


<p style="text-align: center;">Individual Mayoral Decision</p> <p style="text-align: center;">August 2021</p>	
<p>Report of: Ann Sutcliffe, Corporate Director for Place</p>	<p>Classification: Unrestricted</p>
<p>Covid Local Support Grant</p>	

Lead Member	Mufeedah Bustin, Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion
Originating Officer(s)	Ellie Kershaw, Tackling Poverty Programme Manager
Wards affected	All
Key Decision?	No
Forward Plan Notice Published	9 July 2021
Reason for Key Decision	This report has been reviewed as not meeting the Key Decision criteria.
Strategic Plan Priority / Outcome	<p>1. People are aspirational, independent and have equal access to opportunities;</p> <p>2. A borough that our residents are proud of and love to live in;</p>

Executive Summary

Since December 2020 the Council has received a number of payments from the DWP in the form of the Covid Winter Grant, renamed the Covid Local Support Grant in April 2021.

The purpose of the grant is to provide food and essential household goods to residents. The most recent allocation is £1.1 million, received at the end of June and to be spent and all purchases distributed by 30 September 2021.

This report is seeking permission for two proposed uses of the grant:

1. To make small grants to four organisations working with specific cohorts of people that the council wants to reach and
2. To work with His Church charity to enable the council to access up to £300,000 in food and essential household supplies for the VCS hub, to be distributed to several partners who distribute food direct to residents.

Both of these decisions require an Executive decision which is being sought via IMD due to the time constraints in distributing the funding.

Recommendations:

The Mayor is recommended to:

1. Approve up to £300,000 funding from the most recent allocation of the Covid Local Support Grant to be spent with His Church on admin and transport costs that will allow the VCS food hub to access further supplies of food and household goods
2. To give delegated authority to the Corporate Director for Place to enter into a contract with His Church
3. To give delegated authority to the Corporate Director Place to agree further expenditure with His Church should additional funding become available and their terms remain the same
4. To approve the grants listed at paragraph 3.6 to be made from the Covid Local Support Grant to provide food and essential goods to specific groups of hard to reach residents on the council's behalf.

1 REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 In mid June the Government announced the extension of the Covid Local Support Grant to the end of September. All funds must be spent and items used by that date, which does not leave sufficient time for a formal procurement exercise.
- 1.2 VCS food partners across the borough are reporting that their services remain significantly over subscribed and they are low on supplies.
- 1.3 Due to their model of charging for admin and delivery, but not goods, purchasing via His Church allows the Council to provide approximately 3x the amount of goods compared to purchasing goods from a food supplier.
- 1.4 The council is trying to ensure that as many people as possible benefit from the funding; spending so far includes vouchers for children identified by their school as at risk of food poverty over the school holidays and vouchers to be distributed by the Early Help team to specific families they deem at risk of food poverty. In order to ensure that we can assist hard to reach groups, we will require support from our partners who work with these groups. In some cases this will mean helping us to distribute shopping vouchers, in others the council providing food through the hub, but in some cases a direct grant for to allow the distribution of food and household goods is more appropriate.

2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The council could purchase from traditional suppliers of food and household goods, but this would reduce the amount of supplies by approximately 2/3 of the amount that could be provided by His Church, meaning fewer residents would be supported.
- 2.2 The council could distribute food and vouchers only without granting to any partners, but we will miss some key groups, most specifically those who do not have either the ability or the infrastructure to prepare their own food.

3 DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 In June 2020, to help our residents to cope with the financial impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council opened the VCS food hub. The hub supplies food on a weekly basis to approximately 40 organisations, increasing the food they have that they provide to residents.
- 3.2 Since that time, over 750 tonnes of food has been distributed, the equivalent of feeding approximately 35,000 people for a week each. This food has been sourced from a combination of repurposed food from Felix, Fare Share and City Harvest, corporate donations and purchases using funding from the DEFRA food grant and the Covid Winter Grant/Covid Local Support Grant, which were given to the Council with the express purpose of providing food and essential household goods. The hub was run initially from New City College, and currently from Granby Hall, with the only costs incurred by the Council being staffing to manage the operation. These are minimal as we have been supported by a number of excellent volunteers.
- 3.3 There are now very few corporate donations and the repurposed food is a much lower amount than was provided last year. Since the beginning of the year we have been able to increase the volume and range of food and other supplies we distribute through government grants. We use local fruit and veg suppliers and have been sourcing ambient food and household items from His Church Charity (HCC), based in Lincolnshire. The supplies come in pallets with retail value of £1,500 each pallet, which is waived, and the Council instead pays £425 per pallet for delivery and admin. Where preferred, pallets can be delivered direct to the organisations we are supporting.
- 3.4 We have been using an RCDA to purchase supplies from His Church, under the assumption that the Covid Local Support Grant would end in June and that the £189,000 allowed under the RCDA would be sufficient. However, with the extension of funding we now have the opportunity to make further purchases, which requires an Executive decision.
- 3.5 It is requested that the Mayor approves further expenditure of up to £300,000 from the Covid Local Support Grant, and that the Corporate Director for Place is given delegated authority to approve further purchases in this financial year should further funding for the hub be identified.

- 3.6 It is further requested that a number of small grants are approved to enable some partners to reach key groups the council may otherwise miss
- Age UK -£5,000 for their hospital discharge scheme, providing cooked meals to older people in poverty who, following their discharge from hospital are unable to make their own food for a number of weeks
 - Beyond the Streets- £4,000 for food, clothes and essential household goods to support women experiencing multiple disadvantage who have been affected by Covid-19
 - St Mungo's- £2,310 to provide phone and Oyster card top ups to their clients
 - Providence Row- £15,360 to allow them to provide cooked meals to homeless people, and to provide a resettlement package of essential household goods for clients being discharged from hospital as homeless
 - Bromley by Bow Centre £10,000 for energy vouchers for residents (top up to an externally funded existing project)
 - CAB £10,000 for energy vouchers for residents (top up to an externally funded existing project)

4 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Disabled people, young people and those from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to be suffering from the financial impacts of the pandemic. Supplying additional food and support through a range of partners will ensure that support is offered to all people who need it, but will ensure that these groups will be particularly positively impacted.

5 OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:
- Best Value Implications,
 - Consultations,
 - Environmental (including air quality),
 - Risk Management,
 - Crime Reduction,
 - Safeguarding.
 - Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.
- 5.2 Provision of food to those in need contributes to the council's ability to safeguard those at risk of food poverty.

6 COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 The council is utilising funding from the extended 'Covid Local Support Grant' to provide the following services:

- 6.2 Purchase of ambient food supplies and household items from the 'His Church' charity up to an agreed level of £300K. This is a highly cost-effective way of providing these supplies to the VCS food hubs as costs are less than 1/3 of the commercial market price ensuring the maximum number of clients are reached.
- 6.3 Provide small grants to local charities, partners organisations and outreach groups to provide services for those suffering through food poverty, homelessness and hardship due to the pandemic. There are 6 of these grants with a combined value of £46,670 with no one beneficiary receiving more than £16,000.
- 6.4 The recommendations in this report total £346, 670 and this can be contained within the remaining grant. and will not be a pressure on the General Fund.

7 COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The Mayor through an Individual Mayor Decision (IMD) has the power to approve the recommendations sought in this report.
- 7.2 The direct award of a contract to His Church Charity falls within the Council's remit because the value (£300,000) of this service, is below the relevant threshold (£663,540) for a Light Touch Service.
- 7.3 Grants applications must be determined by the Grants Sub-Committee except the Mayor decides to approve such application under its reserved powers.
- 7.4 There are no legal implications in approving this recommendation.
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Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- None.

Appendices

- None.

Background Documents – Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2012

- None.

Officer contact details for documents:

N/A