

CABINET MEMBER DECISION: Household Support Fund (HSF) – 6th October 2021 to 31st March 2022

**Gloucestershire
County
Council**

KEY DECISION not published in the Forward Plan

The following key decision will be considered by Cllr Stephen Davies, Cabinet Member for Children’s Safeguarding and Early Years under the Council’s Special Urgency Rule. Because the decision is urgent, it has not been possible to publish details about the decision on the Forward Plan.

Recommendations

That the Lead Cabinet Member for Children’s Safeguarding and Early Years ratifies the following decisions by the Executive Director of Children’s Services:

1. A decision to distribute Household Support Funding (HSF) received by the council from the Department of Work and Pensions for the purpose of supporting those most in need during the period 6th October 2021 to 31st March 2022.
2. A decision to award to the council’s incumbent welfare support services supplier, without further competition, a contract for the provision of administration services in respect of such funding and also delivering support in the form of food vouchers, fuel vouchers, white goods and emergency household items to those most in need during the period 6th October 2021 to 31st March 2022. Such direct contract award is made on grounds that, for reasons of extreme urgency brought about by unforeseeable events (that is, the unforeseeability of a notification from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on 6th October 2021 requiring the council to ensure that the above-mentioned services were operational as soon as possible), the time limits for completing a regulated procurement procedure could not be complied with, hence the council’s incumbent supplier of welfare support services, namely, Auriga Services Limited, was the only supplier capable of implementing the required services in the available timeframe.

That the Lead Cabinet Member for Children’s Safeguarding and Early Years delegates authority to the Executive Director of Children’s Services to:

3. Conduct a competitive procurement process in respect of a single provider Framework Agreement for the supply of food vouchers, fuel vouchers, white goods and household emergency support to those most in need as required under the terms of the Household Support Fund Grant provided by the Department for Work and Pensions in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic and for any other future COVID grants received from Government in relation to

emergency welfare provision. Such Framework Agreement shall continue for an initial period of 15 months commencing early in 2022 and include an option to extend its term for a further period of 12 months.

4. Award such Framework Agreement to the preferred tenderer.
5. To call-off such services from the proposed Framework Agreement as are deemed necessary in order to implement the terms of the Household Support Fund Grant
6. Determine whether to exercise the option to extend the term of such Framework Agreement for a further period of 12 months on the expiry of its initial period.
7. Approve £0.654m spend for the purpose of providing financial support to vulnerable individuals and families in Gloucestershire who require rent and/or utility support.
8. Allocate £123k to each of the six District Councils in Gloucestershire (namely, Gloucester, Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, Forest of Dean, Stroud and Cotswolds) for the purpose of them each providing their own localised schemes to target the needs of those most vulnerable (whilst meeting the grant conditions that at least 50% of the funding allocated, is provided to families with children and primarily used to provide support with food, energy and water bills, household items & other essential items).

Reasons for invoking special urgency procedures *(as set out in the Council's Constitution, Rules on Access to Information About the County Council's Formal Business paragraphs 18-19 and Call-In Procedure Rules, section 10)*

On the 6th October 2021 the Government announced a Household Support Fund for vulnerable households, to help them with essentials over the winter months, following the recovery from the pandemic. The fund was to be available from the 6th October 2021 to 31st March 2022.

The continuation of the use of the existing provision through Auriga Service Ltd in the interim, under Regulation 32(2)(c) of the Public Contract Regulations 2015, is recommended for reasons of extreme urgency, brought about by the funding announcement being made by the Government at very short notice. Simultaneously, GCC will develop a compliant procedure/framework through an accelerated process before Christmas 2021. This is to achieve value for money and reduce the Council's exposure to risk.

Signed: Chief Executive

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Burgess', written over a horizontal line.

Date: 25/11/21

In accordance with the Council's Special Urgency Rules, the Chair (Cllr Dr Andrew Miller) and Vice Chair (Cllr Ben Evans) of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and the Chair of Council, Cllr Alan Preest, have confirmed their agreement that the above decision can be taken as a key decision under the Council's Special Urgency Rules. For the above reasons, the decision will require urgent implementation, without pre-implementation review.