

Norfolk County Council

Record of Individual Cabinet Member Decision

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Andrew Proctor (Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy & Governance)

Background and Purpose:

In October 2021, Government launched a new Household Support Fund to support vulnerable households meet daily needs such as food and utilities. Norfolk received £6.7m for the period October 2021 to March 2022 and a further £6.7 (which the County Council supplemented with an additional £1.255m) for the period April to September 2022. Working with partners, this funding has supported a wide range of support arrangements to be put in place, including advice, direct financial support and community infrastructure like food hubs, supporting around 128,000 householders.

A further allocation has been announced by Government for the period October 2022 to March 2023, which the County Council is again supplementing with additional funding; the full amount for this period will be £7.9m.

Decision:

- 1. To acknowledge the impact and benefits that have been achieved throughout phases 1 and 2, working closely with partners, to support around 128,000 vulnerable households and individuals across Norfolk through various means to help meet daily needs such as food and utilities.**
- 2. To agree the proposed allocation of funding for phase 3, set out in section 4, which builds on the tried and tested approaches developed in phases 1 and 2 and is expected to see support provided to around 70,000 during the 6 month period.**

Is it a key decision? No

Is it subject to call-in? Yes

If Yes – the deadline for call-in is: 4pm, Monday 10 October 2022

Impact of the Decision:

As set out in the attached report.

Evidence and reason for the decision:

As set out in the attached report.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

As set out in the attached report.

Financial, Resource or other implications considered:

As set out in the attached report.

Record of any conflict of interest:

None.

Background documents:

- As set out in the attached report.

Date of Decision: 30/09/22

Publication Date of Decision: 03/10/22

Signed by Cabinet Member: Cllr Andrew Proctor (Leader of the Council)

I confirm that I have made the decision set out above, for the reasons also set out.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Proctor', with a horizontal line underneath.

Signed:

Individual Cabinet Member Decision Report

Item No:

Report Title: Household Support Fund – Round 3

Responsible Cabinet Member: Cllr Andrew Proctor (Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy & Governance)

Responsible Director: Tom McCabe (Director of Community and Environmental Services)

Is this a Key Decision? No

If this is a Key Decision, date added to the Forward Plan of Key Decisions: N/A

Executive Summary

Over the last year, funding has been made available (primarily through the Household Support Fund) to support vulnerable households meet the daily needs such as food and utilities. A lot of hard work in the County Council and with partners has seen a range of activities and support put in place across Norfolk. This includes:-

- A new network of food hubs across the county, with 8 in operation and plans to bring 7 more into operation by the end of the year
- Direct financial support to households in hardship through the Norfolk Assistance Scheme
- Emergency support for those in immediate need
- Information, advice and guidance on how to access the range of support options available

There have been some fantastic outcomes and the work is supporting many people across Norfolk. However, the pressures continue for some, and may be particularly difficult over the winter period as households use more fuel to keep their homes warm, and the increased costs of this.

Therefore, the additional funding being made available is particularly welcomed and we will take steps, working with partners through our tried and tested models, to make sure we can continue get support quickly to those are in most need.

Recommendations:

1. To acknowledge the impact and benefits that have been achieved throughout phases 1 and 2, working closely with partners, to support around 128,000 vulnerable households and individuals across Norfolk through various means to help meet daily needs such as food and utilities.
2. To agree the proposed allocation of funding for phase 3, set out in section 4, which builds on the tried and tested approaches developed in phases 1 and 2 and is expected to see support provided to around 70,000 households during the 6 month period.

1. Background and Purpose

- 1.1 In October 2021, Government launched a new Household Support Fund to support vulnerable households meet daily needs such as food and utilities. The County Council is given an allocation from this fund to support Norfolk communities and it is expected to be allocated in line with associated guidance also issued by Government.
- 1.2 Norfolk received £6.7m for the period October 2021 to end March 2022 with guidance that the focus of this allocation was on helping families recover from the Covid period, with 50% ringfenced to be spent on households with children.
- 1.3 A further £6.7m was allocated for the period to end September 2022, with ringfenced amounts for support for families with children and older people. The County Council supplemented this with an additional £1.225m funding to ensure a range of support for Norfolk communities, bringing the total in this period to £7.9m.
- 1.4 The Government has announced a further six month allocation for Norfolk of £6.7m covering the period October 2022 to end March 2023. This paper sets out a proposed way forward for allocation of this funding, building on our tried and tested delivery models.

2 How funding has been used so far

- 2.1 We have worked closely with district, borough and city councils, VCSE and public sector partners to identify and implement a range of support measures to meet the needs of vulnerable households, as well as providing more robust and joined up information and advice to those who need it.
- 2.2 **Phase 1 (October 2021 to March 2022)**
 - 2.2.1 During the first phase of funding we have supported close to **71,500 households**. This includes:-

- Free school meals (supermarket vouchers) for 29,011 children
- Direct financial support to people in financial hardship who cannot pay their living costs, delivered through the Norfolk Assistance Scheme. 3,163 households were supported with funding for fuel, food, energy and other essential items
- Emergency support (through district councils) for rent and other emergency items to 8,820 households
- Providing hygiene and warm and well packs through libraries, supporting 11,006 households
- Working with the voluntary sector, enabled grass roots support for some of our hardest to reach residents through their trusted relationships and to establish food hubs, this work supported 19,048 households

2.3 **Phase 2 (April 2022 to September 2022)**

2.3.1 During Phase 2, demand for support continued and to date (final data is currently being compiled) we have supported around **44,600** households through:

- Cost of living vouchers to support 30,000 children. This recognised the need to continue to provide our lowest income families with support.
- Direct financial support to people in financial hardship who cannot pay their day to day living costs, delivered through the Norfolk Assistance Scheme. 3,500 households were supported with funding for fuel, food, energy and other essential items. The scheme included a focus on providing essential support for older people, people with disabilities and carers through a range of services.
- Emergency support (through district councils) for rent and other emergency items to 5,591 households
- Providing hygiene and warm and well packs through libraries, supporting 2,500 households
- Work with the voluntary sector continued, with further development of food hubs (see 2.4) and targeting some of our most hard to reach residents through their trusted relationships. Over 3,000 households received payments to help with utilities.
- Worked with Anglian Water to enable bill payers with accounts on the 'social tariff' (which targets very low income households) to clear long term arrears and access support such as debt advice.

2.4 **Food Hubs**

2.4.1 One significant area of progress has been the establishment of food hubs in Norfolk. Working in partnership with the Norfolk Community Foundation, the Nourishing Norfolk programme now has 8 fully operational food hubs across Norfolk, supporting 12,000 households. Plans are in place to have 7 more hubs open by the end of the year, that could support up to 15,000 households. A map showing the location of existing and planned hubs is set out in Annex A.

3 Phase 3 funding

- 3.1 Round 3 of the Household Support Fund has recently been launched with a focus on helping vulnerable households with the rising cost of living, in particular supporting with energy and utility costs (and associated Government guidance has also been issued setting out any requirements in terms of using this funding allocation). Norfolk has been allocated £6.7m from the fund.
- 3.2 In considering a proposed way forward for allocation of this phase of funding, the following factors have been taken into account:-
- The volumes (demand) experienced during the first two phases
 - The increase in fuel costs expected in October
 - In light of the increasing fuel costs, the need to consider community-based activities and infrastructure alongside direct household support to provide the greatest benefits
 - The timescales which the funding needs to be spent within - given these timescales (the funding needs to spend over the next 6 months) it is appropriate to seek to build on the tried and tested approaches we have developed over the previous 2 rounds to ensure rapid delivery of this vital support this winter, and build on our success in supporting our residents to date
 - There was ringfencing of funding to some cohorts in phase 2 which, in practice, did not match the demand experienced by the County Council and partners. In phase 3, there is a greater flexibility to target wider cohorts and therefore to respond to local demand. For example, it will be possible to support households in need who are not already receiving the additional cost of living support from Government.
 - We now have a richer picture of demand/need drawn from applications received to the Norfolk Assistance Scheme during phases 1 and 2 (see Annex B)
 - The funding provided to Nourishing Norfolk has kick started the programme of food hubs and enabled Norfolk Community Foundation to secure additional funding from others to further boost the reach and spread of activity
 - Providing funding to district councils for emergency support, with onward referral to NAS, enables urgent needs can be met quickly whilst avoiding duplication in future support
 - Older people and people with disabilities are less likely to approach the Council for help. Therefore, support through those VCSE organisations that already have trusted relationships with individuals is important to supporting these cohorts
 - Many of those who are in greatest need are the individuals and communities who were affected the most by the impacts of Covid

4 Proposal

- 4.1 As with phase 2 funding, and given the continuing pressures and demand, the Government allocation of £6.7m will be supplemented by additional County Council funding to bring the full amount of funding between October 2022 to March 2023 to £7.9m
- 4.2 Taking account of our experience to date, and the factors set out in para 3.2, it is proposed to allocate funding for this period as set out in the table below.

Cost of living support for families This will see the cost of living support for very low income families continue for a further six months. Vouchers of £15 per month per child, plus an additional £30 in December, for around 30,000 children.	£3.6m
Norfolk Assistance Scheme Continuation of the scheme providing funding for utilities, fuel and purchase of oil for rural householders alongside holistic support and referrals such as debt advice.	£2.7m
Emergency support Provided through district councils, this enables emergency needs, rent arrears and items not provided by the Norfolk Assistance Scheme such as carpets and council tax arrears. The emphasis will be on providing funds quickly (first 48 hours) in a crisis, whilst supporting onward referral to the Norfolk Assistance Scheme.	£0.9m
Support through voluntary organisations Funding to Norfolk Community Foundation (NCF) to provide grants to reach households including people with disabilities, carers, and older people – with a focus on utilities and oil. NCF will provide funding to local VCSE organisations who have close links with the hard-to-reach groups and the general community connections.	£0.4m
Warm spaces Community spaces to stay warm and participate in activities will be beneficial during the colder winter months. This funding will be allocated to NCF to provide grants to VCSE organisations, including community groups and parish councils, for core costs to provide warm spaces. This supports the wider work to make warm spaces available for households in fuel poverty, including through our Warm and Welcome offer at Norfolk libraries. Funding will be allocated to those areas with the most significant needs for community spaces, taking into account existing opportunities (see Annex B).	£0.22m
Hygiene and warm and well packs To continue the programme delivered through libraries to provide Warm and well bags, period poverty and hygiene grab and go bags supporting their 'Keep warm and well this winter' campaign.	£0.084m
TOTAL	£7.904m

- 4.3 We have been in close contact with our partners throughout the funding periods to work with them on their spending plans and we continue to do so to ensure that the funds are allocated appropriately.
- 4.4 We will continue to work closely with district councils, voluntary and public sector organisations to assess take up and demand for the support offer. The funding for district councils and NAS will be allocated 50% initially (to cover the period October to January) to enable some flexibility to amend the approach, if needed, based on demand and take-up.

5 Impact of the Proposal

- 5.1 The funding allocations will ensure that we can continue to support those households most in need over this autumn and winter period, and by continuing to work closely with our partners we will reach out to hard-to-reach groups through the network of support on offer. Based on our experience in phases 1 and 2, we expect the funding to provide support to around 70,000 households across Norfolk.

6 Evidence and Reasons for Decision

- 6.1 The above proposal takes into account our experience to date, as set out above. It ensures that we can continue to support those in greatest need.
- 6.2 It is possible that, particularly with the increase in fuel prices, there may be more households who find themselves in hardship this winter. The larger allocation of funding to the Norfolk Assistance Scheme means that we are well placed to support more households and the expected demand through this service over the winter period.
- 6.3 By continuing to work closely with the district, borough and city councils, and providing funding directly to them for local support, we are able to ensure a response for people in crisis, providing emergency funding within 48 hours. Those households in receipt of this funding will be referred to the Norfolk Assistance Scheme for further support if required and also the wraparound holistic support that can be offered to help families move to a more sustainable financial situation.
- 6.4 Our collaboration with the voluntary sector has been vital throughout the last two rounds of funding and working closely with the Norfolk Community Foundation we have been able to provide funding to 46 different voluntary organisations to enable them to provide much needed support to people who may not be in contact with NCC but have close relationships with these organisations.

7 Alternative Options

- 7.1 The Hardship Support Fund needs to be allocated within the Government guidance issued. For round 3, this includes a focus on supporting households with energy/utility costs. Some of the fund also needs to be

allocated through an application process. Utilising the routes that we already have in place, for example the application process that forms part of the Norfolk Assistance Scheme, enables funding to be allocated quickly to those in need.

- 7.2 The phase 3 funding could be allocated differently to the table set out above. However, the proposal is based on our experience of need and demand over the first two rounds as well as a consideration of the routes that can be continued to be utilised to get support quickly to those who most need it.

8 Financial Implications

- 8.1 Of the £7.904m total funding, £6.7m is the Hardship Support Fund allocation from Norfolk from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). The remaining amount is being funded by COMF funding allocated to hardship support this winter to address wider impacts of COVID and recovery.
- 8.2 The funding (both HSF and COMF funding) is provided to the County Council to allocate within the guidance specified, and so can only be used for the purpose stated in the guidance. Previous funding allocations have been determined by officers, in consultation with the Cabinet Member and with the oversight of the officer Hardship Board. This took place over a period of time to enable new arrangements and delivery routes to be put in place quickly to best meet need. Now that we have these new models, arrangements and relationships with partners in place to deliver, and we have a clearer picture of demand/use of the support available during Phases 1 and 2, the allocation of funding to specific areas can be determined now.
- 8.3 The Hardship Support Fund allocation is provided in arrears and the County Council will need to provide detailed reporting on spend to the DWP to successfully secure funding against costs; interim reporting to DWP on October to December spend is required in January 2023 with final report to DWP on October to March spend in April 2023. It is not possible to carry forward DWP funding beyond March 2023.

9 Resource Implications

- 9.1 **Staff:** There are no additional staffing implications. Resource to support the management of the fund, including working with partners, will be provided by existing staff.
- 9.2 **Property:** None.
- 9.3 **IT:** None.

10 Other Implications

- 10.1 **Legal Implications:** None.
- 10.2 **Human Rights Implications:** N/A

10.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA): Norfolk County Council has a duty to pay due regard to equality when exercising its public functions. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed. Overall, the proposed allocation of funding should not provide any direct discrimination for those with protected characteristics. Some groups with protected characteristics could be significantly impacted by the increase in fuel prices and other cost of living pressures. The proposed way forward will ensure that those people are able to access the support that they need. We recognise that some groups are less likely to come forward for support from the Council and therefore will continue to work with the voluntary and community sectors, who have established and trusted relationships, to support individuals to access the range of support available to them.

10.4 Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA): The necessary agreements are in place that enable essential data to be shared across partners where there is a direct link to the provision of support and services.

10.5 Health and Safety implications: N/A

10.6 Sustainability implications: The food hubs provided through Nourishing Norfolk provide access to affordable food and other support and can also reduce food waste and transport miles. Providing warm spaces for people to access during the colder months will help, to some extent, reduce the need for household use of utilities like gas and electric during parts of the day.

10.7 Any Other Implications: Officers have considered all the implications which members should be aware of and there are no other implications to take into account.

11 Risk Implications / Assessment

11.1 All risks are managed by officer Hardship Programme Board, and with key partners.

11.2 There is a risk that demand and need may outstrip the funding available, given that we expect demand to increase during the winter months as households have a greater need for energy use at the new higher price caps. To help mitigate against this, some of the funding (to NAS and district councils) is being allocated in two tranches so that we could adjust the scheme after three months. We will also continue to work with partners to assess demand and take up.

12 Select Committee Comments

12.1 N/A

13 Recommendations

1. To acknowledge the impact and benefits that have been achieved throughout phases 1 and 2, working closely with partners, to support around 128,000 vulnerable households and individuals across Norfolk through various means to help meet daily needs such as food and utilities.
2. To agree the proposed allocation of funding for phase 3, set out in section 4, which builds on the tried and tested approaches developed in phases 1 and 2 and is expected to see support provided to around 70,000 during the 6 month period.

14 Background Papers

[Household Support Fund – Round 1 – Oct 2021 – March 2022](#)

[Household Support Fund – Round 2 – Apr 2022 – Sept 2022](#)

[Household Support Fund – Round 3 – Oct 2022 – March 2023](#)

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained within this paper, please get in touch with:

Officer name: Sarah Rhoden, Director of Community, Information & Learning
Telephone no.: 01603 222867
Email: sarah.rhoden@norfolk.gov.uk

Officer name: Natasha Hayes, Head of Communities
Telephone no.: 01603 306146
Email: natasha.hayes@norfolk.gov.uk



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Nourishing Norfolk – Community Food hubs



The Nourishing Norfolk Network map

Location based demand analysis

The map below shows demand through the number of applications made to the Norfolk Assistance Scheme in each location, alongside the locations of existing community hubs (libraries, museums and community supermarkets). Mapping community provision against the number of NAS applications we receive demonstrates that we have either a Library or a Food hub in the areas of high demand. There are some key areas such as the North of Wymondham and Swaffham where additional support may be required, and these areas can be targeted through our funding.

