



## **URGENT DELEGATED DECISION NOTICE**

Date: 28 November 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.

**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 three allocations having to be spent before 31 March 2023.

**Call-in does not apply.**

## **Background**

The background to this decision is as detailed in the report titled “**Household Support Fund 3**” 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 rounds 1 & 2, the delivery mechanisms for each Group of customers identified, and the rationale for these mechanisms, were all contained within the report which is appended.

## **Financial Detail and Implications**

### **Financial Ref : FIN/117/23/SL**

Full financial details and implications are contained within the appended report – Section 6 relates.

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

## **Notes of Consultation Relevant to the Decision**

In Round 3 of the Fund the Government have advised the receiving Authority (the County Council) to consider the following criteria:

- using the funding ‘to support households in the most need; particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support Government has recently made available but who are nevertheless in need’  
**And**
- ‘people who are entitled to but not claiming qualifying benefits, people who are claiming Housing Benefit (HB) only’  
**And**
- ‘consider providing support to disabled people in their area. Disabled people in particular may be facing acute challenges due to the disproportionate impact that rising costs bring for the additional services they need in order to manage their conditions, remain independent and avoid becoming socially isolated’

As the receiving authority Lincolnshire County Council had been allocated £5,464,685 to distribute but with no ringfencing of funds for individual groups of people.

Lincolnshire County Council's approach to distribution was set out in Sections 3.2 – 3.4 of the report (appended) approximately 56% of the total funding via schools and early years providers and 44% via other trusted partners.

A minimum of 10% of the total grant would be made available immediately to District Councils on a proportionate needs' basis, to enable the funds to be targeted to meet local need at the earliest opportunity

West Lindsey would receive £71,040.91 and the appended report detailed how the Local Authority planned to distribute the funding to reach as many of the most vulnerable households as quickly as possible. Section 3.9 of the report specifically referred.

To ensure a common approach across all of Lincolnshire, the Districts had worked collectively to develop a common methodology for delivering their percentage of the allocation and had built on learning from delivering previous rounds. It was noted whilst an 'open application' and instant assessment process was extremely time-consuming and resource heavy, and not the preference, guidance stated some funding must be distributed using an 'open application' mechanism, as there was a view that this may be the only way certain customers would contact the Council and receive funding.

It was also noted that following feedback from Food Banks, involved in previous rounds, it had been agreed that direct payments could be made to them to create food parcels, as opposed to the previous voucher arrangement, as this would enable more families to be assisted.

The staffing Resources required were highlighted and Officers advised the selected methods where the most economical, from an administration perspective, the easiest to resource and ensured money was distributed with the least delay possible.

Referring back to the open application process, it was noted applications would be open for one month and all applications assessed at the end of that period, to ensure the most in need from all applications where identified – again a changed approach based on learning. Approval of this decision would enable applications to open next week and payments to be made direct to bank accounts in January 2023.

In response to questions posed during the consultation meeting, in making this decision, the responsible officer, outlined how disability would be assessed and the current systems already in place to assist in this, the Gainsborough food banks the Authority worked in partnership with, and the checks and balances which would be in place, including Grant Funding agreements and the requirement to make returns demonstrating where assistance had been directed. It was suggested Ward Split data would be a useful measure.

There were discussions about the work being undertaken at the X Church in Gainsborough and whether they were a partner organisation, or could be. The work ongoing with the Group was outlined. It was also asked that it be made clear that the reference to Age UK in the trusted VCS partners, was actually Age UK Lindsey which specifically dealt with the local area.

Promotion of the Scheme by Members, once launched, was welcomed.

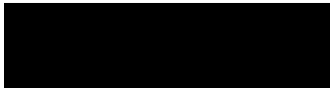
Finally, noting the delegated authority being sought to make minor amendments, if required, Members requested that all Policy Committee Members be made aware (for info only) by e-mail, if the need arose for such an amendment.

**Decision**

1. The delivery of the Lincolnshire District Councils' Household Support Fund 3 scheme, which runs to 31 March 2023, 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 Benefits Manager in consultation with the Director of Change Management, ICT and Regulatory Services to make minor amendments to the Scheme.

**Caveats to the decision: -**

- Should the delegation in 2 above be used all Policy Committee Members to be made aware, by e-mail for information
  
- Changes considered 'significantly material' will require further Member approval.



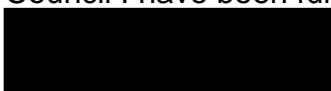
.....  
Ian Knowles  
Head of Paid Service

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



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



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

As Leader of the Opposition, I have been fully consulted on this matter.



.....  
Trevor Young  
Leader of the Opposition

Date all Members were notified of the decision: Friday 2 December 2022



## MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT

**SUBJECT:** Household Support Fund 3

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Angela Matthews

**MT MEETING DATE:** Monday, 28 November 2022

COMMITTEE	DIRECTORS
	Director of Change Management, ICT & Regulatory Services

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Grant Funding will be received from the County Council to cover payments and administrative costs including the costs of using the Post Office to issue vouchers and the costs of making payments directly into resident's bank accounts.

**FIN REF:** FIN/117/23/SL

**HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS:** The fund will be administered by the Benefits Team Manager and resource to be identified from around the organisation. Capacity will be kept under review during delivery. Funds have to be made available from this round of the HSF to people making an open application which we are aware needs a bigger resource to assess each application and set up payments

**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 the Legal team.

**SECTION 17 CRIME AND DISORDER CONSIDERATIONS:** Not applicable

**CLIMATE RELATED RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES:** Not Applicable

**HEALTH IMPLICATIONS:** The delivery of Household Support Fund 3 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, energy 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

**DECISION(S) REQUIRED:**

**Report for MT is for information only and an urgent decision meeting will be arranged week commencing 5 December where the decisions required will be:**

1. Approve the delivery of the Lincolnshire District Councils' Household Support Fund 3 scheme, which runs from October 2022 to March 2023
2. Where there are relatively minor amendments made to the scheme, unless these are considered 'significantly material' then the Benefits Manager in consultation with the Director of Change Management, ICT and Regulatory Services is delegated to implement these changes. This aids the scheme to flex to requirements and need promptly if required, 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 31 March 2023.

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 has written to all District Council Chief Executives on 21 November 2022 outlining the proposed approach to HSF3 delivery in Lincolnshire and establishing core principles of the scheme.

1.4 Final details of the delivery of HSF3 are contained within this report for approval to begin delivery.

## **2. Background and previous HSF 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 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 was to support residents as set out within the guidance. The grant period was from 1st April 2022 to 30th September 2022 inclusive.

2.3 Lincolnshire County Council as the receiving authority of HSF2 had to ensure that:

At least 33.33% of the grant was 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 was 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 was used to assist other households.

2.4 Lincolnshire County Council provided 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%) was 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.

2.6 HSF2 ran from April 2022 to September 2022, with the Lincolnshire District Council's scheme running primarily during September 2022. For West Lindsey a total of £301,285.50 was paid in the form of support vouchers, broken down as follows:

	Households with Children	Other Households	Pensioners	Sub-total	Admin Costs ♦	TOTAL
Number	770*	580*	2,004			3,354
Amount	£39,000	£29,500	£220,440	£288,940	£12,346.50	£301,285.50

\* Estimate number of support vouchers issued by foodbanks and VCS organisations.

♦ Admin costs for Post Office vouchers to pensioners, VCS Organisation admin and WLDC admin.

### 3.HSF3

3.1 Under HSF3, commencing 1 October 2022, Lincolnshire County Council are the receiving authority and have again been allocated £5,464,685 to distribute but with no ringfencing of funds for individual groups of people. The funding advice is for us to consider:

- using the funding 'to support households in the most need; particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support government has recently made available but who are nevertheless in need'

**And**

- 'people who are entitled to but not claiming qualifying benefits, people who are claiming Housing Benefit (HB) only'

**And**

- LAs are also encouraged to 'consider providing support to disabled people in their area. Disabled people in particular may be facing acute challenges due to the disproportionate impact that rising costs bring for the additional services they need in order to manage their conditions, remain independent and avoid becoming socially isolated'

3.2 Lincolnshire County Council are distributing £3m of the funding to schools and early years providers, based on the number of children eligible for Free School Meals and Early Years Pupil Premium and families with a 2-year-old eligible for the Early Years payment, this is a tried and tested mechanism and reaches over 30,000 children in the County

3.3 Lincolnshire County Council are also allocating £64k to 16- and 17-year olds in semi-independent living environments and 18-20-year olds in supported living.

3.4 The HB-Only customers will be allocated £250 per household and this will account for approximately £1.35m of the total funding. West Lindsey has between 550 and 600 of these households (a final check is being made to identify each household as the DWP are unable to give us a definitive list at the moment). The easiest and most efficient mechanism of paying these customers is via the Post Office like in HSF2 for the Pensioner group

3.5 As a first phase of HSF3, District funding of £546,468 has been allocated – which represents 10% of the total funding and will be divided between the seven Districts, split as per previous % HSF allocations as:

District Council	Proportionate allocation of funding phase 1	Allocation 10%
		£546,468.52
Boston	10%	£54,646.85
City of Lincoln	16%	£87,434.96
East Lindsey	24%	£131,152.44
North Kesteven	11%	£60,111.54
South Holland	12%	£65,576.22
South Kesteven	14%	£76,505.59
West Lindsey	13%	£71,040.91

3.6 The Districts funding is aimed to support as many residents from different customer groups as possible. We have learnt from previous rounds of HSF that an ‘open application’ and instant assessment process is extremely time-consuming and resource heavy, however, guidance states we must distribute some funding using an ‘open application’ mechanism. This may be the only way certain customers would contact us and receive funding.

3.7 Learning from previous HSF distributions where help provided by partner and voluntary organisations has been successful as it has reached a far wider audience than the District alone can

3.8 The proposal for the West Lindsey first phase funding is to allocate to the district food banks and other partner organisations to make an immediate positive difference to many households

3.9 It is proposed that the West Lindsey first phase funding (£71,040) be distributed as follows:

Amount	Organisation(s)	How the funding will be spent																
£20,000	<b>West Lindsey DC Customer Applications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open application (on-line &amp; paper applications)</li> <li>• One-month application window then assessment period</li> <li>• £100 paid into the customers bank account if successful</li> <li>• Team referrals – make an application on behalf of their customer or direct the customer to the application process</li> </ul>																
£39,000	<p><b>West Lindsey Food Banks:</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="472 1122 970 1406"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="472 1122 818 1160">Food Bank/Support</th> <th data-bbox="818 1122 970 1160">Amount</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="472 1160 818 1193">Caistor</td> <td data-bbox="818 1160 970 1193">£7000</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="472 1193 818 1227">Market Rasen</td> <td data-bbox="818 1193 970 1227">£7000</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="472 1227 818 1261">Feeding Gainsborough</td> <td data-bbox="818 1227 970 1261">£7000</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="472 1261 818 1294">Bread &amp; Roses</td> <td data-bbox="818 1261 970 1294">£7000</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="472 1294 818 1328">Salvation Army</td> <td data-bbox="818 1294 970 1328">£9500</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="472 1328 818 1361">Admin (10%)</td> <td data-bbox="818 1328 970 1361">£3550</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="472 1361 818 1406"><b>Total</b></td> <td data-bbox="818 1361 970 1406"><b>£39,000</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Food Bank/Support	Amount	Caistor	£7000	Market Rasen	£7000	Feeding Gainsborough	£7000	Bread & Roses	£7000	Salvation Army	£9500	Admin (10%)	£3550	<b>Total</b>	<b>£39,000</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding used to buy goods to make up food parcels or purchase a voucher to be spent on Fuel / warm clothing</li> </ul>
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£12,000	West Lindsey trusted VCS partners – e.g. Age UK, Carers First, Barnardo's for Care leavers, Wellbeing Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisations can use the funding to help customers with food, fuel and household essentials in return for a report on what they have spent the funding on.</li> </ul>																

3.10 The primary route of delivery for the allocation in West Lindsey will be to Award funds to foodbanks and VCS organisations who can then purchase goods or vouchers to issue. Grant agreements will be put in place and include collecting required monitoring data to support the drawdown of HSF3 funds.

3.11 Food Banks/Food Support organisations promoted by the Greater Lincolnshire Food Partnership will be eligible to receive funds from this

allocation. Additional VCS organisations have been considered to provide for hard to reach residents not covered in previous schemes.

3.12 HSF4 was included as part of the 'cost of living measures' announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to run from April 2023 – March 2024. No further information or guidance has been released at this stage.

#### **4. Corporate Plan Priorities**

4.1 The delivery of this scheme will directly contribute towards a number of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities. Specifically, HSF3 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 enhance individual and household wellbeing. Access to funding support for those facing financial hardship will ensure people are supported during Winter / Spring months and help prevent households reaching crisis.

#### **5. Staff Resources**

5.1 It is proposed that HSF3 delivery will be managed by officers from the Benefits Team and the Change Support Team supported by Finance Officers. This scheme is likely to increase demand on Customer Services (telephone enquiries and referrals) and if required will support customers who need help completing a form. The website and online process will be clearly communicated and signposted. All staff supporting any part of the fund will be fully briefed

5.2 The primary tasks that will be taking place include:

- HSF3 management and liaison with LCC and District Councils
- Setup Royal Mail vouchers and cover letter via online portal
- Establish an application and assessment process
- Staff briefings on the fund, their roles and responsibilities
- Customer communications updated and consistent
- Upload data to initiate voucher distribution
- Establish grant agreements with foods banks for food voucher purchasing
- Complete monthly returns to LCC
- Pay out funding to individual customers on successful application

5.3 Two officers within the Benefits Team and one from the Change Management Team have been identified to support this work. These officers have past experience

of HSF1 or 2. Officers in other teams also have past experience of HSF delivery and if required could be requested to provide additional support.

5.4 The delivery of HSF3 may impact on the day to day work of selected officers in the Benefits and Change Teams but the impact will be kept to a minimum and if the impact is higher than expected further resource will be sought.

## **6. Finance**

6.1 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 HSF3 funds.

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