

## Standing Order 42

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

<b>To (Chair &amp; Vice Chair):</b>	Councillors Tom Gracey & Chris Howorth
<b>Relevant Committee:</b>	Corporate Management Committee
<b>Date:</b>	June 2023
<b>Report Author:</b>	Ed Bowen
<b>Report Title:</b>	Household Support Fund Policy Tranche 4
<b>SO42 Proforma Number:</b>	1023

#### 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)

On 17 November 2022 in the Autumn Statement the Chancellor announced, as part of a number of measures to provide help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living, that the Household Support Fund (HSF) would be extended from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 with a further £842m of funding.

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.

Runnymede's share of the Fund is £326,504 and covers the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. It 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 whilst the Council goes through the democratic process of approving this policy.

#### 3. Recommendation(s)

**To approve Runnymede's Housing Support Fund (Tranche 4) policy and for 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

The expectation is that the Household Support Fund should be used to support households in the most need; particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support government has recently made available but who are nevertheless in need and who require crisis support. This includes the Cost-of-Living payments and the energy support for 2023/24 set out on 17 November 2022.

For the Cost-of-Living payments this may include, but is not limited to, people who are entitled to but not claiming qualifying benefits, people who are claiming Housing Benefit (HB) only and people who begin a claim or return to payment of a benefit after the relevant qualifying date. There may be groups who are vulnerable to rising prices even though they are supported through these schemes, for example large families or single-income families. It is important to stress that the Household Support 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 and so Local Authorities have discretion on exactly how this funding is used within the guidance set out by Central Government.

The Government expects councils to create local policies that support vulnerable households and 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.

As the fund will be distributed in four tranches, the scheme will change to meet the seasonal demand for fuel during the colder winter months and where possible to react to changes in the cost of living crisis.

## 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 struggle with the cost-of-living crisis. Payment is made under Section 31 Local Government Finance Act 2003. Runnymede Borough Council has been allocated £326,504 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 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 due to the global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living.

This grant is primarily aimed at:

- supporting households with the cost of energy. Support which can make a quick but sustainable impact on energy costs is particularly encouraged; for example, the insulation of hot water tanks, fitting draft excluders to a door, or replacing inefficient lightbulbs or white goods.
- The grant can also be used to support households with the cost of food and water bills, essential costs related to energy, food and water, and with wider essential costs. The grant can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this need.

Eligibility will be for those residents whose liability for Council Tax is because their sole or main residence at the time of the award is within the Runnymede Borough Council area and where applicable the claimant a partner or a dependant child are in receipt of an eligible benefit.

All other eligibility will be assessed on need by our trusted partner organisations, Citizens Advice, Adult Social Care Team, and Runnymede Borough Council Housing and Revenues Teams. Eligibility is assessed 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 pay 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.


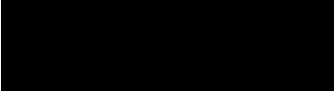
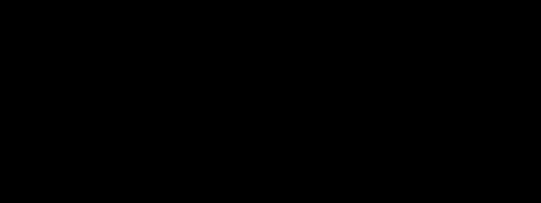
The Council will publicise the scheme through the Council's website and social media.

Residents will be required to make an application with supporting documentary evidence either to the Council or a trusted partner organisation during the period 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023 to 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024, 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 £2,000.00 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. <b>Financial and Resource implications (where practicable)</b></p> <p>Resource implications of suggested course of action: -</p> <p>The Council will receive ring-fenced funding of £326,504 to deliver this scheme paid in four tranches:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>May £32,650</td> <td>November £163,252</td> </tr> <tr> <td>August £81,626</td> <td>January £48,976</td> </tr> </table>	May £32,650	November £163,252	August £81,626	January £48,976
May £32,650	November £163,252			
August £81,626	January £48,976			
<p>8. <b>Legal implications</b></p> <p>Powers have granted under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 and payment is covered by Section 31 Local Government Finance Act 2003.</p>				
<p>9. <b>Equality implications</b></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 any resident with protected characteristics</p>				
<p>10. <b>Other implications (Environmental/Biodiversity/Sustainability must be addressed)</b></p> <p>There are none</p>				
<p>11. <b>Background papers</b></p> <p>Housing Support Fund (Tranche 4) policy</p>				
<p>12. <b><u>Chief Officer(s) Decision</u></b></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><b>NB:</b> 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. <b><u>Chief Executive's Decision</u></b></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 \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

[Redacted Signature]

*22 JUNE 2023*

[Redacted Signature]

*22nd June 2023*

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.