

RECORD OF DECISION MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Any interest to declare/ or conflict and any dispensation granted *[if applicable]* N/A

SERVICE DIRECTORATE: Legal and Community

1. DECISION TAKEN

The approval of £40k of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Household Support Fund (HSF) 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. **£15,000** to Settle Group as outlined in 6.2
- 1.3. **£15,000** 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:

18th January 2022

4. REASON FOR DECISION

- 4.1 As part of the nationwide efforts to recover following the pandemic, Hertfordshire have been provided with some funding from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Household Support Fund (HSF). This funding is being used to help people this winter with the cost of food and energy.
- 4.2 Hertfordshire County Council have received just under £6.2 million. They have allocated this funding to support various organisations and county council services to provide a range of support including free school meals, supermarket vouchers for food and winter essentials and helping those in energy poverty by helping with energy bills. 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 £44k of the HSF to address fuel/energy poverty. This funding was received on 7 January 2022 and the money needs to be spent by 31 March 2022.
- 4.4 Fuel/Energy Poverty: Following internal and external consultation with colleagues and our partners the fuel/energy poverty allocation will be distributed accordingly via a grant's application process in which the following organisations were invited to apply.

Organisation	Amount
Citizens Advice Bureau	£15k
Settle	£15k
First Garden City Homes	£5k
North Herts Ethnic Minority Forum	£5k
Unallocated ¹	£4k

¹ To be withheld to deal with any emergent issues

<i>Total</i>	£44K
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- 4.5 Discussions have taken place with these partners and they are confident that they are able to ensure that they can allocate the funding to those residents most in need within a very challenging timeframe.

5 CONSULTATION WITH MEMBERS

- 5.1 Both the Executive Member and Deputy Member for Community Engagement have been briefed on the Household Support Fund are supportive of this scheme. This included an information note circulated on the 16 December to which the Executive Member for Finance & IT was also copied in. Information was also circulated in MIS on the 17 December.

6 APPLICATION DETAILS

6.1 First Garden City Homes

Applicant	First Garden City Homes
Project	Provide funding to tenants in urgent need of financial assistance to keep warm and clean
Sum requested:	£5,000
DWP and NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council objectives	Be a more welcoming and inclusive Council Build thriving and resilient communities

First Garden City Homes already support North Herts tenants in most hardship cases and who are likely to suffer fuel poverty. They currently have cases where they can assist immediately with carpeting in living rooms, cases where they can top up fuel meters to provide addition fuel for heating, replace broken appliances and one case where they can assist with a gas debt to enable gas to be put back on.

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 enhance lives this winter and provide this financial help to prevent fuel poverty. Rather than give cash they intend to order appliances, etc through shops that they currently use and purchase vouchers for high street shops to give to residents to purchase warm clothing and other eligible items.

Each case would have a financial assessment and a referral for authorisation. They will ask for match funding from residents where possible for expensive items such as appliances/carpets, or fully fund if unaffordable.

6.2 settle Group

Applicant	settle Group
Project	Provide funding to tenants in urgent need of financial assistance to keep warm and clean
Sum requested:	£15,000
DWP and NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council objectives	Be a more welcoming and inclusive Council Build thriving and resilient communities

To maximise the funding available settle plans to allocate funding to customers in fuel/energy poverty alongside two other existing streams of support for customers in relation to housing costs and poverty. 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 likewise 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 in order 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 with an energy voucher. All customers who received a Christmas hamper in December 2021 will be contacted to ascertain if they need support through the fund by the Neighbourhood Officer. In addition every customer who accesses funding will be referred to the CAB Energy Advisor and advised accordingly.

6.3 North Hertfordshire Citizens Advice (NHCA)

Applicant	North Herts Citizens Advice
Project	Provide funding to tenants in private sector and those in urgent need of financial assistance to keep warm and clean
Sum requested:	£15,000
DWP and NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council objectives	Be a more welcoming and inclusive Council Build thriving and resilient communities

Funds will be distributed to 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. 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

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 generalist and specialist advice services. They are also distributing HSF supermarket vouchers, and are running two separate energy advice projects in and believe they are well placed to identify the people most in need.

6.4 North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum (NHMEF)

Applicant	North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum
Project	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
DWP and NHDC Policy met	Yes
Council objectives	Be a more welcoming and inclusive Council Build thriving and resilient communities

The request for this funding proposal is to cover the cost of fuel to those people who are financially vulnerable and currently facing difficulties to pay their winter fuel bills. Every winter, the fuel bill such as gas and electricity increases. However, the situation

has been heightened by the global hike in fuel prices, particularly gas & electricity and the NHEMF have had many BAME people in the North Herts district area reporting to them that they are going through food and fuel poverty. This has included reports of BAME residents struggling to buy necessary food for their children/family and keep their heating on. The proposed grant will enable them to provide financial support to vulnerable people (including the social isolated and the elderly) to help keep them warm which will address some of this hardship.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Department for Work and Pensions is providing funding to County Council's and Unitary Authorities, under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, to administer the scheme and provide assistance to households most in need. The *Household Support Fund: final guidance for County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England published 11 November 2021* sets out how County Councils are expected to work with District Councils and partners.

7.2 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, including financial assistance and grants to external organisations.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no direct financial implications to the Council. Costs associated with administering the scheme will be covered within existing council resources.

9. RISK IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The deadline for this funding to be used is 31 March 2022. It is essential that these funding allocations are distributed to our partners as quickly as possible to ensure the money is utilised within this very short timeframe.

9.2 There could be reputational risk to the Council if it is seen to be slow in implementing this assistance to enabling partner to support those residents most in need in need.

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 Council is implementing Government policy designed to provide financial and economic support to residents experiencing fuel and energy poverty.

11. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

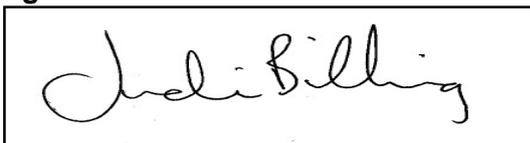
12.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

13. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

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

NOTIFICATION DATE: 21 January 2022

Signature of Decision taker

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judi Billing".

(Cllr Judi Billing, Executive Member for Community Engagement)

Date: 18 January 2022

Signature of Service Director consulted:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that appears to read "J. Thompson".

Jeanette Thompson, 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