

1013

Standing Order 42

Consultation with Appropriate Chairman and Vice-Chairman for Urgent Action to be Taken Under Standing Order 42

To (Chair & Vice Chair):	Councillors Tom Gracey & Chris Howorth
Relevant Committee:	Corporate Management Committee
Date:	13 December 2022
Report Author:	Linda Norman
Report Title:	Household Support Fund Policy Tranche 3
SO42 Proforma Number:	1013

1. Synopsis of report

To create and implement a policy to administer the next tranche of Household Support Fund which will support the Borough's most vulnerable residents during the current cost of living crisis within the guidance laid down by central government and Surrey CC.

**2. Reasons why this matter cannot wait for a Committee Decision.
(Please state if agreement of Chairman and Vice-Chairman required within 24 hours, and why)**

In the Autumn Statement, the Government announced its intention to continue with the Household Support Fund to March 2023. This will be the third tranche of funding with Runnymede receiving £192,562 to support vulnerable residents, particularly those who may not have been eligible for other grants including the Cost-of-Living payments and the Energy Support Rebate. The funding has gone to Upper Tier Authorities and there has been a delay in receiving the allocation whilst County considered how best to target the monies.

This grant covers the period 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 and is not ring-fenced to any particular group but Local Authorities are expected to especially consider how they can support households with the cost of energy crisis. The Government also expect an application process for some of the funding to give residents the opportunity to come forward and ask for support.

It is therefore important to create a local policy to support our vulnerable residents and ensure they are not adversely affected by the time it could take to go through the Council's internal process for approving this policy. With such a limited time frame to deliver this scheme and with a cold winter already upon us, the Government are expecting Local Authorities to act quickly on this matter.

3. Recommendation(s)

To approve Runnymede's Housing Support Fund (Tranche 3) policy and authorise officers to start administering the scheme as quickly as possible, working with partner organisations to facilitate an efficient and effective process.

4. Context of report

In response to the cost-of-living crisis, the Government has made £421m available to Councils to support those most in need to help with significantly rising living costs. This funding has been extended from 1 October 22 to 31 March 2023. Local Authorities have discretion on exactly how this funding is used within the guidance set out by Government.

The expectation is that this third tranche should be used to support households in the most need; particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support the Government has recently made available but who are nevertheless in need. It is important to stress that this fund is intended to cover a wide range of low-income households including families with children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people. Energy bills may be of particular concern to low-income households during the period of the scheme and Local Authorities should especially consider how they can support households with the cost of energy. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to those items and with wider essential costs. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, it can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need.

Authorities should develop a 'local eligibility framework and approach' to enable them to distribute grant funding so that it best supports households most in need.

There will be targeted support of approximately £110,000 for those households with eligible Council Tax discounts or exemptions such as Disabled Band relief, care leavers or severely mentally impaired or are in receipt of Armed Forces Pension, severe disablement Allowance or Carers Allowance. A further £82,562 will be available through an application process.

The Government expect Councils to create local policies so that support for vulnerable households can be provided as soon as is practically possible. Councils should work collaboratively with other organisations in their area who may encounter those households who are eligible and would benefit from this grant.

5. Report and, where applicable, options considered

Vulnerable households across Runnymede will be able to access the support fund to help them with essentials over the coming months as the country continues to struggle with the cost of living crisis. Payment is made under Section 31 Local Government Finance Act 2003. Runnymede Borough Council has been allocated £192,562 to support families who have been adversely impacted.

Powers have also been granted under the Localism Act 2011, which allow Runnymede to set up a local scheme for the granting of discretionary relief where such relief would be of benefit to the local community.

The Government is asking local authorities to prioritise support for local communities:

- The objective of the Household Support Fund is to provide support to vulnerable households in most need of support to help with significantly rising living costs.
- To use their discretion on how to identify and support those in most need
- To use the funding to meet immediate need preferably within 12 weeks of funding allocation being distributed
- Help those who are struggling to afford food, energy and water bills and other essential expenditure during the winter as the country recovers following the pandemic

This grant is primarily aimed at:

- Residents who are in the most need of support to pay for food, energy, and water bills, and in emergencies, other household costs and expenditure
- Those who are without sufficient resources to meet the immediate short-term needs of themselves or dependents during the period 1st October 2022 to 31st March 2023, or sooner if the fund has run out
- Alleviating food and fuel poverty where gas, electric, water or food bills have risen
- Safeguarding families in their own homes

Eligibility will be for those residents whose liability for Council Tax is because their sole or main residence during the period 1st October 2022 to 31st March 2023 is within the Runnymede Borough Council area and are in receipt of an eligible benefit. Applicants who are excluded from other Government support with the cost of living will be able to claim £150 towards energy bills.

All other eligibility will be assessed on need by our trusted partner organisations, Citizens Advice, Adult Social Care Team, and Runnymede Borough Council Housing Team. Eligibility is assessed as per household, considering household composition

Ukrainian guests will be able to claim help with essentials linked to energy and water, travel expenses and wider essentials where they and/or their household are unable to buy essential items, pay for travel, clothing, or mobile phone bills.

The Council has a duty to carefully consider every application on its individual merits, considering the relevant circumstances affecting each resident.

The Council and its trusted partners will assess the need and complete a nomination application form.



The Council will publicise the scheme through the Council's website, social media and through posters distributed by ward councillors.

Residents will be required to make an application with supporting documentary evidence either to the Council or a trusted partner organisation during the period 16 December 2022 to 12th March 2023, or sooner if the fund has run out. If the resident is unable to meet any of the criteria, they should clearly explain why.

The level of relief awarded will be capped at £800.00 per household to ensure as many people as possible are supported.

6. Policy framework implications

- This policy underpins the Council's Corporate Theme of 'Supporting Local People'
- This policy underpins the Council's commitment to supporting the Government's Cost of Living crisis initiative

<p>7. Financial and Resource implications (where practicable)</p> <p>Resource implications of suggested course of action: -</p> <p>The Council has received ring-fenced funding of £192,562 to deliver this scheme</p>
<p>8. Legal implications</p> <p>Powers have <u>been</u> granted under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 and payment is covered by Section 31 Local Government Finance Act 2003.</p>
<p>9. Equality implications</p> <p>By creating a local policy to support our vulnerable residents with the current cost of living crisis will have a positive impact on many residents with protected characteristics such as age and disability.</p>
<p>10. Other implications (Environmental/Biodiversity/Sustainability must be addressed)</p> <p>There are none</p>
<p>11. Background papers</p> <p>Housing Support Fund (Tranche 3) policy</p>
<p>12. Chief Officer(s) Decision</p> <p>Signature of authorised officer </p> <p>I have been consulted and am in agreement with the above</p> <p>Signature(s) and position(s) of other relevant Chief Officer, Corporate Heads or authorised representatives</p> <p>.....</p> <p>NB: this <u>must</u> include the Assistant Chief Executive or his authorised representative where the decision involves expenditure, loss of income, or future implications for budget or financial forecast.</p>
<p>13. Chief Executive's Decision</p> <p>Signature of Chief Executive ... </p> <p>I have been consulted and am in agreement with the above</p>

14. **Chairman and Vice-Chairman Comments**

I concur in the Chief Officer's decision

Signed _____

Date 21 December 2022

Signed _____

Date December 21st 2022

I have the following further comments:

The completed copy is to be returned by the Councillors to the Corporate Head of Law and Governance (Democratic Services) who will send a copy to the Chief Officer and report to the relevant Committee for information.