

From: Zena Cooke, Corporate Director Finance

To: Roger Gough, Leader

Decision No: 20/00093

Subject: **Urgent Decision - LOCAL AUTHORITY EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE GRANT FOR FOOD AND ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES**

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This paper sets out a proposed approach to using the £1.67m of Emergency Assistance Grant which the Government has allocated to Kent County Council.

Recommendations: The Leader of the Council is asked to AGREE that the £1.67m Emergency Assistance Grant from DEFRA should be:

1) Used to provide locally-targeted support to individuals and families in need, with sufficient flexibility to respond to emerging and changing need across the county;

2) Allocated as follows:

(a) £200k for distribution via the Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) across Kent, based on agreed criteria

(b) £735k for existing county-wide services such as the Kent Support & Assistance Service

(c) £735k for Kent's District & Borough Councils, distributed using the same methodology used by DEFRA to allocate the KCC share of the national allocation

And:

3) Authority be delegated to the Corporate Director for Finance to, in consultation with the Leader, update, review and amend the VCS and existing county-wide service funding arrangements in response to changing need and the emergency assistance landscape, and to take other necessary actions including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Government has allocated £1,669,165.92 to KCC as a one-off contribution for the 2020-21 financial year to support households experiencing financial hardship as a result of Covid 19. This is the Council's share of the widely-trailed £63m nationally, which is intended to 'help local authorities to continue to support those struggling to afford food and other essentials over the coming months due to COVID-19'. The funding has been allocated by population weighted by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for the authority area. Government expects most of this to be spent in 12 weeks – i.e. by around 20th October 2020. Government's guidance on how to spend this Grant can be found 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>

1.2 Discussions have taken place at the Districts & Communities Recovery Cell of the Kent Resilience Forum, with District Chief Executives and with the Kent Community Foundation about how best to target this resource and ensure that the excellent work undertaken collectively to support people through the pandemic is continued. The following principles have been developed to guide the expenditure:

Overall Objective: to help those who are struggling to afford food and other essentials

Aims:

- ensuring those who most need help receive it, with focus on equality of access, and consistency of approach to assessing eligibility across the county
- providing guidance or advice that supports those seeking help to improve their situation and avoid future dependency
- using this opportunity to improve the system for addressing financial hardship across the county, and preparing for what lies ahead

1.3 Whilst the main priority is to ensure those facing greatest need are supported with food and essentials, we also intend to use this opportunity to improve the process by which partners provide additional support to individuals and families where needed (for example referring to Citizen's Advice, mental health services, domestic abuse support, etc.). We are also very aware that when furloughing ends there could be a large cohort of people who have never been in financial hardship before who are facing a significant reduction in income and will not know how to navigate through the various channels of support available. Whilst this funding needs to be largely used by mid-October, we want to pave the way for supporting that cohort too.

2. Strategic Statement and Policy Framework

2.1 This decision underpins all three outcomes within KCC's Strategic Statement, but in particular giving children the best start in life and supporting older and vulnerable residents, as they are likely to be key beneficiaries of the emergency funding. It does not relate to a plan or strategy set out in the Council's Policy Framework.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 There is no direct financial implication for KCC because the vehicles by which the grant will be distributed are already in place, and reasonable administration costs can be charged to the grant.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 None identified.

5. Equality Implications

5.1 Covid-19 has impacted differentially on several of the protected characteristics, notably age, ethnicity and pregnancy but also gender. It is therefore our intention to make every effort to ensure that those most in need are aware that help and support is available. We intend to do this by running:

- targeted communications via faith leaders and community groups which support people from ethnic minorities
- an internal communications campaign to ensure that KCC staff who come into contact with individuals and families in need are well briefed about available support

6. Conclusions

6.1 Following discussions with partners, and building on the experience of supporting those facing difficulties during the pandemic, it is suggested that the Grant be used as follows:

- £200k should be allocated via Kent Community Foundation. We have worked with Kent Community Foundation to establish two funding pots that will complement the county-wide and District funding set out below, extending reach across Kent. The two funds will provide individual hardship grants to families and individuals in need, with referrals accepted from both professionals (e.g. social workers) and charities supporting individuals and families known to them, who are in financial difficulty. Whilst open to all, this fund will particularly welcome applications from families with children with complex needs, who need financial support for essential supplies. In addition, there will be a grant funding scheme available for VCS organisations supporting people who are in financial difficulty, such as food banks. This grant pot will be used to ensure they have capacity to meet increased demand for support. This funding will be county-wide.
- £735k should be used for the Kent Support and Assistance Service and other county council services working with vulnerable households experiencing financial hardship. This could include the provision of advice, information and support for the longer term, and potentially development of improved triaging and referral which would bring sustainable benefits. We will also look to

'forward funding' where possible, such as warehousing food with long shelf life.

- £735k should go to District and Borough Councils, allocated using the distribution methodology used by DEFRA to allocate the KCC share of the national allocation, to provide locally-targeted support, either directly or also via the local voluntary and community sector, to individuals and families in need.

6.2 The spend will be monitored closely, not only in order to report back to Government but also so that we can flex the response according to experience, and how need and demand changes across the county.

7. Recommendations

7.1 The Leader of the Council is asked to AGREE that the £1.67m Emergency Assistance Grant from DEFRA should be:

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2) Allocated as follows:

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And:

3) Authority be delegated to the Corporate Director for Finance to, in consultation with the Leader, update, review and amend the VCS and existing county-wide service funding arrangements in response to changing need and the emergency assistance landscape, and to take other necessary actions including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision.

8. Background Documents

None

9. Report Author

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