Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee – Cabinet

15 December 2025

Wards: ALL

Household Support Fund 7 – Redistribution of funding

Report of the Director of Corporate Resources (S151)

Report Status: This item is not exempt
Therefore exempt reasons are not applicable

This is a key decision. The matter is in the Forward Plan

Forward Plan reference number 0030/25

1. Purpose of the Report and Summary

1.1 To seek agreement on the re-distribution of Household Support Funding 7 following announcement from Government funding for Winter Allowances will be reinstated to pensioners earning less than £35,000 per annum.

1.2 Outline to members other Household Support Fund 7 funding options in relation to the £375,500 allocation and potential redistribution options following changes in Government policy.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That members note the options outlined in section 10 for the redistribution of HSF 7 funding of £375,500.

2.2 To approve option 3 as the preferred option for redistribution of the HSF 7 funding to existing HSF 7 schemes in line with 2025-26 HSF 7 Cabinet decision in May 2025.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 To ensure that there continues to be a co-ordinated cross system response to support the City through ongoing financial challenges facing our most vulnerable residents.

3.2 To ensure that funding available is effectively targeted to those most in need and ensure that provision has a long-term sustainable impact.

4. Key Organisational Impacts

4.1 Ensuring allocation of the Household Support Fund aligns with Hull City Council's broader organisational strategies such as the Community Plan and Council Plan and associated six ambitions. Allocating funds in a manner that supports these plans and ambitions and providing support to residents in need within the city.

4.2 Addressing urgent issues is crucial, it's equally important to consider the sustainability of the initiatives funded by the Household Support Fund to ensure lasting impact.

4.3 Collaborative working with VCS partners and various departments within Hull City Council to reduce duplicative funding and encourage cross-departmental communication ensures that resources are utilised effectively and that our initiatives are complimentary and are directed toward areas of genuine need. Maintaining Crisis Payments (CP) and Community Support Grants (CSG) via Local Authority Support (LAS) and food distribution through VCS organisations supports a comprehensive response to the needs of all community groups

4.4 Government announced an amended policy for Winter Fuel Allowance resulting in pensioners with income up to £35,000 will now receive this Winter Fuel Allowances directly. Following a review of the Council Tax Reduction pensioner caseload, it has been confirmed all previous CTRS eligible cases have income under the Government's threshold for receiving the Winter Fuel Allowance.

5. Impact on other Executive Committees (including Area Committees) and decision makers:

5.1 The decisions made within this report are City wide and do not impact specifically on any Executive Committees (including Area Committees).

6. Contribution to the delivery of the Community Plan, the Council Plan and/or Area Plans:

6.1 This decision supports the Community Plan ambitions, with a specific focus to ambition two - a healthier and fairer Hull, by providing financial support to the VCS to enable food support (food banks), provision of direct payments and vouchers along with practical support, financial support for meals for school children in the school holidays who are eligible for free school meals which will inform our approach to service delivery and support people to be healthy and aid prevention by providing advice with money and energy management.

6.2 Allocation of the fund is clear, accountable and based on defined eligibility criteria.

6.3 The scheme will continue to work in partnership with the VCS and support organisations in order to extend reach and provide a holistic approach to supporting vulnerable households.

7. Equalities Impact Information

7.1 An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment has been caried out to provide evidence that “due regard” has been paid to the different protected characteristics when administering the Household Support Fund and meet the aims of the general equality duty; eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations.

8. Consultation

8.1 Consultation continually takes place through a number of engagement methods including the Financial Inclusion Network, VCS colleagues and wider council forums.

8.2 Continuous review and consideration of opportunities to further support communities and key groups through the HSF is undertaken throughout the year via the Financial Inclusion Network.

9. Background

9.1 Residents of the City continue to be severely impacted by the on-going increases in the cost of living.

9.2 The Council’s strategic response was to establish a cross organisational Cost of Living Network with six areas of focus for the development of practical solutions to support the community through the impact of the Cost-of-Living Crisis. The areas of focus have been:

- Food
- Fuel and Energy
- Health
- Employment
- Money and debt
- Housing

9.3 The Government has provided Household Support Funding since October 2021. For 2025/26 the Government awarded funding of £5,354,902.

9.4 The total funding available to support those in need with their living expenses for the period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026 is £5,354,902, which must be fully spent by the 31 March 2026.

10 Issues for Consideration

10.1 The funding available is not enough to meet the level of demand that exists and there are time and resource constraints that limit the practical options available.

10.2 The funding allocation of £375,500 is targeted to support pensioners who are affected by the loss of Winter Fuel Allowances. Using a targeted approach of pensioners entitlement to the higher rate of Council Tax Reduction and therefore those with the greatest financial need. The changes made by Government in June 2025 to the Winter Fuel Allowance eligibility criteria provides an opportunity to review the funding allocation to ensure it remains targeted to the most disadvantaged within the city.

10.3 The following options are proposed for review

10.4 Option 1 - Continue to support Pensioners in receipt of Council Tax Reduction with a credit of £200 onto their Council Tax account with total budget allocation of £375,500. This option would continue to support pensioners within the city in line with the original HSF 7 funding allocation. This option is not recommended as this cohort will receive Winter Fuel Allowance funding.

10.5 Option 2 - Support Pensioners in receipt of up to 50% Council Tax Reduction to pay in full any outstanding Council Tax debt balance. This would assist 1,685 pensioners who are in debt with their Council Tax payments. This option would look to continue to support some of the most financially disadvantaged pensioners within the city in managing their Council Tax charges. This option is not recommended as this cohort will receive Winter Fuel Allowance Funding.

10.6 Option 3 - Provide £375,500 of funding to the following existing HSF 7 schemes requiring additional funding capacity

- Free School Meals for the first week of the Easter school holidays, commencing 30th March 2026. Supporting 16,130 pupils (£15 per week). £242,000.
- Further supporting pensioners via Age UK to provide an advice and advocacy service supporting more pensioners with applications for welfare benefits such as Pension Credit. Expert welfare advice ensuring they have the right entitlement providing increased income for pensioners with long term sustainable impact. Additional support of £33,500 to Age UK will assist with rises in caseload and reduce waiting times for pensioners to be supported. £33,500. However, the Council has increased capacity within the Welfare Rights Team which also looks to support this cohort, and therefore any additional awarded funding will be subject to performance information and evidence to support the need for further funding to be shared with the provider, to ensure maximum benefit is achieved from this funding allocation.
- Provide additional funding for Tenancy Support and Sustainment. This funding contributes to a wider strategy aiming to prevent homelessness and protect tenancies. £150,000 has previously been committed for this

scheme. Additional £65K to support those in private tenancies and £35K for those in Council housing. £100,000.

This option is recommended as it supports existing priority cohorts already identified within the HSF 7 funding allocation and continues to further benefit those most in need within the city.

11 Options and Risk Assessment

11.1 There is a risk that applications and referrals may exceed the funding available therefore progress will continue to be monitored closely to prevent overspending that would have to be fully funded by the Council.

12 Performance Monitoring

12.1 Each fund owner is responsible for collecting the data applicable to their scheme and returning the information for inclusion into the overall Hull City Council return to the Government. Government returns must be authorised by the S151 Officer.

12.2 Wider performance monitoring is carried out with our VCS partners to understand the fund reach and impact is has had on the community. This information continues to be utilised to inform the prioritisation of Household Support Funding for the city.

13 Comments of the Monitoring Officer (Town Clerk)

The proposal to allocate funds to tenancy sustainment in the context of the current homelessness crisis has the potential to reduce wider system and financial pressures that would otherwise arise consequent upon the limited supply of housing within the Benefits Local Housing Allowance. Similarly, it is recognised that support for pupils who are in receipt of Free School Meals in the holiday period has become established practice. The additional grant contribution to Age UK is a variation on their existing grant. Although the sums are well within the Light Touch Regime, as the existing arrangements come to an end it will be important to ensure that the process for grant provision is undertaken through the Council's platform in an open and transparent manner. [IA]

14 Comments of the Section 151 Officer (Director of Corporate Resources)

14.1 The Director of Corporate Resources (S151) is the author of this report.

15 Comments of the Assistant Director OD & HR and compliance with the Equality Duty

15.1 The content of the report is noted. There are no staffing or equality matters arising for the council from this decision. KH

16 Comments of Overview and Scrutiny

16.1 This report will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at its meeting on the 12th December 2025. Any comments or recommendations agreed by the Commission will be submitted to Cabinet for consideration alongside the final report. Ref: Sc9056 [PT]

17 Comments of the Portfolio Holder – Councillor Dad

17.1 I welcome the proposals to re-purpose an element of the Household Support Funding and confirmation of the provision of school meal vouchers in the first week of the Easter Holidays. I hope the Government will continue to provide similar levels of funding into 2026/27 to enable this vital support to our residents beyond March 2026.

Director of Corporate Resources (S151)

David Bell

Contact Officer: Amanda Renton Telephone No.: 01482 612160

Officer Interests: None

Background Documents: - Household Support Fund 7 Distribution May 2025

Implications Matrix

This section must be completed and you must ensure that you have fully considered all potential implications

This matrix provides a simple check list for the things you need to have considered within your report

If there are no implications please state

I have informed and sought advice from HR, Legal, Finance, Overview and Scrutiny and the Climate Change Advisor and any other key stakeholders i.e. Portfolio Holder, relevant Ward Members etc prior to submitting this report for official comments	Yes
I have considered whether this report requests a decision that is outside the Budget and Policy Framework approved by Council	Yes
Value for money considerations have been accounted for within the report	Yes
The report is approved by the relevant Director/Assistant Director	Yes
I have included any procurement/commercial issues/implications within the report	Yes
I have considered the potential media interest in this report and liaised with the Media Team to ensure that they are briefed to respond to media interest.	Yes
I have included any equalities and diversity implications within the report and where necessary I have completed an Equalities Impact Assessment and the outcomes are included within the report	Yes
Any Health and Safety implications are included within the report	No
Any human rights implications are included within the report	No

I have included any community safety implications and paid regard to Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act within the report	No
I have liaised with the Climate Change Advisor and any environmental and climate change issues/sustainability implications are included within the report	No
I have considered how the decision may contribute or impact on culture and heritage within the city.	No
I have included information about how this report contributes to the Community Plan/ Area priorities within the report	Yes
I have considered the impact on air quality, carried out an appropriate assessment and included any resulting actions or opportunities necessary to improve air quality in the report.	No