

<b>Report title</b>	Additional Covid Grants 2021-2022	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Cllr Beverley Momenabadi Children and Young People	Cllr Linda Leach Adults
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	No	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All Wards	
<b>Accountable Director</b>	Emma Bennett, Director of Children's and Adults Services	
<b>Originating service</b>	Children's Services	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Kate Lees Tel Email	Partnership Manager 01902 556591 <a href="mailto:Kate.Lees@wolverhampton.gov.uk">Kate.Lees@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Strategic Executive Board	2 July 2021

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**Recommendations for decision:**

The Cabinet (Resources) Panel is recommended to:

1. Approve the establishment of supplementary expenditure budget totalling £999,457, fully funded from Local Covid Support Grant, and delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, in consultation with the Director of Children's and Adult Services to approve the delivery plan associated with the criteria of the Local Covid Support Grant.
2. Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Adults, in consultation with the Director of Children's and Adult Services and the Director of Finance to build in supplementary budgets fully funded by Infection and Prevention Grant once the allocation has been confirmed, and to make payments to care providers in line with the conditions of grant.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 Seek approval from the Panel to approve the expenditure of a further instalment of the Local Covid Support Grant allocation, building further on previous spends of this grant and the Winter Fund Grant, supporting vulnerable families and individuals in Wolverhampton.
- 1.2 To provide the Panel with an update on the extension to the Infection and Prevention Grant for Adult Social Care.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant international, national and regional impact, and will continue to have significant financial implications for the Council.
- 2.2 In response to the pandemic, Government have announced a number of one off grants for local authorities and other sectors impacted by the pandemic.

## **3.0 Covid Local Support Grant (Winter Fund Grant)**

- 3.1 On 8 November 2020, it was announced that there would be a new Winter Grant Scheme, (now called the Covid Local Support Grant) focused on providing assistance with food and bills to support children and their families from the beginning of December until the end of March 2021. There has been a further two extensions to this grant 31 March - 16 April 2021 and 17 April - 20 June 2021
- 3.2 On 22 June 2021 the government announced a further extension to the Covid Local Support Grant. The grant period will run from 21 June – 30 September 2021.
- 3.3 The Department for Work and Pensions subsequently issued the Covid Local Support Grant guidance on 22 June along with grant allocations. Wolverhampton's allocation is £999,457.

## **4.0 Eligibility**

Awards must be based on the following framework:

- At least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to support households with children, with up to 20% of the total funding to other households experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, poverty during the pandemic. This may include households not currently in receipt of Department of Work and Pension (DWP) welfare benefits.
- At least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to provide support with food, energy, and water bills for household purposes (including drinking, washing, cooking, central heating, and sanitary purposes) and sewerage. Within this condition there is flexibility about the proportion of support allocated to food and to bills.
- Up to 20% of the total funding can be used to provide support with other essentials clearly linked to the scheme conditions (including sanitary products, warm clothing, soap, blankets, boiler service/repair, purchase of equipment including fridges, freezers, ovens, etc.), in recognition that a range of costs may arise which directly affect a household's ability to afford or access food, energy and water.

- The scheme is not intended to cover payment of rent or other housing costs because these are not directly related to food or utility bills and other benefits and support is available to cover these costs. Nor is it intended to be used for the provision of general advice on managing debt and/or financial hardship.
- It is important that authorities develop overall policies appropriate for their areas, and proportionate procedures, for the allocation of the grant monies by reference to the above criteria

## **5.0 Progress**

- 5.1 Since December 2020, Wolverhampton has received £2.7 million as part of the Covid Winter Fund grant/Local Support Grant. This grant has been issued through the Department for Work and Pensions and is accessible for households that have found themselves in difficulties because of Covid-19. This grant is not means tested.
- 5.2 Council services supporting the identification of need and distributing the grant have included Adults and Children's Social Care, Early Intervention, Care Leavers team and DCYP.
- 5.3 In addition, Wolverhampton has taken a proactive approach in identifying trusted third-party organisations within the city to ensure that the grant reaches micro communities and households that may otherwise be not known to council services.
- 5.4 Over 30 different providers have engaged with the programme. These include well established community groups and newer organisations and charities that have launched since the pandemic.
- 5.5 Up to 16 April, 47,000 individuals have been in receipt of support offered through the grant including accessing to support with food, fuel, clothing, and other essential household items.
- 5.6 8,000 individuals have been supported by third party organisations, 66 % of these were families with children. Of those supported 81% were supported around food, toiletries, and sanitary products. 19% with other essential that include clothing, bedding, small appliances, and other household items.
- 5.7 Distribution of funds have been allocated across the city; however, some wards are reported to have been in greater receipt to funds. These include Bushbury South and Low Hill, St Peters, Ettingshall, Health Town and East Park.
- 5.8 Some early analysis indicates that households with single occupants, couples, and families with less than three children have been in receipt of the largest proportion of support.
- 5.9 A delivery plan is currently being developed building on the success of the previous approach to maximising this grant to ensure it targets the right individuals and families in the City and compliments other support programmes such as the 'Yo' Festival/WV Holiday squad and the use of the Holiday Activity Fund.

## **6.0 Infection and Prevention Grant - Adult Social Care**

- 6.1 The Council has received funding from the ring-fenced Infection and Prevention grant from Government to provide support for adult social care providers. To-date Wolverhampton has received around £6.3 million.
- 6.2 On 27 June 2021, Government announced an additional £250 million for the period of 1 July 2021 until the end of September. This is a ring-fenced grant for care homes and home care provides to keep their staff and residents safe. The funding can be used to:
- Ensure staff who are isolating receive their normal wages whilst doing so
  - Ensure that members of staff work in only one care home where possible
  - Limit or cohort staff to individual groups or residents or floors / wings, for example paying for extra staff cover to provide the necessary level of care and support to residents
  - Support recruitment of additional staff (and volunteers) if they are needed to enable staff to work in only one care home.
- 6.3 This extension will also include testing funding to support providers with the costs associated with ongoing testing in care settings. This includes funding to support visitor testing to ensure residents can see their loved ones as safely as possible.
- 6.4 At the time of writing this report, the specific allocations had not been confirmed. This report therefore seeks approval to delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Adults, in consultation with the Director of Children's and Adult Services and the Director of Finance to establish supplementary budgets once the grant is confirmed and make the payments to care providers in line with the conditions of grant.

## **7.0 Evaluation of alternative options**

- 7.1 There are no alternatives other than taking a less thorough response to Covid-19, it is felt that this would put the Council at risk legally and morally.

## **8.0 Reasons for decision(s)**

- 8.1 The Council has legal and moral duties in relation to a number of aspects arising from Covid-19. This decision enables the authority to take steps to expend the grant on key services to support the Council's response to Covid-19.

## **9.0 Financial implications**

- 9.1 In response to the pandemic, Government have announced a number of one-off grants to support local authorities, and other sectors impacted by the pandemic.
- 9.2 On 22 June Government announced a further extension of the Covid Local Support Grant Scheme (previously Winter Fund Grant), which will continue to focus on providing support with food and fuel poverty and other essentials to support children and their families and other vulnerable adults up until 30 September 2021. Wolverhampton's additional allocation is £999,457, taking the total grant to £2.7 million.

- 9.3 This grant is ringfenced and is required to be spent in line with the eligibility criteria as set out in section 4 of this report. In addition, an element of the grant can be used for administration costs, for example, staff costs, advertising, and publicity to raise awareness of the scheme, web page design and printing application forms.
- 9.4 This report therefore seeks approval to establish supplementary budgets totalling £999,457 fully funded by grant and delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, in consultation with the Director of Children's and Adult Services to approve the delivery plan associated with the criteria of the Local Covid Support Grant.
- 9.5 In addition, on 27 June, Government announced an extension to the Infection and Prevention Grant which provides funding to adult social care providers to support them in their response to the pandemic and to keep people safe. To-date Wolverhampton has received £6.3 million from this ring-fenced grant. At the time of writing this report the specific allocation for Wolverhampton from this extension was not known. This report therefore seeks approval to delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Adults, in consultation with the Director of Children's and Adult Services and the Director of Finance to build in supplementary budgets fully funded by Infection and Prevention Grant once allocations have been confirmed, and to make the payments to care providers in line with the conditions of grant.  
[AS/02072021/N]

## **10.0 Legal implications**

- 10.1 The Concessions Contract Regulations 2016 will be applicable to this contract. The contract is sub threshold and as such the Council is only required to comply with internal contract procedure rules.
- 10.2 The appropriate authority is set out in the body of the report.
- 10.3 The legal duty to spend with propriety falls under S.151 Local Government Act 1972 and arrangements for proper administration of their affairs is secured by the S.151 Officer as Chief Financial Officer Equalities implications  
[DP/02072021A].

## **11.0 Equalities implications**

- 11.1 The report has no direct equalities implications, however, the Council's response to Covid-19 will support the most vulnerable residents across the City.

## **12.0 All other implications**

- 12.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant international, national and regional impact, and will continue to have significant financial implications for the Council. Whilst the direct financial impact of the pandemic was limited in 2019-2020, it will have a significant impact on 2020-2021 and future years.

### **13.0 Schedule of background papers**

- 13.1 Special Urgency Decision – Urgent decision relating to November lockdown and budget decisions related to Council actions as a result of Covid-19 – 8 November 2020.