

## **DISTRIBUTION OF GRANT FUNDING TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS**

<b>Head of Service:</b>	Rod Brown, Head of Housing & Community
<b>Wards affected:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Urgent Decision?(yes/no)</b>	Yes
<b>If yes, reason urgent decision required:</b>	Emergency Assistance Grant to be distributed by end October 2020
<b>Appendices (attached):</b>	Appendix 1 – Distribution of Emergency Assistance Grant by Surrey County Council

### **Summary**

The report seeks the allocation of grant funding to support those most impacted by COVID-19 and on-going pressures for winter 2020, including transition towards EU exit.

### **Recommendation (s)**

#### **The Committee is asked to:**

- (1) Agree the full allocation of £38,598.65 of the Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies to the Epsom and Ewell Foodbank;**
- (2) Agree the award of £10,000 from the EU Exit funding for local government, with the funds being awarded equally to the Citizens Advice Bureau and Age Concern.**

## **1 Reason for Recommendation**

- 1.1 The distribution of the emergency assistance and EU Exit grant will help sustain organisations with their continued provision of support to those residents struggling to afford food and other essentials or those particularly affected by existing the EU.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 In June 2020 the Prime Minister announced a grant of £63 million for local authorities in England to help those who are struggling to afford food and other essentials. This is known as the Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies and referred to in this report as the Emergency Assistance Grant.

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- 2.2 Surrey County Council has been granted an allocation of £788,015.67 on the basis of population, weighted by a proxy measure of need, the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for each authority area.
- 2.3 Epsom and Ewell Borough Council has been provided with a proportion of this funding totalling £38,598.65. The award will be used to support local organisations that help those who can not afford to buy food and other essentials.
- 2.4 In addition, during 2019 the government awarded additional funding for Council's to prepare for the EU Exit. This funding was to assist local authorities in preparing for the EU exit including capacity and capability. The work on preparedness covered those financially vulnerable and most likely to be disproportionately affected by the arrangements. The remaining balance of this could support those in need as we progress to a winter response.

## **3 The local COVID-19 impact and response**

- 3.1 The Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic was reported to Members of this committee on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020.
- 3.2 The Council was fortunate to be able to rely extensively on many community and voluntary sector organisations across the borough to help support our most vulnerable residents during this challenging time.
- 3.3 For residents who were over the state pension age, Age Concern Epsom and Ewell were able to provide a wealth of support. This included shopping facilities which was a door-step service paid for by the resident.
- 3.4 Citizens Advice has been able to respond to the rise in demand arising from Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic. Advice provided has been wide ranging including helping those with benefits and tax credits difficulties, issues resulting from employment and coping with poor mental health.
- 3.5 During lockdown the Council also helped by providing a basic food shopping service which also relied on the customer paying a fixed amount to cover the cost of the service. This charge meant the Council was not carrying the cost for this service.
- 3.6 For those residents who were struggling to afford food, there was an increased reliance on the existing Epsom and Ewell Food Bank. The Food Bank provided food and essential supplies free of charge from their two centres within the borough, usually on a referral from the Council or another agency.
- 3.7 In addition Surrey County Council operated the government's basic free food box service from the Bookham Youth Centre in Leatherhead which offered a simple and basic food package free of charge. Surrey County Council have reserved some of the grant to cover these costs (see Appendix1).

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### 4 Emergency Assistance Grant

- 4.1 In addition to the £6.5 billion of extra support the government is providing through the welfare system, the Emergency Assistance Grant has been provided to local authorities to help support those finding it difficult to afford food and other essentials, such as toiletries and sanitary products.
- 4.2 In Surrey the funding was initially passed to Surrey County Council who have distributed it to the Surrey Crisis Fund, Bookham Food Distribution and to each of the 11 Districts and Boroughs within Surrey, based on population data weighted for IMD. Details of the distribution are attached in Appendix 1.
- 4.3 The allocation to Districts and Boroughs is given to target those in need and provide additional grant funding to local food banks and VCFS organisations supporting the purchase and distribution of food, medical supplies and other essential items.
- 4.4 The Government have also published guidance on the allocation of this grant which is available here:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-local-authority-emergency-assistance-grant-for-food-and-essential-supplies/coronavirus-covid-19-local-authority-emergency-assistance-grant-for-food-and-essential-supplies>
- 4.5 This guidance includes the following objectives and principals which apply to the Council in allocating the Emergency Assistance Grant:
- Use discretion on how to identify and support those most in need
  - Use the funding from July onwards to meet immediate need and help those who are struggling to afford food and essentials due to COVID-19
  - Use the funding for existing schemes and other support which deliver the same outcomes and where the need is greatest
  - Work together with other local authorities to provide support and ensure the funding meets its objectives
- 4.6 The guidance also advises that when deciding how to help people, the Council should consider:
- Using cash or vouchers where practical - this may reduce pressure on your local partners
  - Advising and providing information to people to help them access longer term support they might need, such as benefits - you should decide which approach is suitable in your community

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- 4.7 The pandemic has and will continue to pose a significant and increasing threat to employment and subsequently increased reliance on free to access food supplies within the borough. From March 2020, the pandemic has had a significant impact on employment within the borough and many residents either lost their jobs or were furloughed and found themselves in financial difficulties.
- 4.8 The financial risks associated with unemployment is expected to become even more acute with the imminent removal of current protections from eviction, the ending of furlough and the introduction of further COVID-19 controls.
- 4.9 This continuing financial threat can be illustrated by the growth in Universal Credit claimants at Epsom Job Centre. The table below reports on the local increases in Universal Credit claims from February to July 2020.

Table 1 Universal Credit Claims at Epsom Job Centre

<b>Age of claimant (Years)</b>	<b>February 2020</b>	<b>July 2020</b>	<b>Percentage increase Feb-July 2020</b>
<b>All ages</b>	<b>1030</b>	<b>3110</b>	<b>302 %</b>
<b>18 – 24</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>400%</b>
<b>50+</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>745</b>	<b>248%</b>

- 4.10 The anticipated increases in unemployment across the borough, particularly in the younger residents, is likely to place additional demands on the existing arrangements for accessing free food supplies, which will predominately impact on the Epsom and Ewell Food Bank.

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### 5 EU Exit funding for local government

- 5.1 In March 2019 the government awarded £58M of additional funding to support the Council's preparedness for EU Exit. Of that £20M was distributed in 2019/20 and £20M in 2020/21. The Council have been working with the Surrey Local Resilience Forum (SLRF) as the lead for Brexit preparedness
- 5.2 The EU Exit funding is not ring fenced but the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) confirmed that it should not be used on unrelated matters.
- 5.3 The Surrey Local Resilience Forum have combined their Emergency Plans into one plan, identifying that there are a number of risks over this winter that will impact on Council's and residents. This plan encompasses the Surrey Local Outbreak plan to prevent the spread of the virus, mass vaccinations plans, seasonal flu, NHS winter pressures, flooding, severe weather and planning for the end of the EU transition period. This recognises the link and impact of these events which have to be coordinated.
- 5.4 As part of the initial work on EU transition in 2019 we identified the impact on businesses within Epsom and Ewell and those financially vulnerable or likely to be impacted with the changes such as the Settlement Scheme. As part of this the designated Brexit lead officer was required to contact voluntary organisations and report on the impact and risks as a key role was to bring together local public sector providers, voluntary sector and community groups to report on local impacts . This included the Foodbank, Citizens Advice and Age Concern.
- 5.5 The impact of leaving the EU is somewhat supplanted by Covid 19 but will have a further significant impact on the local economy and jobs as identified in the Road to Recovery Report also presented to this committee.
- 5.6 Much of the support needed will fall to the voluntary sector and therefore it is recommended that the EU Exit funding should be distributed to the Epsom Citizens Advice Bureau and Age Concern.

### 6 Risk Assessment

#### Legal or other duties

- 6.1 Impact Assessment
  - 6.1.1 None
- 6.2 Crime & Disorder
  - 6.2.1 None

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### 6.3 Safeguarding

6.3.1 Directing the Emergency Assistance Grant so that it reaches those who are in greatest need will help protect those who are most vulnerable.

### 6.4 Dependencies

6.4.1 As part of the on-going emergency, the Council's emergency response continues to be aligned to the Surrey-wide Local Resilience Forum.

6.4.2 Distribution of the Emergency Assistance Grant is subject to the grant conditions set out above and in the government's guidance.

### 6.5 Other

6.5.1 None

## 7 Financial Implications

7.1 Both the Emergency Assistance Grant and the EU Exit funding were issued under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003. The funding is not ring-fenced. The Council was awarded £38,598.65 of the Emergency Assistance Grant by Surrey County Council as identified in Appendix 1.

7.2 The Council received funding of £52,452 across 2 years for EU Exit and £10,000 can be allocated as grant funding between Age Concern and the Citizens Advice Bureau (£5,000 each) as proposed in the report.

7.3 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** none arising from the contents of this report.

## 8 Legal Implications

8.1 None arising from the contents of this report.

8.2 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** none arising from the contents of this report.

## 9 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

9.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:  
Safe & Well and Opportunity & Prosperity

9.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is not included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

9.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None for the purposes of this report.

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- 9.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** Supporting vulnerable people during periods of financial crisis will help strengthen community safety and protect those who are most vulnerable.
- 9.5 **Partnerships:** The Council has a long tradition of working effectively with voluntary and charity groups supporting residents. These partners are reliant on financial support to continue to deliver services to borough residents.

### 10 Background papers

10.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

#### **Previous reports:**

- Strategy and Resources Committee report: The Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic (2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020)
- Strategy and Resources Committee report: S&R Road to Recovery Report? (27<sup>th</sup> October 2020)

#### **Other papers:**

Guidance: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Local authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies (Updated 4 August 2020)