnshire, and which is summarised in the appended report, to ensure the most vulnerable residents could be supported.

The full rationale for the decision, the additional criteria applied by Government, since round 1, the delivery mechanisms for each Group of customer identified, and the rationale for these mechanisms, were all contained within the report which is appended.

Financial Detail and Implications

Financial Ref : 66/23/ef

Full financial details and implications are contained within the appended report – Section 5 relates.

Grant Funding will be received from the County Council to cover payments and administrative costs of using the Post Office to issue vouchers.

Notes of Consultation Relevant to the Decision

A key difference from Round 1 of the Fund was that Government had stipulated to the receiving Authority (the County Council) that

- At least 33.33% of the grant must be allocated to support households that include:
 - A person who will be under the age of 19 as at 30th September 2022,
 - Or**
 - A person aged 19 or over in respect of whom a child-related benefit is paid or free school meals are provided during the Grant Period;
- At least 33.33% of the grant must be allocated to support households that include a person who has reached state pension age by 30th September 2022; and
- Up to 33.33% of the grant was to be used to assist other households.

To ensure a common approach across all of Lincolnshire, the Districts had worked collectively to develop a common methodology and had built on learning from delivering Round 1.

Lincolnshire County would be responsible for issuing payments which met criteria 1 – relating to those aged under 1. Lincolnshire County Council would provide an allocation of funding from the grant to school and early years providers, based on the number of children eligible for Free School Meals / Early Years Pupil Premium and families with a 2-

year-old eligible for the Early Years Entitlement. This distribution would equate to 53% of the grant.

The remaining 47% of the grant (33% of which must be allocated to Pensioners) would be shared amongst the Districts, the allocation splits are included at Appendix one of the report.

Lincolnshire Councils had determined the best proxy measure for identifying pensioner households in need, as being those in receipt of Pension Credit. The proposed level of payment, delivery method and rationale was detailed at sections 2.7 – 2.9 of the appended report and ensured the 33% allocation was achieved.

Finally, the remaining 11.05% of the total grant would be allocated to District Councils proportionately based on the percentage allocations used previously, based on a calculation of population and deprivation indicators applied by the County Council.

West Lindsey would receive £78,530.32, core principles had been established across the Districts, namely support would be issued in voucher form and accord with the following: -

- Voucher values of £100 or £200 with a focus on supporting food and household essential costs
- Payments made direct to foodbanks and related VCS organisations, to buy vouchers and issue them
- Direct voucher issue from Council teams with identified households in need of support (e.g. Benefits, Housing, Customer Services)

It was proposed, the primary route for delivering the remaining allocation in West Lindsey would be to award funds to foodbanks and food related VCS organisations who could then purchase vouchers to issue. The rationale for this approach was shared. Delivery costs would be offset against the £78,530.32 allocation.

There would be no “open” application process as previously, and no referral scheme, given time constraints and the resource intensive nature this had proven to be previously.

In responding to comments assurance was offered that there was capacity within the Team to deliver the fund, resources would be kept under review, but Officers were confident that the revised approach, built on previous learning and would reduce the resources which had to be applied.

Officers outlined the food banks it was anticipated would be used and their locations, indicating that further conversations would be held if the proposed approach was supported. Those recognised by the Greater Lincolnshire Food Partnership would be used and the reasons for this were outlined. In response to concerns about coverage and access to foodbanks, assurance was offered that some food banks offered out-reach services/delivery services. Food Banks could issue food vouchers as opposed to there being an expectation that people had to visit and collect goods. Lincoln City had received a higher allocation and it was anticipated that Lincoln fringe residents did naturally benefit from Lincoln based services.

Household Support Fund information pages were already active on the web and would be updated post any decision made. These pages also included information which directed users to other support and help available or organisations which may be able to offer assistance.

All Members present indicated their support for allocating the additional funding as proposed and welcomed the Lincolnshire wide approach.

The Leader indicated he would welcome the opportunity to be part of any future discussions with food banks across the District.

It was also confirmed that completed spend meant that the District Council needed to have issued money to foodbanks, rather than individuals by 30 September.

Decision

1. The delivery of the Lincolnshire District Councils' Household Support Fund 2 scheme, which runs to 30th September 2022, as set out in the report, be approved.
2. In order to aid the Scheme to flex to requirements and need promptly, as well as remaining consistent with principles of the Lincolnshire Districts scheme, delegated authority be granted to the Communities Manager in consultation with the Assistant Director for Homes & Communities to make minor amendments to the Scheme.

Changes considered 'significantly material' would require further Member approval.



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Ian Knowles
Head of Paid Service

As the Chairman of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee I have been fully consulted on this matter



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Anne Welburn
Chairman of Corporate Policy and Resources

As the Chairman of the Prosperous Communities Committee and Leader of the Council I have been fully consulted on this matter



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Owen Bierley
Leader of the Council / Chairman of the Prosperous Communities Committee

Date all Members were notified of the decision: 10 August 2022



MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT

SUBJECT: Household Support Fund 2

REPORT AUTHOR: Grant White

MT MEETING DATE: August 2022

COMMITTEE	DIRECTORS
	Assistant Director, Homes and Communities

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Grant Funding will be received from the County Council to cover payments and administrative costs of using the Post Office to issue vouchers.

FIN REF: 66/23/ef

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS:

The fund will be administered by the Council's Communities Team. Capacity will be kept under review during delivery. Significant changes have been made from the delivery of Household Support Fund previously to greatly reduce the impact on resources. This includes awarding funds to households already identified as financially vulnerable rather than making the total funding available through an open referral process.

HR REF:

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Any awarding of funding to Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) partner organisations will be treated as a grant award. All grant awards will be subject to a Grant Funding Agreement. Existing grant funding agreement templates used for Council funding activity will be used and have been approved for use by Legal.

SECTION 17 CRIME AND DISORDER CONSIDERATIONS:

Not applicable

CLIMATE RELATED RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES:

Not applicable

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS:

The delivery of Household Support Fund 2 will have a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of identified households in West Lindsey facing financial hardship. The fund will provide financial support aimed at helping households with the increasing cost of food and other household essentials. The scheme should not be seen as a complete solution, but it is part of a broader range of financial support being made available from the Government.

DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS:

Information Sharing Agreement established for the sharing of data from DWP via Lincolnshire County Council to District Councils. Data protection included within grant funding agreements and any terms and conditions for voucher issuing providers.

RISKS AND MITIGATING ACTION:

Not applicable

DECISIONS REQUIRED:

Report for MT is for information only and an urgent decision meeting will be arranged in w/c 8th August 2022 where the decisions required will be:

1. Approve the delivery of the Lincolnshire District Councils' Household Support Fund 2 scheme, which runs to 30th September 2022.
 2. Where there are relatively minor amendments made to the scheme, unless these are considered 'significantly material' then the Communities Manager in consultation with the Assistant Directors for Homes & Communities is delegated to implement these changes. This aids the scheme to flex to requirements and need promptly, as well as remaining consistent with principles of the Lincolnshire Districts scheme.
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Household Support Fund and requests approval to begin delivery of a Lincolnshire District Councils' scheme covering the second round of Household Support Fund which runs to 30th September 2022.
- 1.2 There are now three rounds of Household Support Fund and this report uses the following abbreviations to refer to each round:
- **HSF1:** First round of HSF – October 2021 to March 2022
 - **HSF2:** Second round of HSF – April 2022 to September 2022
 - **HSF3:** Third round of HSF – October 2022 to March 2023
- 1.3 Lincolnshire County Council wrote to all District Council Chief Executives on 28th April 2022 outlining the proposed approach to HSF2 delivery in Lincolnshire and establishing core principles of the scheme. All District Councils have responded to this letter indicating their intention to deliver specific elements of HSF2.
- 1.4 Final details of the delivery of HSF2 are contained within this report for approval to begin delivery.

2. Background and HSF2 delivery

- 2.1 HSF1 ran from October 2021 to March 2022, with the Lincolnshire District Councils' scheme running from 1st December 2021 to 31st March 2022. For West Lindsey a total of £344,958 was paid in the form of support vouchers, broken down as follows:

	Food	Energy	Essential linked to energy	Wider household essentials
Number	1,368	1,113	45	503
Amount	£180,800	£109,259	£4,500	£50,400

Total Households	Total Residents	Number of Adults	Number of Children
870	2,327	1,209	1,118

- 2.2 The continuation of Household Support Fund (HSF2) was announced in March 2022 as part of the Spring Statement. DWP have distributed a further £421m to Local Authorities in England to help households with the cost of essentials such as food, clothing and utilities. Lincolnshire's allocation of £5,464,685.20 is to support residents as set out within the guidance. The grant period is from 1st April 2022 to 30th September 2022 inclusive.

- 2.3 Lincolnshire County Council as the receiving authority of HSF2 must ensure that:
- At least 33.33% of the grant is allocated to support households that include:
 - A person who will be under the age of 19 as at 30th September 2022,
Or
 - A person aged 19 or over in respect of whom a child-related benefit is paid or free school meals are provided during the Grant Period;
 - At least 33.33% of the grant is allocated to support households that include a person who has reached state pension age by 30th September 2022;
 - Up to 33.33% of the grant is used to assist other households.
- 2.4 Lincolnshire County Council will provide an allocation of funding from the grant to school and early years providers, based on the number of children eligible for Free School Meals / Early Years Pupil Premium and families with a 2-year-old eligible for the Early Years Entitlement. This distribution is estimated to equate to 53% of the grant.
- 2.5 The remainder of the funding (approximately 47%) will be allocated to District Councils to enable residents to access funding available in their local area. At least 33.33% of the total grant must be distributed to residents of state pension age. Taking this into account, Lincolnshire Councils have determined the best proxy measure for identifying pensioner households in need as being those in receipt of Pension Credit. The agreed approach is to issue a £110 cash voucher via Royal Mail to every Lincolnshire resident in receipt of Pension Credit, taken from a scan of DWP data in July 2022.
- 2.6 A table showing the full breakdown of allocations to all Districts has been produced and attached with this report as Appendix 1.

APPENDIX 1 – HSF2 District Allocations

- 2.7 In West Lindsey there are 1,997 individuals of pension age in receipt of pension credit as of July 2022. By issuing £110 cash vouchers, 34.90% of to the total grant will be distributed to pensioners across the Lincolnshire therefore meeting the required criteria of a minimum of 33.33%.
- 2.8 Royal Mail provide a voucher issuing service tailored for this type of support fund activity. It is a service used by many other Local Authorities for HSF delivery and has already been used by East Lindsey District Council and South Kesteven District Council for other schemes.
- 2.9 Royal Mail will charge £1.50 per voucher which includes postage and there is a one-off £1,000 set-up fee. Recipients will then be able to take the vouchers, with proof of ID, to their local post office to receive their £110. Each voucher issued will include a cover letter detailing the scheme. The cover letter will be a West Lindsey headed letter and provide details of our HSF information webpage and contact details. A dedicated HSF e-mail address is in operation and Communities Team officers will continue to work closely with Customer

Services to manage any temporary increase in queries. All post office locations can be used for redeeming the voucher including pop-up and mobile locations.

- 2.10 The remaining 11.05% of the total grant will be allocated to District Councils proportionately based on the percentage allocations utilised for HSF1 using the multiple deprivation indices as a methodology. With a less, resource-intensive scheme including the aim of reducing longer-term recipient dependency on such funds, this will be distributed in a similar way as HSF1 by engaging with third sector and other partners during the grant period.
- 2.11 For the remaining 11.05% of the total grant, West Lindsey will receive £78,530.32. This amount will be distributed in the form of support vouchers in-line with the following core principles agreed by all District Councils:
- Voucher values of £100 or £200 with a focus on supporting food and household essential costs
 - Payments made direct to foodbanks and related VCS organisations, to buy vouchers and issue them
 - Direct voucher issue from Council teams with identified households in need of support (e.g. Benefits, Housing, Customer Services)
- 2.12 The primary route of delivery for the remaining allocation in West Lindsey will be to award funds to foodbanks and food related VCS organisations who can then purchase vouchers to issue. Grant agreements will be put in place and include collecting required monitoring data to support the draw down of HSF2 funds from LCC.
- 2.13 Food banks and food related VCS organisations promoted by the Greater Lincolnshire Food Partnership will be eligible to receive funds from this allocation. Additional VCS organisations can be considered but these will be agreed by consensus of all District Councils to ensure county-wide consistency.
- 2.14 Any grant payments to VCS organisations for this delivery will be staggered to ensure the HSF2 conditions are fully met and avoid a situation of excess vouchers being purchased but not being issued.
- 2.15 HSF3 was included as part of the 'cost of living measures' announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to run from October 2022 to March 2023. No further information or guidance has been released at this stage.

3. Corporate Plan Priorities

- 3.1 The delivery of this scheme will directly contribute towards a number of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities. Specifically, HSF2 will support the following priorities:

Our Council

- Partnerships

- The Lincolnshire Districts HSF is a positive example of strong partnership working. The delivery of the scheme will result in enhanced sharing of knowledge around HSF needs across Lincolnshire.

Our People

- Health & Wellbeing
- Vulnerable Groups & Communities
 - The funding will directly support maintaining and/or enhancing individual and household wellbeing. Access to funding support for those facing financial hardship will ensure people are supported during summer/autumn months and help prevent households reaching crisis.

4. Staff Resources

4.1 It is proposed that HSF2 delivery will be managed by officers within the Communities Team. As a result of changes to how HSF2 is being delivered it is anticipated that current staff resources and capacity will be sufficient.

4.2 The primary tasks that will be taking place include:

- HSF2 management and liaison with LCC and District Councils
- Receive and check DWP pension credit data for West Lindsey
- Setup Royal Mail vouchers and cover letter via online portal
- Upload data to initiate voucher distribution
- Establish grant agreements with food banks for food voucher purchasing
- Complete monthly returns to LCC

4.3 Four officers within the Communities Team have been identified to support this work and therefore provide managed capacity impact and resilience. Three of these officers have past experience of HSF1 in order to support the effective delivery of HSF2. Officers in other teams also have past experience of HSF delivery and could be requested to provide additional support if required.

4.4 The delivery of HSF2 may impact on the day to day work of selected officers in the Communities Team. The impact will be kept to a minimum but if necessary lower priority items of day to day work will be re-scheduled or temporarily paused. HSF2 needs to be fully distributed by the end of September 2022.

5. Finance

5.1 The scheme is fully funded by Lincolnshire County Council through HSF monies. All administration costs associated with Royal Mail vouchers will be covered by allocated HSF2 funds.

5.2 Reasonable administration costs will be recouped through HSF funding and be funded from the total allocation to West Lindsey.

- 5.3 Lincolnshire County Council will reimburse each District Council with expenditure incurred in accordance with the scheme. The payments will be made in arrears following the submission of the monthly monitoring returns.
- 5.4 Lincolnshire County Council will be paid from central government in arrears. District Councils will also receive reimbursements for fund payments in arrears.

6. Monitoring and Reporting

- 6.1 Lincolnshire County Council as the accountable body for HSF2 is required to provide data to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). District Councils will be required to supply data to support this.
- 6.2 The key principles of monitoring and reporting agreed between Lincolnshire County Council and the District Councils are:
- Each District Council will keep records of HSF2 payments made;
 - LCC will reimburse each District Council in arrears for actual expenditure incurred in the delivery of the HSF2 in line with the guidance documentation;
 - Each District Council will need to provide LCC with a bank account (with reference) to where these payments are to be made;
 - This process is to be reviewed by Lincolnshire HSF working group periodically during the grant period;
 - LCC as responsible body retains the right to request the supply of further information for audit purposes if required.
- 6.3 Lincolnshire County Council will provide the reporting template for District Councils to use with monthly reporting timescales.

7. Recommendations for the Urgent Decision meeting (wc:08/08/2022)

- 7.1 Approve the delivery of the Lincolnshire District Councils' Household Support Fund 2 scheme, which runs to 30th September 2022.
- 7.2 Where there are relatively minor amendments made to the scheme, unless these are considered 'significantly material' then the Communities Manager in consultation with the Assistant Director for Homes & Communities is delegated to implement these changes. This aids the scheme to flex to requirements and need promptly, as well as remaining consistent with principles of the Lincolnshire Districts scheme.

APPENDIX 1 – HSF2 District Allocations

	Pensioner Allocation					Remaining Allocation	
District Area	Pension Data	Percentage Split	£110 per eligible Pensioner	Admin Costs	Total Spend	Remaining allocation	Remaining allocation %
Boston	1,801	10.35%	£198,110.00	£3,701.50	£201,811.50	£60,407.94	10%
East Lindsey	4,798	27.56%	£527,780.00	£8,197.00	£535,977.00	£144,979.05	24%
Lincoln	2,075	11.92%	£228,250.00	£4,112.50	£232,362.50	£96,652.70	16%
North Kesteven	2,171	12.47%	£238,810.00	£4,256.50	£243,066.50	£66,448.73	11%
South Holland	2,116	12.16%	£232,760.00	£4,174.00	£236,934.00	£72,489.53	12%
South Kesteven	2,382	13.68%	£262,020.00	£4,573.00	£266,593.00	£84,571.11	14%
West Lindsey	1,997	11.47%	£219,670.00	£3,995.50	£223,665.50	£78,530.32	13%
TOTAL	17,340		£1,907,400.00	£33,010.00	£1,940,410.00	£604,079.38	11.05%
			% of total grant	% of total grant (admin)	Overall pension & admin of whole grant		
			34.90%	0.60%	35.51%		