

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – URGENT RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

Roger Gough, Leader

DECISION NO:

21/00107

For Publication

Key decision: YES

Key decision criteria. The decision will:

- a) *result in savings or expenditure which is significant having regard to the budget for the service or function (currently defined by the Council as in excess of £1,000,000); or*
- b) *be significant in terms of its effects on a significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions – which will include those decisions that involve:*
 - *the adoption or significant amendment of major strategies or frameworks;*
 - *significant service developments, significant service reductions, or significant changes in the way that services are delivered, whether County-wide or in a particular locality.*

As Leader of the Council, I agree to:

- 1) Confirm and endorse the arrangements put in place via Officer Decision 21/0008, taken under delegated authority arising from Key Decision 21/00062 by the Corporate Director for Finance, to accept the Household Support Grant in full for use in accordance with the guidance published by Department of Work and Pensions and relevant terms and conditions.
- 2) Note that Officer Decision 21/0008 committed £750k of the accepted grant to the provision of supermarket vouchers to families with children in receipt of benefits-related Free School Meals or families in need of support through KSAS during the October 2021 school.
- 3) Approve use of the grant to support the provision of vouchers to families with children in receipt of benefits-related Free School Meals or families in need of support through KSAS during the Christmas 2021, February and Easter 2022 school holidays.
- 4) Approve the use of the remainder of the Household Support Grant over the winter period to the end of March 2022 as set out in section 3 of the associated Executive Decision Report.
- 5) Authorise the Corporate Director Finance, in consultation with the Leader to take any other actions, within the scope of the grant management framework, needed to ensure that the grant is spent in full by the date stipulated by the Department for Work and Pensions, including reviewing, revising and amending the funding allocations set out in the Executive Decision Report.
- 6) Authorise the Corporate Director Finance, in consultation with the Leader, to take other necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision.
- 7) Authorise the Corporate Director Finance in consultation with the Leader, to accept and administer any further grant monies providing they are given by government on very similar terms of reference and that they can be appropriately managed under the funding / governance framework put in place by this decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

Government announced in October the Household Support Grant, which is in line with previous grants issued (Covid Winter Grant and Covid Local Support Grant). While previous acceptance and management of related grants was possible via delegated authority arising from previous decisions, it is appropriate and necessary for these previous arrangements to be noted and the ongoing acceptance and deployment of the Grant to be subject to Executive Member decision-making.

This decision is necessary to confirm KCC's acceptance of the additional grant monies and clearly set out the approved use through to the grant spend end-date of 31 March 2022.

Financial Implications:

The Household Support Grant provides the Council £11.065m to support the most vulnerable residents in the County over the winter period without a direct impact on the Council's budget.

Reason for Urgency:

Final formal confirmation of the full funding scale, total spend deadline and activity timelines were not received from Government with sufficient notice to allow for appropriate KCC Governance processes to commence at an earlier stage. It is therefore not possible to comply with normal Executive Decision governance timescales while meeting government deadlines and the need to deliver the relevant funding support to residents. There is an urgent need to allocate and distribute the grant funding as quickly as possible to reach those residents and households most in need of financial support over the winter months. It is also important that schools are advised as early as possible that free school meal provision in school holidays will continue and include the Easter holidays. The grant is strictly time limited and needs to be spent in full by the end of March 2022 to avoid any unspent grant being clawed back by Government.

Member and other consultation:

No Cabinet Committee consultation possible due to urgency process.

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, in addition to agreeing that the decision could not be reasonably deferred, provided the following comments:

Mr Booth supported the decision.

The Group Spokespeople of the Scrutiny Committee provided the following comments:

No comments were received.

The Chair and Group Spokespeople of the Adult Social Care Cabinet Committee provided the following comments:

No comments were received.

The Chair and Group Spokespeople of the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee provided the following comments:

Mr Dance supported the decision.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

The option of turning down the grant was rejected as there are many Kent families in need who will benefit from receiving this support.

We considered providing all funding to Districts to deliver through localised solutions however there are some elements of support that would be best provided at a county level, for example Free School Meals.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

None



22 November 2021

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signed

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date