

RECORD OF DECISION MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Any interest to declare/ or conflict and any dispensation granted for the Officer or Executive Member
[NO]

Any conflict with any Member of the Panel and the bodies concerned **[NO]**

SERVICE DIRECTORATE: Legal and Community

1. DECISION TAKEN

1.1 Approval to use the April 23 to Mar 24 Household Support Fund extension (£100,000.00) for a district wide food education project.

2. DECISION TAKER

2.1 Cllr Alistair Willoughby (Executive Member for Community and Partnerships in consultation with the Service Director – Legal and Community).

3. DATE DECISION TAKEN:

24th July 2023

4. REASON FOR DECISION

4.1 £100,000.00 Household Support Fund has been allocated to North Herts Council from the Department for Work and Pensions via Herts County Council for the period April 2023 to March 2024. The funding is to be used to support households in the most need; particularly those who may not be eligible for other benefits including pension credit and free school meals.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 There are no other reasonable alternative options.

6. CONSULTATION (INCLUDING THE EFFECT ON STAKEHOLDERS, PARTNERS AND THE PUBLIC)

6.1 The Senior Leadership Team have approved these plans.

6.2 The Executive Member for Communities and Partnership and Deputy Executive Member for Communities and Partnership have been consulted and are supportive of the proposal.

6.3 The North Herts Food Provision Network have been consulted on these ideas and given their support.

7. FORWARD PLAN

7.1 This decision is not a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

8. BACKGROUND/ RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 Previous district/borough Household Support Funding provided supermarket vouchers to low-income households distributed by partner organisations. This support will continue countywide through Citizens Advice and Herts help.
- 8.2 Vouchers can provide effective support in a crisis but are unable to support households to make changes to improve their circumstances. It is also not possible to limit their use to basic food provisions when most supermarkets sell wide ranges of items. Some partners have reported that households have come to rely on receiving vouchers and thus consideration has been given as to how this fund could be used to support behaviour change by providing a programme that educates households to cook healthy food with low-cost ingredients.
- 8.3 The North Herts Council (NHC) Community Wellbeing Team already provide food education projects in the local community and have the existing local knowledge and relationships with partners to deliver more of this work within the tight timescales required for the Household Support Fund. HCC have confirmed their support for a district wide food education programme that seeks to upskill households in how to cook healthy, low-cost meals and have highlighted NHC's proposed approach to the other districts/boroughs as a model of good practice.
- 8.4 To deliver a programme of this scale under very short timescales, the Community Wellbeing Team wish to:
 - 8.4.1 Utilise the skills and knowledge of our existing Health and Wellbeing Coordinator (grade 7 full time) to lead on the delivery of this programme from now until March 2024. The postholder currently coordinates our North Herts Healthy Hub project and is a qualified nutritionist, with a food safety qualification and substantial experience delivering food education.
 - 8.4.2 Recruit a fixed term (Sept 23 to Mar 24) additional Health and Wellbeing Coordinator to cover the delivery of the Healthy Hub programme during this period.
 - 8.4.3 Deliver a programme of face-to-face food education classes for groups in the local community including carers, young people, people living with a disability, families, older people and culturally diverse households.
 - 8.4.4 Deliver food boxes to households who prefer not to access face to face food education classes. Each box will contain low cost, healthy ingredients and recipes for 5 dinners, 5 breakfasts and snacks for a household of 4 to 5 people. They have been used in many other areas of the country for similar programmes and officers in these local authorities have provided consistently positive feedback and helpful insight. Every household participating in food boxes will receive regular contact from the team to provide additional support as well as any basic equipment they need to participate.
- 8.5 Utilising an existing skilled and knowledgeable staff member will enable us to meet the ambitious targets of the programme whilst the day-to-day work of the Healthy Hub can be picked up by the temporary post with support from the team. Existing colleagues have declined the opportunity for additional hours as an alternative option. The post to be recruited will be available to both internal and external applicants and could provide a secondment opportunity.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Executive Member has delegated authority to make these Executive decisions under section 14.6.8(b)(ii)A 5 of the constitution, in consultation with the Service Director: Legal & Community. That decision will be subject to a 5 clear working day

call-in period, following publication in the Members Information Service (MIS) and on the Council's website.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 It is significantly more cost effective to pay a salaried grade 7 NHC employee (approx. £23 an hour) to deliver food education sessions than external consultants (approx. £100 an hour for sessional work) as well as benefitting from their local knowledge and familiarity with working at NHC.
- 10.2 This model would see about 25% of the funding used for staffing costs for session delivery and project management (approx. £26k). The remaining £84k will be spent on the running costs for food education classes and the cost of food boxes and equipment for households. Although more detailed planning is required, it is hoped we could provide around 150 food education classes and distribute about 1000 food boxes.
- 10.3 The cost of this proposal would be covered by the Household Support Fund. The total available funding for 2023/24 is £110k being the £100k Household Support Fund allocation plus a 10% administration fee which will be used to support the project costs. 50% has so far been received and a second instalment is due Autumn 2023.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The funding criteria means there is a short timeframe for us to use the allocated money to deliver essential support to vulnerable households. Therefore, there is a potential reputational risk associated with not using the full allocation and not delivering the maximum support possible. This decision notice aims to mitigate the risk by allowing experienced officers to make the required preparations and commence delivery quickly.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2 This proposal will target households in the district who are in greatest need and experiencing food poverty.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and "go local" policy do not apply to the matters contained within this report, as there are no recommendations on procurement.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 To support both an increase in the consumption of low cost vegetables and assist with food safety, the programme will focus on cooking with vegetarian ingredients, which is reported by the Vegetarian Society to contribute to reduced carbon emissions.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 Utilise the skills and knowledge of our existing Health and Wellbeing Coordinator (grade 7 full time) to lead on the delivery of this programme from now until March 2024. The postholder currently coordinates our North Herts Healthy Hub project and

is a qualified nutritionist, with a food safety qualification and substantial experience delivering food education.

15.2 Recruit a fixed term (Sept 23 to Mar 24) additional Health and Wellbeing Coordinator to cover the delivery of the Healthy Hub programme during this period.

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS


16.1 None

17. APPENDICES

17.1 None

NOTIFICATION DATE

28th July 2023

Signature of Service Director Consulted 

Date 24.7.23

Signature of Executive Member for Community and Partnerships



Decision Taker

Date 24.7.23

Please Note: that *unless urgency provisions apply* EXECUTIVE decisions cannot be implemented until 5 clear working days have elapsed after the decision has been taken to allow for scrutiny call-in.

Call-in does not apply to NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS