



Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Cabinet

30th November 2022

Report of the Chief Finance Officer – Huw Jones

Matter for Decision:

Delivery of the Welsh Government's Discretionary Cost of Living Support Scheme – Proposals for use of remaining funding

Wards Affected: All

Purpose of report

To agree the distribution of surplus funds available after the initial delivery of the of the discretionary element of the Welsh Government's cost of living support scheme (COLSS) which was approved by members on the 22nd June 2022.

Background

The Welsh Government announced funding to the 22 Unitary Authorities to provide support payments to households within the County Borough in order to assist with the current cost of living crisis.

The purpose of the funding is to support households across Wales facing an unprecedented cost-of-living crisis, fuelled by soaring energy bills and household living costs.

Welsh Government announced 2 funding streams as follows -

A main scheme – Councils were required to make a £150 payment to all eligible households within council tax bands A – D; and to all households in receipt of council tax support (CTRS) irrespective of band.

This scheme has now closed (5pm on 30th September 2022) having supported 54,651 household to the total value of £8,197,650.

A discretionary scheme – For local authorities to provide support for those not included within the criteria for the main scheme. Members approved the initial discretionary scheme criteria on the 22nd June 2022 and to date 5,419 people have been paid £150 with a total expenditure of £812,850.

There are approximately 376 still eligible for the payment but yet to apply.

Welsh Government have funded the discretionary scheme to the value of £1,401,836 as estimated spend will be £869,250 there is a surplus of £532,586 that can be used to support individuals in the communities deal with the cost of living crisis.

In light of this it is proposed that the discretionary scheme for Neath Port Talbot be extended to provide additional support as follows:

- Allocate £250,000 to the Discretionary Housing Payment scheme which is used to support tenants struggling to meet their rental costs and costs associated with moving accommodation. The DHP policy is below.
- Allocate £100,000 to local foodbanks to support the community. If at the end of the scheme there is a further underspend additional funding will be provided to food banks.
- There are 1,222 taxpayers that are still resident in NPTCBC who have been identified as eligible for the £150 payment under the main scheme who were required to register for a payment but have not done so by the closing date of the 30th September 2022, 5pm.

These residents have received two letters to date and where practical and possible contact has been made by telephone. To prevent residents from missing out on available financial support a final letter encouraging them to apply for the payment will be issued and any resulting applications paid from the discretionary fund.

Summary of the above:

	£
Total discretionary funding available	1,401,836
<u>Allocated</u>	
Paid to date	812,850
Earmarked for 376 eligible applicants who have not applied for discretionary £150	56,400
Discretionary Housing Payments	250,000
Foodbanks	100,000
Earmarked for any of the 1,222 'main scheme' residents yet to apply	183,300
Total allocated	1,402,550
Over commitment	714

It is anticipated that of the 1,222 applicants who have not already applied for the main scheme not all will apply hence the over commitment.

Financial Impact

The cost of the scheme(s) will be met by Welsh Government.

Integrated Impact Assessment

A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The first stage assessment, attached at Appendix 1 has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required.

Valleys Community Impacts

Positive impact for all households within all communities.

Workforce impacts

There will be additional staff resource time required to deal with the administration of the scheme. The admin funding provided will meet this cost.

Legal impact

No impact

Risk management

No impact.

Consultation

There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members:

- Approve the distribution criteria for the remaining balance of the Welsh Government Discretionary Cost of Living Support Scheme
- Grant delegated authority to the Chief Finance Office in conjunction with the leader of Council and the Cabinet member for finance, performance and social justice to determine an appropriate distribution method for funding allocated to foodbanks.

Reason for proposed decision

To ensure that all funding available to the Council is utilised in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant.

Implementation of decision

The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Stage 1 Integrated Impact Assessment.

List of background papers

Welsh Government Grant Scheme Guidance.

Officer contact

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Impact Assessment – First Stage

1. Details of the initiative

Initiative description and summary: Delivery of the Welsh Governments discretionary cost of living support scheme
Service Area: Finance
Directorate: Chief Executive's Office

2. Does the initiative affect:

	Yes	No
Service users	✓	
Staff	✓	
Wider community	✓	
Internal administrative process only		✓

3. Does the initiative impact on people because of their:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't Know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence)/How might it impact?
Age		✓				
Disability		✓				
Gender Reassignment		✓				
Marriage/Civil Partnership		✓				
Pregnancy/Maternity		✓				

Impact Assessment – First Stage

Race		✓				
Religion/Belief		✓				
Sex		✓				
Sexual orientation		✓				

4. Does the initiative impact on:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence used) / How might it impact?
People's opportunities to use the Welsh language		✓				
Treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English		✓				

5. Does the initiative impact on biodiversity:

	Yes	No	None/ Negligible	Don't know	Impact H/M/L	Reasons for your decision (including evidence) / How might it impact?
To maintain and enhance biodiversity		✓				
To promote the resilience of ecosystems, i.e. supporting protection of the wider environment,		✓				

Impact Assessment – First Stage

such as air quality, flood alleviation, etc.						
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6. Does the initiative embrace the sustainable development principle (5 ways of working):

	Yes	No	Details
Long term - how the initiative supports the long term well-being of people		✓	
Integration - how the initiative impacts upon our wellbeing objectives		✓	
Involvement - how people have been involved in developing the initiative		✓	
Collaboration - how we have worked with other services/organisations to find shared sustainable solutions		✓	
Prevention - how the initiative will prevent problems occurring or getting worse	✓		Funding will help to ease the cost of living crisis for residents.

Impact Assessment – First Stage

7. Declaration - based on above assessment (tick as appropriate):

A full impact assessment (second stage) is not required	✓
Reasons for this conclusion	
The scheme will support existing initiatives that will help residents in the borough deal with the cost of living crisis.	

A full impact assessment (second stage) is required	x
Reasons for this conclusion	

	Name	Position	Date
Completed by	Ann Hinder	Principal Council Tax Officer	07.11.2022
Signed off by	D Huw Jones	Chief Finance Officer	07.11.2022