

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

The approval of £20,000 DWP Household Support Funding awards to the following bodies to provide direct financial support for households in urgent need to cover the costs of utilities, gas electric water and items to keep them warm in the winter months:

- 1.1. **£5,000** to First Garden City Homes as outlined in 6.1
- 1.2. **£5,000** to Settle Group as outlined in 6.2
- 1.3. **£5,000** to North Herts Citizens' Advice as outlined in 6.3
- 1.4. **£5,000** to North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum as outlined in 6.4

2. DECISION TAKER

The Executive Member for Community Engagement in consultation with the Service Director – Legal and Community.

3. DATE DECISION TAKEN:

31 May 2022

4. REASON FOR DECISION

- 4.1 On 23 March 2022, the government announced in the Spring Statement that the Household Support Fund (HSF) would be extended from 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022. As previously, the fund will be made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need.
- 4.2 Hertfordshire County Council have received a further £6,172,064.84. via the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). For this round of the Household Support Fund, the DWP have asked that 33% of the funding go to pensioners, 33% go to households with children and 33% to other households. Officers at Herts County Council have worked directly with the Benefits teams in each District to provide a payment to all pensioners in receipt of pension credit. This has left a smaller amount than previously to provide for food and utilities for the remaining 66% of households. Further information on the Hertfordshire Household Support Fund can be found on the County Council's website; [Household Support Fund in Hertfordshire](#)
- 4.3 North Herts Council has been allocated £55k from this funding; £30k is required to address food poverty and £20k has been allocated to support fuel/energy poverty. The remaining £5,000 is to cover the cost of administration and monitoring of the funding. This funding must be used by end of September 2022.
- 4.4 Food Poverty: In line with previous support provided over the last 18 months the food poverty allocation will be distributed to Food Network providers and charity groups and organisations across the district. The Community Engagement team have organised the purchase of the supermarket gift vouchers and distributed these to the food provision groups to provide to families in need.

4.5 Fuel/Energy Poverty: Following internal and external consultation with our partners the fuel/energy poverty allocation will be distributed accordingly via a grant's application process in which the following organisations have been invited to apply.

Organisation	Amount
Citizens Advice Bureau	£5k
Settle	£5k
First Garden City Homes	£5k
North Herts Ethnic Minority Forum	£5k

4.5.1 Discussions have taken place with these partners and they agreed to split the £20k equally between the four partners. As the amount is less than last time it is envisaged, they will not have an issue with distributing the funding to households in the time frame, the first three having distributed a previous grant of £15K each and the North Herts Ethnic Minority Forum £5K following a delegated decision in January 2022.

5 CONSULTATION WITH MEMBERS

5.1 Consultation has taken place by means of an information note that was published in the Members Information Service on the 27 May 2022.

6 APPLICATION DETAILS

6.1 First Garden City Homes

Applicant Project	First Garden City Homes Provide funding to tenants in urgent need of financial assistance to keep warm and clean
Sum requested:	£5,000
Sum Awarded	£5,000
Council priorities	People first

Currently support residents in most hardship who are likely to suffer fuel poverty and have cases identified who are in debt with their utility bills already or are hardship and will struggle to pay fuel bills ongoing.

Additionally, they intend to use housing and sheltered scheme managers who all work in the community to identify genuine cases of hardship where they can offer financial support to enable residents to afford their utility costs and help relieve the stress increased fuel costs are causing. Rather than give money they intend to order appliances etc through retail outlets and look at purchasing vouchers for high street shops to give to residents to purchase warm clothing and other eligible items.

6.2 Settle Group

Applicant Project	Settle Group Provide funding to tenants in urgent need of financial assistance to keep warm and clean
Sum requested:	£5,000
Sum Awarded	£5,000
Council priorities	People first

Settle plans to allocate funding to customers in need alongside two other existing streams of support for customers in relation to housing costs, the Letchworth Welfare Fund and the Settle Welfare Fund.

Customers will be able to self-refer via their website for support and will be channelled through to the appropriate funding to be issued.

All staff will be advised of financial support which is available for customers and encouraged to make a settle plus referral via QL for the Neighbourhood Officer to obtain the relevant details from the customer to make a request for financial support on behalf of the customer.

All customers who have been referred for a foodbank voucher will automatically be provided information about the Household Support Fund – Energy and Water.

6.3 North Hertfordshire Citizens Advice (NHCA)

Applicant Project	North Herts Citizens Advice Provide funding to tenants in private sector and those in urgent need of financial assistance to keep warm and clean
Sum requested:	£5,000
Sum Awarded	£5,000
Council priorities	People first

The remaining funds will be distributed to NHCA clients who are struggling to afford gas and electricity, water bills and to keep themselves warm and clean. The grants will be given to contribute towards bills and arrears and to pay for items such as heaters, blankets, personal hygiene products, equipment repairs etc.

NHCA will focus on low income households who are not able to afford the basic essentials. This will include those who are having to choose between heating and eating, those with significant arrears, and those with other debt issues.

Clients will be identified by both the generalist and specialist advice services. NHCA are also distributing HSF supermarket vouchers, and are running two separate energy advice projects in 2022/23, so we are well placed to identify the people most in need.

Funds will be distributed in the following ways:

- Cash grants
- Accompanying clients to pay for pre-payments card top ups
- Buying items directly for clients
- Paying for arrears, repairs etc direct to suppliers

NHCA will keep a record of:

- Who has been issued with a grant
- Amount
- Reason a grant is needed
- Number of children in the house
- Any evidence of need/receipts it is possible to obtain (this may not always be possible),

It is important that this money is not just a sticking plaster and therefore clients must have a full assessment to explore the underlying reasons for need and will be provided with relevant information and advice, including referrals into relevant specialist projects.

Grants will only be offered to those clients in genuine need of them. NHCA will endeavour to distribute all the available funds, but will return any unspent monies at the end of the grant period.

6.4 North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum (NHMEF)

Applicant Project	North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum Provide funding to BAME community in private rented sector and those in urgent need of financial assistance to keep warm and clean
Sum requested:	£5,000
Sum Awarded	£5,000
Council priorities	People first

The funding will enable the provision of financial support to vulnerable households. NHMEF will provide financial assistance to contribute/ pay for essential commodities including utility bills. The support will cover both qualitative and quantitatively, based on need and personal circumstances. Depending on the nature of individual financial circumstances, longer term impact will be considered.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Chapter 1, s1-8 of the Localism Act 2011 provides a General Power of Competence which gives local authorities the powers to do anything if it is not specifically prohibited in legislation.
- 7.2 Section 137 Local Government Act 1972 provides specific authority for the Council to incur expenditure on anything which is in the interests of and will bring direct benefit to its area. This includes a charity or other body operating for public service.
- 7.3 The decision taker signing the Decision Notice has delegated authority to take such a decision in accordance with the North Hertfordshire District Council Constitution under section 14.6.8(b)(iii)(A) in relation to Community engagement and development, including financial assistance and grants to external organisations.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The current balance available in the budget to allocate is **£20,000** funding provided from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) allocated via the Hertfordshire County Council.
- 8.2 The total amount of funding requested adds up to **£20,000**.

9. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no relevant risk entries that have been recorded on Pentana Risk, the Council's performance and risk system. Individual events should have their own risk assessments in place to mitigate any health and safety issues. Whenever a request for grant funding for equipment is received, the recipient of the funding will be advised to obtain insurance for the item to avoid a repeat request for funding in the event of the equipment being stolen or damaged. There are no pertinent risk implications for the Authority associated with any items within this report.

10. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 The projects outlined in this report seek to advance equality of resource.

11. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report, as it is not a procurement exercise or contract.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

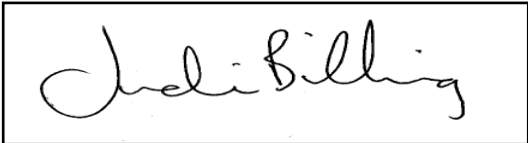
12.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no pertinent Human Resource implications associated with any items within this report.

NOTIFICATION DATE

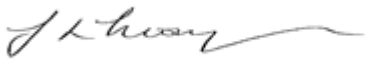
1 June 2022



Signature of Executive Member Decision taker

Date ...31.5.22.....

Signature of Service Director: Legal and Community



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