

Surrey Heath Borough Council

Executive

20th September 2022

Surrey Heath Emergency Food Poverty Grant Scheme

Portfolio	Support & Safeguarding – Cllr Sarah Jane Croke
Strategic Director/ Head of Service	Louise Livingston – Head of HR, Performance & Communications
Report Author	Jayne Boitault – Community Partnership Officer
Key Decision	No
Wards Affected	All
PH Sign off	Yes

Summary and purpose

To amend the qualifying criteria for the Council's Emergency Food Poverty Grant Scheme by extending its remit to include applications from not-for-profit organisations to assist with meeting fuel/energy costs when setting up a 'warm bank' type of initiative.

Recommendation

The Executive is advised to RESOLVE that

- (i) the criteria of the Emergency Food Poverty Grant Scheme be altered to accept applications from not-for-profit organisations to assist with meeting fuel/energy costs when setting up a 'warm bank' type of initiative within Surrey Heath;
- (ii) an upper limit of £5,000 per application or organisation for either food or fuel be introduced; and
- (iii) authority to agree any grant condition changes be delegated to the Head of HR, Performance & Communications in consultation with the Support & Safeguarding Portfolio Holder.

1. Background and Supporting Information

- 1.1 This scheme was launched in December 2020 and has awarded 5 grants to date at a total cost of £10,400. An initial £20,000 was agreed at the Executive meeting in October 2020 to meet local demand, and this was increased by a

further £50,000 in February 2021, with the scheme at that time being open and available until 31st March 2022.

- 1.2 This scheme formed part of the Community Grants Review in January 2022 considered by the Executive where it was agreed to extend the closing date for applications until 31st March 2023. The fund presently has £59,600 available.
- 1.3 As we move towards autumn, fears around the cost of living crisis are rising in the face of increasing fuel, energy and utility costs, coupled with the highest inflation in years. With the rising Energy costs, changes within the energy caps, communities are becoming nervous about being able to meet the costs over this next 6-month period.
- 1.4 A new concept originally tweeted by Martin Lewis, the money saving expert, suggested that people who are unable to afford their heating may have to turn to warm spaces as winter approaches. The concept of “warm banks” was introduced, which is the equivalent of “food banks” where people who can’t afford heating are invited to spend their time at no cost with heating churches, halls and other open public buildings.
- 1.5 Plans are being developed through the Council’s Community Support Working Group, to enable our communities to collaborate in partnerships to make available communal warm banks. Discussions are underway with the Watchetts Residents Group now who are working with St Marys Church to open a ‘warm bank’. Organisations who are working to develop this initiative will require financial support and by changing the criteria of this scheme to include fuel and food poverty will enable this Council to pro-actively provide this support to help meet some of the additional heating costs that will be incurred.
- 1.6 It is proposed to make available up to £5,000 per application or organisation for either food or fuel. It should also be noted that the Council has supported the main local foodbanks with funds from the Government Household Support Grant Scheme.
- 1.7 It is proposed that the amendments to the scheme are implemented by 1st October 2022 at the latest and for this to be widely publicised and to help galvanise this initiative locally. It is also proposed for the fund to be open until exhausted or 31st March 2023, whichever is earlier.

2. Proposal and Alternative Options

- 2.1 The Executive has the option to:
 - 2.1.1 Agree the suggested amendments as set-out within this agenda item
 - 2.1.2 Agree alternative amendments to this funding scheme
 - 2.1.3 To retain the scheme as is without any changes

2.2 It is suggested to approve as outlined in 2.11 above.

3. Contribution to the Council's Five-Year Strategy

3.1 Health and Quality of Life:

3.1.1 The health and quality of life of all the Borough's residents is very much at the core of the services that the Council provides to its residents understanding that having a warm, safe and secure home, and a healthy, attractive environment which is key for improving health outcomes and our residents' quality of life.

3.1.2 The Council wants to ensure communities have the infrastructure and accessibility to meet the needs of a changing and growing population. Supporting the development of attractive, sustainable and vibrant communities for people to live, work and enjoy. We will also take a positive approach to supporting those who are most vulnerable.

3.1.3 To nurture the strong sense of community across the whole borough, fostering a sense of respect and consideration. We aim to ensure everyone can access a safe, quality home to meet their needs.

3.1.4 We will take a positive approach to supporting all sectors of our community, including those who are most vulnerable. We will promote active and healthy lives for all and a rich programme of cultural and community events

4. Resource Implications

4.1 No changes as this is utilising existing budgeted funding.

5. Section 151 Officer Comments:

5.1 To be completed

6. Legal and Governance Issues

6.1 To be completed

7. Monitoring Officer Comments:

7.1 To be completed

8. Other Considerations and Impacts

Environment and Climate Change

8.1 Providing support to a number of these organisations helps protect the borough's environment.

Equalities and Human Rights

8.2 The organisations support vulnerable people with information, advice and/or funding and increase participation in activities to improve social inclusion.

Risk Management

8.3 To be completed

Community Engagement

8.4 To be completed

Annexes

Annex A. Existing Emergency Food Poverty Grant criteria

Background Papers

None