

## **URGENT REPORT TO THE LEADER**

**28 JUNE 2021**

### **COVID-19 LOCAL SUPPORT GRANT SCHEME**

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Alan Jarrett, Leader  
Councillor David Brake, Portfolio Holder for Adults' Services

Report from: James Williams, Director of Public Health

Author: Scott Elliott, Head of Health and Wellbeing Services

#### **Summary**

This report sets out the proposal to use the COVID Local Support Grant extension (CLSG) allocation for Medway Council to support families with children, other vulnerable households and individuals from 21 June 2021 to 30 September 2021.

#### **1. Budget and policy framework**

- 1.1 Matters relating to grant funding to support Medway's population are a matter for Cabinet. The Leader has urgency powers to make decisions which would ordinarily be made by the Cabinet. These provisions are set out in the Constitution (paragraph 3.2 of Part 3 (Responsibility for Cabinet functions) of Chapter 3 (Responsibility for Functions) of the Constitution.
- 1.2 The Chairman of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee has agreed that the taking of these decisions are urgent and cannot be reasonably deferred until the next Cabinet meeting on 13 July 2021, in accordance with Section 11 (Cases of special urgency) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Meetings and Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012 and Rule 17 (Special Urgency) of the Access to Information Rules (Part 2 of Chapter 4 in the Constitution). This is because it is imperative that the Council takes urgent action to support individuals and families in Medway in line with the Government's announcement to implement the COVID Local Support Grant extension allocation as soon as possible in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.3 Additionally, and in line with rule 15.11 of Chapter 4, Part 5 of the Constitution, call-in can be waived where any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would seriously prejudice the Council's or the Public's interests. The Chairman of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee has agreed that the decisions proposed are reasonable in all the

circumstances and to them being treated as a matter of urgency and to waive call-in.

## 2. Background

2.1 In June 2021 the Department for Work and Pensions announced £160million Covid Winter Grant Scheme to support children, families and the most vulnerable over winter. The funding is ring-fenced and covers the period to the end of September 2021. The aim is to give vulnerable households peace of mind as COVID restrictions are eased by helping those who need it to have food on the table and other essentials.

2.2 The scheme guidance sets out that local authorities have flexibility within the scheme to identify which vulnerable households are in most need of support and apply their own discretion when identifying eligibility, however they should target their support according to the following outline eligibility framework:

- At least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to support families with children, and 20% to support other types of households, including individuals, and
- At least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to provide support with food, energy and water bills, and 20% on other items.

The grant is expected to include supporting free school meal eligible children during December and February half terms. It is permissible for reasonable local authority administration costs to be met from this funding, according to the grant conditions.

2.3 Medway Council's allocation is £855,149.34. The Chief Finance Officer has added this sum to the revenue budget under his delegated authority.

## 3. Proposed Grant Scheme Delivery

3.1 It is proposed that £600,000 of the grant allocation be awarded to the purchasing of a weekly £10 voucher for each of the 10,000 Free School Meals (FSM) eligible children for each of the 6 weeks in half term.

## 4. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
<b>Expenditure is not recovered through the Grant claim process</b>	Expenditure made may be on activities that are not within the grant conditions, and therefore the Government does not fund these through the	The proposal has been designed to ensure expenditure is claimable. Arrangements will be in place to record and monitor expenditure and	CII

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
	second and third payments.	submit claims in due course.	

## 5. Financial implications

- 5.1 The scheme and activity outlined is fully funded by the government, with Medway's allocation confirmed as £855,149.34. The remaining £255,149 of the COVID Local Support Grant allocation will be discussed by the Corporate Management Team and options considered for how to best support eligible residents within the grant conditions.

## 6. Legal implications

- 6.1 The Covid-19 pandemic is an unprecedented national and global event requiring urgent intervention by State and Local Authorities. The use of urgency powers will enable a fast and effective response by the Council and is in entirely line with the Constitutional provisions for urgent decision making.

## 7. Recommendations

- 7.1 The Leader is asked, using urgency powers, to agree the proposals set out in section 3 of this report as the Council's approach to delivering the COVID Local Support Grant and to delegate authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Adults' Services, to finalise and implement these proposals.
- 7.2 The Leader is asked, using urgency powers, to agree to delegate authority to the Director of Public Health in consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Adults' Services, to make minor amendments to the proposals to enable them to continue to support vulnerable households in Medway, including establishing any discretionary eligibility criteria where discussions remain ongoing and where further Government advice is provided.
- 7.3 The Leader is asked, using urgency powers, to agree to delegate authority to the Director of Public Health in consultation with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Adults' Services, to finalise and implement any suitable proposals for the remaining sum of the Covid Local Support Grant, as outlined in paragraph 5.1 of the report.
- 7.4 The Leader is asked to agree that recommendations 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 are considered urgent and therefore should not be subject to call in.

## 8. Suggested reasons for decisions

- 8.1 Given the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lack of cost to the local taxpayer it is appropriate for the Council to introduce these measures.

Lead officer contact

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Appendices

None

Background papers

None

.....(signed) ..... June 2021 (date)

Councillor Alan Jarrett, Leader of the Council