

Record of Officer Decision

Household Support Fund (HSF) 6 - Revised Decision 2

Decision Taker and Date Decision Taken:

The Director of Finance, in consultation with the Council Leadership Group on 14 October 2024 (amended on 12 November 2024 to reflect higher Pensioner need and further amended on 28 November 2024 to include funding for Warm Spaces).

Summary of Matter or Issue Requiring Decision:

The Household Support Fund (HSF) was introduced in October 2021, providing councils with funding to support those in the community most negatively impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. The funding has been extended to cover 1 October 2024 – 31 March 2025 with Torbay receiving an allocation of £1,235,357 in the latest scheme (HSF6).

The Fund is intended to cover a wide range of low-income households in need, including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people, larger families, single-person households, and those struggling with one-off financial shocks or unforeseen events.

Support can also be provided to fund additional debt and benefits advice.

Reasonable administrative expenses can be charged to the grant.

The initial allocation of £170,000 for Pensioners was based on Council Tax Support caseload figures obtained in September. Further checking in November before application forms were sent out has shown that there were considerably more eligible households than originally believed. There were 1,057 eligible households. The Council has therefore increased the Pensioner allocation from £170,000 to £240,000 to fund this.

This has made it necessary to find £70,000 from the rest of the Household Support Fund budget. This has been achieved by removing the two items costing £30,000 each (help with rent in advance/deposits and with setting up home items such as white goods and second hand furniture). These items will all now be funded by the Council's Welfare Support Budget instead, and there will be no detriment to the homeless people assisted. The remaining £10,000 has been saved by reducing the partner agency claim budget from £145,000 to £135,000. That will still enable the Council to make £500 grants to 270 households in financial hardship.

A further revision has now been made: £20,000 will be allocated for Warm Spaces.

Decision Taken:

That the Household Support Fund (HSF5) for 6 months from 1 October 2024 be allocated as follows:

1. Fuel support £240,000.
2. Food vouchers issued through Family Hub £30,000.
3. Care experienced young people £63,600.

4. Financial support for households with acute financial challenges (All household types, applications via partners) £145,000.
5. Households, who are liable for Council Tax and entitled to Working Age Council Tax Support at 1 October 2024: £450,000 (a £75 payment credited to their Council Tax account).
6. Essentials linked to energy and water e.g., warm clothing, ovens, for those in receipt of a disability benefit or children under 5- now funded from Welfare Support as an alternative to HSF funding, which is needed for Pensioners (para 1).
7. Provision of additional debt and benefit advice £63,750.
8. Food banks £94,000.
9. Social supermarkets £77,000.
10. Housing costs – rent in advance, where required to households who are excluded the Discretionary Housing Payments scheme as they are not in receipt of welfare benefits - now funded from Welfare Support as an alternative to HSF funding, which is needed for Pensioners (para 1).
11. Funding for a Torbay Food Alliance Coordinator Post (up to 31 March 2025) £15,000.
12. Funding for the provision of “Warm Spaces” £20,000. Whilst this leaves no contingency and this £20,000 payment is therefore being funded by a payment from the Welfare Support budget to ensure that the money becomes available now, it is anticipated that there may be sufficient remaining Household Support Fund to reimburse the Council before the scheme ends in March 2025. That will be dependant on the level of demand from pensioners for fuel support (paragraph 1).

Summary of Reason(s) for Decision Taken:

To meet the grant restrictions and prioritise addressing hunger, poverty and housing for those in need within Torbay.

Summary of Alternatives or Options considered and rejected and Background Papers:

As set out in decision in the original Record of Decision published on 31 October 2024 – see [Printed decision Household Support Fund HSF 6.pdf](#).

Details of any conflict of interest and dispensation granted to the Officer taking the decision or by any Member of the Council in delegating responsibility for any specific express delegation:

None

Implementation:

This decision will be implemented immediately.

A copy of this decision and any supporting documentation considered by the Officer taking this

decision may also be available for inspection by the public at the Council's offices or posted upon payment of any copying and postage charges. Any member of the public wishing to take up either of these options is asked to please ring (01803) 207087 or email governance.support@torbay.gov.uk

Signed: _____ Date: 28 November 2024
Director of Finance