

HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND 2023/24

Head of Service:	Brendan Bradley, Head of Finance
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	N/A
Appendices (attached):	None

Summary

Central government has introduced a further tranche of the Household Support Fund (HSF4) for 2023/24. Funding for the scheme has been provided to Surrey County Council (SCC), who has overall control and responsibility for administering HSF.

SCC has passed a proportion of the funding to Surrey districts for distribution on to residents.

To assist in delivering the funds to hard-to-reach local residents, EEBC has already entered into a partnership with the Good Company, a local charity who run the local food bank, Epsom Pantry and the Epsom Refugees Network.

This report proposes to continue the partnership with the Good Company, to enable these funds to continue to be disbursed to vulnerable residents, in a timely manner, whom the Council would otherwise be unable to reach.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Agree that a further £50,000 of the HSF4 allocation be passed to the Good Company, for distribution to residents in the period October 2023 to March 2024**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 The recommendation will enable the funds to be disbursed to vulnerable residents in accordance with Household Support Fund scheme requirements.

2 Background

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- 2.1 Government has introduced a further tranche of [Household Support Fund](#) (HSF4) for 2023/24. Funding for the scheme has been provided to Surrey County Council (SCC) who have overall control and responsibility for administering HSF.
- 2.2 As in previous years, County has passed each of the Surrey districts a percentage of the funding for use locally. EEBC has been allocated £214,528 on condition it uses the funding as specified in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) guidance and submits complex management information required by County throughout the year.
- 2.3 EEBC's Revenues & Benefits Team is able to allocate £114,528 of the funding to residents itself, in accordance with the scheme requirements, by identifying eligible residents through benefits and council tax records.
- 2.4 However, government guidance also requires local authorities to make efforts to reach residents who may be suffering financial hardship due to the current cost of living crisis, but who are not traditionally identified as being on a low income through the established benefits and welfare provided by local authorities.
- 2.5 To reach these vulnerable residents (whom the Council itself cannot identify) in 2022/23, EEBC had previously partnered with the Good Company on past tranches of the Household Support Fund. The Good Company proved to be a trusted local partner, open to all sections of the community, and effective at distributing the funds even to those who may not qualify for traditional benefit payments (e.g. those with no recourse to public funds).
- 2.6 To enable the timely distribution of HSF4 funds to residents, a delegated authority decision was agreed in June to pass £50,000 of the remaining £100,000 funding to the Good Company for distribution in the first half of 2023/24, because their work with Epsom & Ewell Foodbank, the Epsom Pantry and the local Refugee Network allowed them to continue to reach these 'unknown' groups and provide immediate, practical assistance in line with the guidance for the scheme.
- 2.7 The delegated authority decision also envisaged that a final £50,000 balance may also be passed to the Good Company for distribution in October 2023 to March 2024, but as a non-urgent decision, that this would be brought to S&R Committee for approval.

3 Proposal

- 3.1 Due to the Good Company's past experience of dealing with previous tranches of the scheme, it already has processes and record keeping in place to allow them to comply with the complex DWP reporting, reconciliation and assurance requirements of the scheme.

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- 3.2 In addition, the Good Company has a proven record of being able to reach vulnerable residents and, as they already comply with the scheme requirements, there is no additional need to train their staff or help set up the arrangement, This reduces administration costs and allows more of the funding to go directly to those residents in need.
- 3.3 For the reasons outlined above, it is proposed to pass the final £50,000 tranche to The Good Company for allocation to residents.

4 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

- 4.1 Equality Impact Assessment
- 4.1.1 None arising from the contents of this report.
- 4.2 Crime & Disorder
- 4.2.1 None arising from the contents of this report.
- 4.3 Safeguarding
- 4.3.1 None arising from the contents of this report.
- 4.4 Dependencies
- 4.4.1 None arising from the contents of this report.
- 4.5 Other
- 4.5.1 None arising from the contents of this report.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 Financial implications are set-out in the body of the report.
- 5.2 The Household Support Fund scheme is fully funded, ultimately by central government, with funds passported to districts by Surrey County Council.
- 5.3 Any funds remaining unspent at 31 March 2024, plus any HSF funds that have not been allocated in line with government guidance, will be returnable to SCC/central government as required.

Section 151 Officer's comments: None arising from the contents of this report.

6 Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct legal implications.

Legal Officer's comments: None arising from the contents of this report.

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7 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

- 7.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged: Safe & Well
- 7.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is not included within the current Service Delivery Plan.
- 7.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None for the purposes of this report.
- 7.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** None for the purposes of this report.
- 7.5 **Partnerships:** Providing these funds to a charitable partner is a reflection of the Council's commitment to support all residents wherever possible.

8 Background papers

- 8.1 Delegated Authority Decision #645 - Household Support Fund Tranche 4, 23 June 2023.