

**30<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

**Agenda Item: 7**

## **REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, COMMISSIONING AND RESOURCES**

### **COVID WINTER GRANT SCHEME**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to ask Committee to approve spending plans for the Nottinghamshire allocation of the COVID Winter Grant Scheme.

#### **Information**

2. On 8<sup>th</sup> November 2020, the government announced a package of extra targeted financial support for those in need over the winter period. The £170 million COVID Winter Grant Scheme, available from December 2020, will see new funding issued to County Councils and Unitary Authorities to support those most in need across England with the cost of food, energy and water bills and other associated costs. Nottinghamshire County Council's allocation is £2,316,008.
3. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will provide funding to County Councils and Unitary Authorities, under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, who will administer the scheme and provide direct assistance to vulnerable households and families with children particularly affected by the pandemic. This will include some families who normally have access to Free School Meals during term time. County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England will have the ability to deliver the scheme through vouchers or grants. The Scheme will operate from early December 2020 and covers the period until the end of March 2021.
4. The Local Authority is able to determine eligibility in their area and target their support within the scope of the conditions set out below:
  - at least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to support families with children, with up to 20% of the total funding to other types of households, including individuals.
  - at least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to provide support with food, energy and water bills (including sewerage), with up to 20% on other items.
5. In Nottinghamshire it is proposed that:
  - approximately £1.15m (50% of the available grant) would be spent on the provision of food to those families where children are in receipt of free school meals or free meals in

Further Education settings due to the low income of the household across the Christmas and February half-term breaks. In October, the Chief Executive took a decision under his Emergency Decision Making powers (see **Appendix A and B**) to provide FSM for eligible families in the two week October half-term period. The cost to the Council to fund FSM for 21,932 eligible children was approximately £634,680 for the two-week holiday. As in October, the provision at Christmas and February 2021 will be delivered locally by schools providing vouchers for local supermarkets. Schools have successfully demonstrated that they can effectively identify eligible children, communicate sensitively with families and manage a voucher scheme including their purchase and subsequent dissemination.

- approximately £0.6m (30% of the available grant) would be targeted at vulnerable families with children with an allocated lead professional such as a Social Worker, Family Service or Children’s Centre Service key worker or a professional in an allied service such as domestic violence charities. Of that figure £0.43m would be targeted at households struggling with the provision of food, paying winter energy costs and water bills during the period up until March and based on an assessment of need by the relevant professional.
  - circa. £0.45m (20% of the grant) would be focused on individual households not meeting the above eligibility but who have been identified by professionals as being in urgent need. This could include care leavers, families with children but without a key worker, those at risk of homelessness, those at risk from domestic violence but without children and those with no recourse to public funds. This would include at least £0.3m targeted on food, energy and water bills. It is proposed that through the Local Resilience Forum’s Humanitarian Assistance Group, officers work with District and Borough Council partners to identify priority individuals for this portion of the grant and to issue vouchers and make appropriate payments.
6. Upon receipt of more detail from the DWP, further local advice and best practice guidance would be produced to ensure that the money is fairly and consistently targeted, to reduce the risks of any fraud and to account for the expenditure in line with the set criteria. It is likely that detailed records will need to be held on individual household allocations. It is proposed that £100,000 will initially be set aside for administration, although this can be reviewed once further details are received.

### **Other Options Considered**

7. Due to the short timescales involved no other options have been considered.

### **Reason for Recommendations**

8. The recommendations support the conditions and purpose of the grant as set by government whilst meeting local priorities.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

9. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty,

safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## Financial Implications

10. The Children & Families revenue budget will be adjusted to reflect this new ring fenced grant and it will be monitored through the usual monthly financial monitoring process and in line with the grant conditions. A summary of the grant allocation is in the table below:

	<b>Food &amp; Utilities</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>	
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>%</b>
FSM & vulnerable families with children	1.58	0.17	1.75	80
Individual households	0.30	0.15	0.45	20
	<b>1.88</b>	<b>0.32</b>	<b>2.20</b>	<b>100</b>
Administration			0.10	
<b>Total</b>			<b>2.30</b>	
	85%	15%		

## RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the Committee notes the decision taken by the Chief Executive under his Emergency Decision Making powers to provide Free School Meals for eligible families during the two week October half-term period.
- 2) That the Committee approves the overarching expenditure plan for the Nottinghamshire allocation of the COVID Winter Grant Scheme as detailed in paragraphs 5 and 6 of the report.

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## Constitutional Comments (AK 18/11/20)

11. This report falls within the remit of Children and Young People's Committee by virtue of its terms of reference.

### **Financial Comments (SAS 19/11/20)**

12. The Children & Families revenue budget will be adjusted to reflect this new ring fenced grant and it will be monitored through the usual monthly financial monitoring process and in line with the grant conditions.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None.

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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