

Date: 20th December 2024

**Delegated Decision Report
(executive decisions)**

**Title of Report: Agreement of Cost of
Living Support Spend in 2024-2026**

Report from Service **Corporate Strategy**
Area:

Responsible Officer: **Toni McMullan** **Tel: 0191 643 8216**
Interim Senior Manager
Communities and Inclusion and
Tracy Hunter Senior Client Manager
Revenues and Benefits

Wards affected: **All Wards**

PART 1

1.1 Purpose:

This report seeks the approval of the Director of Resources to the distribution of the Household Support Fund and the criteria to be applied when considering claims for residents for a payment from the Household Support Fund grant for 2024/25 and 2025/26 and the use Authority's Poverty Intervention Fund.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that the Director of Resources agrees to: -

1. the Assessment Criteria to be applied when considering applications for payments from the Household Support Fund Grant 2024/25 attached to this report at appendix 1; and
2. the allocation of the Household Support Fund Grant 2024/25 and the Authority's Poverty Intervention Fund as set out in Table 1 of paragraph 1.5.2 of this report.

1.3 Forward Plan:

This item first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 13 December 2024. Although the item has not appeared on the Forward Plan for the usual twenty-eight day notice period, this decision needs to be taken to meet the requirement to distribute the grant fund monies within a short period

of time to meet Government grant conditions, and to support the most financially vulnerable residents in the Borough as soon as possible

1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

This report links directly to the priority: We will provide great care to all who need it, which is identified in the 2021–2025 Our North Tyneside Plan.

1.5 Information:

1.5.1 Background

There is a clear commitment from Cabinet and the Elected Mayor to help residents in tough financial times. The Our North Tyneside Plan states ‘we will provide great care to all who need it’ confirms that commitment, and the North Tyneside Equally Well Strategy provides the framework that helps define how the Authority will achieve this.

On the 21 September 2020, Cabinet agreed a report which provided the overarching policy and principals that the Authority would apply in delivering such support, using a bespoke Poverty Intervention Fund (PIF). The aims and purpose of the PIF are laid out in the September 2020 Cabinet report.

The PIF was established to help to alleviate the impacts of poverty on families and individuals across North Tyneside with particular emphasis on children, by providing support to those who most need it. Use of the PIF is guided by the Authority’s Poverty Intervention Board and Steering Group, made up of Cabinet Members and other Elected Members.

The funding of poverty intervention priorities has, in recent years, been funded from the Government’s Household Support Fund and the routine operation of other Authority services, which has limited the direct use of the PIF. This is an important aspect in managing the Authority’s current financial pressure.

At the start of the Authority’s Medium Term Financial Plan for 2024/25, £1m remained in the PIF.

The most recent Household Support Fund (October 2024) has come at a time of pressing support needed for older people as well, due to Government’s removal of the Winter Fuel Payment to many older people across the Borough, not in receipt of Pension Credit.

Officer recommendations of the Household Support Fund which meets the Household Support Fund grant conditions and use of the PIF for the remainder of 2024/25, were developed in consultation with appropriate Cabinet Members, Interim Director for Corporate Strategy and Customer Service and were discussed at the Authority's Poverty Intervention Steering Group. These recommendations are clearly aligned to the wider needs of residents and the Our North Tyneside Plan, Equally Well Strategy and the poverty intervention aims of the Authority.

The recommendations make full use of the remaining 2024/25 Household Support Fund monies available to the Authority and a proportion of the remaining PIF monies, as set out in Table 1 below.

1.5.2 The Guiding Principles

The guiding principles of the recommended approach to using the Household Support Fund and PIF are:

- **Identified priorities:** provides support for priorities identified through the Poverty Intervention Fund governance and wider initiatives
- **Previous grant learning:** is based on evidence from previous grants of what works, and what doesn't work as well
- **Grant conditions compliance:** ensuring the Authority meets grant conditions as expected by government
- **Combination of approaches:** targeted support to speed up distribution of this grant where the data supports this, to reduce demand to the Authority's Welfare Provision Team, as well as having the mandatory application-based process in place (overarching criteria for the application is at Appendix 1)
- **Evidence based assessment:** applications will include an assessment of evidence where needed to allow a more thorough understanding of need
- **Personalisation of support:** wider conversations around the reasons that crisis/support is needed, and providing the appropriate support to meet that need
- **Preventative longer-term support:** this will deal with the real (and likely underlying) reasons people present for help and sets in motion longer term planning to reduce future need
- **Development of a triage:** application will be triaged to identify more serious need from less urgent with appropriate timeframes attributed to each

Table 1: Recommended spend

Type of support	Detail of proposal	Estimated costs
One off PayPoint cash vouchers claiming Council Tax Support and or Housing Benefit not claiming Pension Credit. One payment per household	This cohort of pensionable age people are on a low income and will miss out on the winter fuel payment. This will go some way of helping them with winter fuel costs. PayPoint vouchers will be issued around December/January. Payments are £200.00 for under 80 and £300.00 for 80 and over 80.	£630,200.00
One off PayPoint voucher per household	Clothing grant for winter coat and warm clothing. This will be distributed via schools and the Welfare Provision Team.	£100,000.00
Supermarket voucher	To provide £15.00 for each week of school holidays during the next 6 months. Total value of support £60.00 four weeks (one week for October half term, two for Christmas and one for February half term.) Easter is mid April 2025 so falls outside the period of this grant and can be funded (if agreed from future grant funding.)	£532,800.00
Food, and energy/utility bills and wider need (white goods, clothing etc)	This support is via an application process, which is a grant condition. Profiled using previous data. Two periods of applications, November and January. £180,000 for each period. (Criteria is shown in Appendix 2.)	£360,000.00
Crisis (additional funding on top of current budget for 6 months)	To reflect rising costs of support.	£50,000.00
Contribution towards staffing costs	This is to manage the application-based Household Support Fund process	£71,298.05
Contribution towards staffing costs	This is to manage the voucher administration.	£57,500.00
Food Bank provision	This will reduce impact on ASC budget which currently funds this.	£40,000.00
Warm Welcomes	To deliver a warm welcome across the borough.	£20,000.00
	Total spend on priorities	£1,861,798.05

	Grant funding from Household Support Fund.	£1,609,998.05
	Amount to be met from the Poverty Intervention Fund.	£251,800.00

1.5.3 **Governance**

As agreed by Cabinet in June 2020, the delivery of poverty intervention activity through use of the PIF and any other relevant Government grants such as the Household Support Fund to reduce pressure on local budgets, is overseen by:

- a Steering Group comprised of 1 Elected Member per ward (with appropriate arrangements for mixed wards) and also to include the Young Mayor/Cabinet Member with representation from relevant external organisations; the Steering Group will meet at least quarterly; and
- a Poverty Intervention Board chaired by the Deputy Mayor to include relevant Cabinet Members to meet on a monthly basis to have oversight of the detailed operation of the PIF; and

1.6 **Decision options:**

The following decision options are available for consideration:

Option 1

To agree the recommendations set out in paragraph 1.2 of this report; or

Option 2

No agree the recommendations set out in paragraph 1.2 of this report

Option 1 is the recommended option.

1.7 **Reasons for recommended option:**

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

- 1) There is a very comprehensive approach to supporting people with the impacts of living on low income, and the difficulties that brings. This recommended approach to using the Household Support Fund

combined with use of the PIF further strengthens our support to vulnerable residents of the borough, and provides wide reaching support aimed at delivering good outcomes.

- 2) The recommended proposal ensures that this grant will reduce the financial impact on local budgets, whilst meeting all grant conditions, and the wider plans to support residents who need it.
- 3) The recommended approach aligns to the Our North Tyneside Plan, Equally Well Strategy and the Poverty Intervention aims.

1.8 Appendices:

Criteria for the application process.

1.9 Contact officers:

Toni McMullan, Interim Senior Manager of Communities and Inclusion, tel. (0191) 643 8216

Tracy Hunter, Senior Client Manager Revenues and Benefits, tel. (0191) 643 7228

1.10 Background information:

[Cabinet Report 21 September 2020 Poverty Intervention Fund](#)

PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING

There is a robust decision-making process which includes Cabinet approval to give responsibility to the Head of Corporate Strategy and Customer Service, in consultation with the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Finance, to take all steps necessary to implement the aims of the Poverty Intervention Fund.

The Director of Resources is the Authority's 'Responsible Financial Officer', and his responsibilities and powers as this Officer derive from section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Director of Resources has a duty to make arrangements for the proper administration of the Authority's financial affairs.

The use of the Household Support Fund and PIF, are part of the Authority's financial affairs, and as such the Director of Resources has the delegated authority to make decisions on these Policies.

2.1 Finance and other resources

The recommended approach ensures that it meets the grant condition requirements outlined by government. It reduces the need to rely on local budgets, reducing financial pressure and allowing the Authority to optimise the overall financial position.

2.2 Legal

The Authority's Constitution grants delegation to the Authority's Chief Finance Officer, namely the Director of Resources, to undertake all the statutory duties that relate to the financial administration and stewardship of the Authority arising from section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

2.3 Consultation/community engagement

2.3.1 Internal Consultation

Consultation has taken place with the Director of Resources, Deputy Mayor, Cabinet Members for Recourses and Cabinet Member responsible for Public Health, Safety and Wellbeing.

2.3.2 External Consultation/Engagement

External Partners have been consulted on with regards to the aims of the Poverty Intervention Fund as part of the Cabinet Report in June 2020, and these are still relevant.

External consultation has taken place with certain partners such as Age UK and Citizens Advice around certain aspects of the current initiatives proposed.

2.4 Human rights

There are no Human rights issues.

2.5 Equalities and diversity

An EQIA has been carried out and all impacts on protected characteristics have been considered as part of the recommended approach outlined in table 1. The

application process outlined in Table 1, and the criteria appended to this report is carried out on an individual basis to promote equalities.

The Authority recognises that some protected groups are more likely to live in poverty. The equality impact assessment (which is included with the background documents) has been undertaken to help ensure appropriate accessible information and support is made available to these groups

2.6 Risk management

There are no Risk Management issues.

2.7 Crime and disorder

There are no Crime and Disorder issues.

2.8 Environment and sustainability

There are no Environment and sustainability issues.