

ED2. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS BY A CABINET MEMBER OR AN OFFICER

A. Report Title: Household Support Fund																											
B. Report Author(s): David May Strategic Lead Finance		E-mail: dmay@thurrock.gov.uk																									
C. Decision Maker: Cllr Mark Coxshall																											
D. Position held: Acting Leader and Cabinet Member for Growth																											
E. Key decision: Yes		F. Delegation ref: Constitution, Chapter 8, 15.1																									
G. Is the decision urgent? Yes																											
H. If yes, state why.																											
<p>The Household Support Fund final notification was received on 22-02-23, for the grant period 2023/24.</p> <p>The critical timeline is that this funding has been used to provide Free School Meals in the holiday period. The Easter holiday period runs from the 3 April and to enable schools to issue the vouchers a decision is required. Delay will mean that no vouchers can be issued for Free School Meals for the Easter holiday period.</p> <p>Public expectation is that the HSF will support Free schools meals during the holiday period.</p> <p>Approval to the full use of funds expedites release of funds to the Essential Living Fund for the immediate benefit of residents.</p> <p>Cabinet have agreed Option 2 that provides a managed change to distribution of Free School Meals and allows for funds to be directed to the Essential Living Fund that is an application-based system of support.</p> <p>Option 2: Free School Meal Easter and Summer Holidays</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="4">Household Support Fund 2023/24</th> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="2">Thurrock Funding Allocation</th> <th colspan="2">£2,590,082</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Project Usage</th> <th>Per Month</th> <th>Budget</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Free School Meals</td> <td>Easter and Summer</td> <td>£720,000</td> <td>28%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Essential Living Fund</td> <td>£155,840</td> <td>£1,870,082</td> <td>72%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Total</td> <td>£2,590,082</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Household Support Fund 2023/24				Thurrock Funding Allocation		£2,590,082		Project Usage	Per Month	Budget	Percentage	Free School Meals	Easter and Summer	£720,000	28%	Essential Living Fund	£155,840	£1,870,082	72%	Total		£2,590,082	100%
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1. **DECISION** (strike out whichever does not apply):

I agree the recommendations in the attached report for the reasons given in the report.



RE_ Household
Support Fund 2023_24



Signed:

Date: 14-03-23

URGENCY

Democratic Services will arrange for the completion of the following:


J. I confirm that in my opinion a decision on this matter is urgent and cannot reasonably be delayed:



Signed:

Date: 21/3/2023

To be completed by Democratic Services

Date decision received by Dem. Services:	Date decision published:
Implementation date: 25-03-23	
Relevant O & S Committee or Mayor approval: Cllr Barry Johnson 07-03-2023	
	
RE_ Household Support Fund 2023_24	

Date of Meeting: March 2023	ITEM:
Portfolio Holder, Leader and Cabinet	
Report Title: Household Support Fund	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: David May Strategic Lead Finance	
Accountable Assistant Director: Jonathan Wilson, Acting Director Finance and S151 Officer	
Accountable Director: Jonathan Wilson, Acting Director Finance and S151 Officer	
This report is public	

Executive Summary

In the Autumn statement, to support vulnerable people, the Chancellor announced a further £1bn to enable an extension to the Household Support Fund over 2023/24.

The Household Support Fund should continue to support those most in need and to help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living, particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support.

Energy bills may be of particular concern to low-income households during the period of The Fund and Authorities should prioritise supporting households with the cost of energy. The Fund can also be used to support households with essential costs related to energy, food and water, and with wider essential costs.

Authorities should also consider providing support to disabled people and people with caring responsibilities in their area. These two groups in particular may be facing acute challenges due to the disproportionate impact that rising costs bring for the additional services they need in order to manage their conditions, remain independent and avoid becoming socially isolated.

Authorities must operate at least part of their scheme on an application basis - residents should have the opportunity to come forward to ask for support.

Any change to the use of Free Schools Meals for the distribution of the Household Support Fund, would need careful and early communication to manage expectations.

Recommendation

Member to consider the options presented, with Option 2 providing the balance between Free School Meals and the Essential Living Fund that is an application-based system of support.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The objective of The Fund is to provide crisis support to vulnerable households in most need of support to help with significantly rising living costs.

Thurrock's grant allocation for 2023/24 is £2.590m.

Appendix A shows how the Grant has been utilised in 2022/23.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The following options have been developed for Member consideration:

3.2 Free School Meals

Is a means to distribute targeted funding to children with families. Public perception also links holiday Free School Meals to the Household Support Fund. In 2022/23 an average of 8,000 children and young people have benefited from this support in each of the holiday periods.

A. Free School Meals to be paid – All School Holidays

The table below shows the cost implication of providing a payment for each of the holiday periods in 2023/24.

Free School Meals 2023/24	Weeks	Value	Vol	£
Easter-23 (2 Weeks)	2	£15	8,200	£246,000
May-23 (1 Week)	1	£15	8,200	£123,000
Summer-23 (One payment of £60)	1	£60	8,000	£480,000
October-23 (2 Weeks)	2	£15	8,200	£246,000
Christmas-23 (2 Weeks)	2	£15	8,200	£246,000
February-24 (1 Week)	1	£15	8,200	£123,000
Easter-24 (2 Weeks)	2	£15	8,200	£246,000
Total				£1,464,000

The Easter holiday period would be required to be paid twice in 2023/24. This would utilise 57% of the grant allocation.

B. Free School Meals to be paid – Easter and Summer School Holidays

An option to consider is continuing with the Easter period and making a one-off payment to cover the summer holiday period. This would provide support to families and provide notice to reduce the dependency and expectation. The cost implication is shown below:

Free School Meals 2022/23	Weeks	Value	Vol	£	% Grant
Easter-23	2	£15	8,000	£240,000	9%
Summer-23 (One payment of £60)	1	£60	8,000	£480,000	19%
Total				£720,000	28%

C. Free School Meals to be paid – Summer School Holidays only

A further option is to consider only making a one-off payment to cover the summer holiday period. This would reduce the administration on the Local Authority and Schools & Academies. The cost implication depending on the value paid is shown below:

Free School Meals 2022/23	Weeks	Value	Vol	£	% Grant
Summer-23 (One payment of £60)	1	£60	8,000	£480,000	19%
Summer-23 (One payment of £60)	1	£75	8,000	£600,000	23%

D. No Free School Meals to be paid

The final option is to not distribute any fund through Free School Meals and allow residents to apply to the Essential Living Fund.

In a recent call with the DWP a number of LA's are moving away from FSM or are considering a one-off payment. Initial discussions with Essex CC and Southend suggest all options would be put to Members but feel FSM will still be used in some form.

3.3 Care Leavers – Should future support continue or should those in need be directed to the Essential Living Fund

3.4 Essential Living Fund

The scheme can continue to be expanded to include Utilities and the amount awarded prioritised to Food and Fuel with a 4-week award. Discussions will be held on a monthly basis, to understand take up, to ensure funds are utilised.

The ELF is not restricted and will support the allocation of funds to all residents, deliver on the targeted groups outlined above and the requirement for people to self-refer for emergency help.

In December 2022 the following payments were made:

ELF HSF	Amount Families	Number Families	Amount Pensioners	Number Pensioners	Amount Individuals	Number Individuals	Amount Total	Number Total
December	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
Food (inc Toiletries)	£59,570	215	£2,610	15	£10,495	65	£72,675	295
Fuel (inc Utilities)	£46,930	367	£3,040	28	£9,610	89	£59,580	484
Bedding	£1,640	23	£60	2	£370	12	£2,070	37
White Goods	£6,540	13	£0	0	£7,070	10	£13,610	23
Clothing	£7,740	99	£230	4	£1,310	29	£9,280	132
Household	£3,800	12	£0	0	£1,160	5	£4,960	17
Furniture	£7,445	14	£0	8	£3,025	8	£10,470	30
Total	£133,665	743	£5,940	57	£33,040	218	£172,645	1,018

3.5 Options for Consideration

The option for Free Schools Meals will determine the funding that can be made available to the Essential Living Fund.

The worked options are shown below:

Option 1: Free School Meal All Holidays

Household Support Fund 2023/24			
Thurrock Funding Allocation		£2,590,082	
Project Usage	Per Month	Budget	Percentage
Free School Meals	All Holidays	£1,464,000	57%
Essential Living Fund	£93,840	£1,126,082	43%
Total		£2,590,082	100%

Option 2: Free School Meal Easter and Summer Holidays

Household Support Fund 2023/24			
Thurrock Funding Allocation		£2,590,082	
Project Usage	Per Month	Budget	Percentage
Free School Meals	Easter and Summer	£720,000	28%
Essential Living Fund	£155,840	£1,870,082	72%
Total		£2,590,082	100%

Option 3a: Free School Meal Summer Holiday Only

Household Support Fund 2023/24			
Thurrock Funding Allocation		£2,590,082	
Project Usage	Per Month	Budget	Percentage
Free School Meals	Summer £75	£600,000	23%
Essential Living Fund	£165,840	£1,990,082	77%
Total		£2,590,082	100%

Option 3b: Free School Meal Summer Holiday Only

Household Support Fund 2023/24			
Thurrock Funding Allocation		£2,590,082	
Project Usage	Per Month	Budget	Percentage
Free School Meals	Summer £60	£480,000	19%
Essential Living Fund	£175,840	£2,110,082	81%
Total		£2,590,082	100%

Option 4: No Free School Meal Allocation

Household Support Fund 2023/24			
Thurrock Funding Allocation		£2,590,082	
Project Usage	Per Month	Budget	Percentage
Free School Meals		£0	0%
Essential Living Fund	£215,840	£2,590,082	100%
Total		£2,590,082	100%

- 3.6 Communication. It is mandatory for Authorities to reference that the grant is funded by the Department for Work and Pensions or the UK Government in any publicity material, including online channels and media releases.

In addition, through a dedicated web page, Authorities should outline plans for the use of funding, including with details of who is eligible in the area, as well as how and when residents might be able to apply for the application-based element of the scheme. Links to the Government's Cost of Living Hub should be included.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 Option2 provides a managed change to distribution of Free School Meals and allows for funds to be directed to the Essential Living Fund that is an application-based system of support.
- 4.2 Portfolio Holder and S151 Officer sign off is required as part of the grant condition.

5. Background papers used in preparing the report:

- [Household Support Fund: guidance for local councils - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/household-support-fund-guidance-for-local-councils)
- [About the Essential Living Fund | Essential Living Fund | Thurrock Council](#)

6. Appendices to the report

- Appendix A Household Support Fund 2022/23 – Use of Funds

Report Author:

David May

Strategic Lead Finance

Resources – Corporate Finance

Household Support Fund 2022/23 – Use of Funds**Appendix A**

Household Support Fund 2022/23			
	Apr-Sept	Oct-Mar	Combined
Category	Expenditure	Projected	Total
	£	£	£
Free School Meals	£572,220	£562,025	£1,134,245
Care Leavers	£25,200	£37,800	£63,000
Essential Living Fund	£270,275	£695,216	£965,491
Pensioners	£427,346	£0	£427,346
Total	£1,295,041	£1,295,041	£2,590,082

Free School Meal

The table below shows the volume and total paid.

A weekly sum of £15 is paid, with £60 paid for the summer holiday period.

Free School Meals 2022/23	Vol	£
Easter-22 (2 Weeks)	7,556	£226,680
May-22 (1 Week)	7,740	£116,100
Summer-22 (One payment of £60)	7,602	£456,120
October-22 (2 Weeks)	7,647	£207,965
Christmas-22 (2 Weeks)	7,827	£231,990
February-23 (1 Week)	8,138	£122,070
Total	8,138	£1,360,925

For information: Easter-22 was part of the 2021/22 grant allocation

Care Leavers

Support for Care Leavers has been provided linked to the resources available.

Essential Living Fund

The ELF for the period October to March, no restrictions on use of funds, funding was increased to 4-week awards (previously 2-week) for food, fuel, and utilities, with all other goods remaining unchanged. Low-income claimants who site they are struggling will be included in eligibility under HSF funding.

Data from Essential Living fund for the period October to December 2022 is shown below:

	Fuel	Food	Wider Essentials	Total
Spend	£144,550	£180,275	£91,550	£416,375
Households	1,174	1,088	540	2,802

Pensioners

For the period April to October Pensioners has to account for a third of the allocated grant. The Local Council Tax Scheme (LCTS) data was used to identify low-income pensioner households, 3,246 pensioners in receipt of LCTS received £120 per household.