



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

18th SEPTEMBER 2023

LOCAL COST OF LIVING SUPPORT SCHEME (2023)

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE & GROUP DIRECTOR – FINANCE, DIGITAL & FRONTLINE SERVICES IN CONSULTATION WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, CLLR A MORGAN OBE

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides details of a further Local Cost of Living Support Scheme (2023).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended to:

2.1.1 Note and agree the detail of the proposed Local Cost of Living Support Scheme (2023).

2.1.2 Note and agree the implementation arrangements and delegation to the Deputy Chief Executive & Group Director – Finance, Digital & Frontline Services as detailed at section 9.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council has already delivered a number of cost of living support schemes which have been funded by Welsh Government and supplemented with the Council's own resources. The latest scheme delivered during the Autumn of 2022, allocated support of £2.890M and was funded by £1.990M of the Council's own resources. This report proposes a further Local Cost of Living Support Scheme (2023), the total cost being £4.292M with the funding proposals set out in the report.

4. LOCAL COST OF LIVING SUPPORT SCHEME (2023)

- 4.1 The details of the proposed further Local Cost of Living Support Scheme (2023) are set out as follows:

a. Payment to Families with one Child or more of Compulsory School Age

- A payment of £125 will be available / made to families with one or more child(ren) of compulsory school age. It will be one payment per family, not per child.
- Families of electively home educated child(ren) will be eligible, as will families of child(ren) that attend a school outside of Rhondda Cynon Taf but reside within the County Borough.
- It is estimated that 22,000 families will be entitled to this £125 payment.
- The cost to the Council of this element of the local scheme amounts to **£2.750M**.

b. Support to Lower Paid Council Staff

- Council staff continue to provide valued public services. Our lowest paid employees however, are more likely to be suffering from the ongoing cost of living crisis.
- In recognition of this it is proposed that all employees who are remunerated at Grades 1 to 6 are paid a one-off support payment supplement to their salary.
- In scope roles would include cleansing operatives, collection operatives, home care and social care workers, cooks, cleaners, school crossing patrols etc.
- This would equate to £125 per employee and would be made to approximately 5,800 employees.
- The cost to the Council of this payment would amount to **£0.942M** (including on-costs).

c. Local Cost of Living Hardship Fund – Resident Support

Fuel - £100k

Discretionary voucher payment for residents experiencing significant financial difficulties related to heating their homes.

Food - £60k

Discretionary payment to residents experiencing significant financial difficulties, to purchase small energy efficient kitchen appliances, such as slow cookers, and will also include a supermarket food voucher.

Housing (additional Discretionary Housing Payments) - £100k

It is proposed that the existing available resources for Discretionary Housing Payments is supplemented with an additional allocation of £100k. This will be awarded in line with existing processes.

The total cost of the resident support package would amount to **£0.260M**.

d. Local Cost of Living Hardship Fund – Community Support

Winter Welcome Centres/Warm Hubs – £80k

It is proposed to invite Expressions of Interest, for Community Venues to register as Winter Welcome Centres, providing warm pack items, warm drink and snacks to residents attending centres.

It is also proposed to further support Winter Welcome Centres with additional funding for **Food Support (£30k)** for venues able to provide hot meals and an additional allocation to support residents who are experiencing significant **Financial Hardship (£50k)**.

The total cost of the Community Support Package would amount to **£0.160M**.

e. Support to Food Banks – £50k

It is proposed that **£50k** is provided to support food banks and food support grants. This repeats the level of support which has previously been provided through the last 2 schemes.

f. Community Facilities Energy Support Grant

It is proposed to make available **£130k** to support energy cost pressures being felt across not for profit community based facilities. Community based facilities which are run by not for profit organisations who are known to the Council (RCT together) and who provide a combination of activities and / or sporting activities will be invited to apply for this funding of £540 per organisation (this is subject to Council approving the funding as part of the Council Corporate Plan – Investment Priorities report being presented on 20th September 2023).

5. INDICATIVE SCHEME DELIVERY AND IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 The Local Cost of Living Support Scheme (2023) will be operationally delivered during the period October to December 2023.

Payment to Families with one Child or more of Compulsory School Age

- Compulsory School Age will be determined as at the start of the school term beginning September 2023;
- A child begins to be of compulsory school age the term following their fifth birthday;
- In line with this, if a family has one or more children born between 1st September 2007 (i.e. age 16 as at 31st August 2024) and 31st August 2018 (i.e. age 5 as at 31st August 2023) and reside in Rhondda Cynon Taf, then they will be eligible for a Family Payment; and
- The payment will not impact upon any benefits (e.g. Universal Credit).

Payment to lower paid Council Employees

- A payment of £125 will be made at the November 2023 payroll;
- It includes all Council staff on Grades 1 to 6 who are due to receive a payment in November 2023; and
- The payment will be classed as earnings and accordingly will be subject to tax, National Insurance and pension deductions.

Local Resident and Community Support

- It is anticipated that this fund will be available for distribution from October 2023, details of which will be made available on the Council's website.

Community Facility Energy Support Grant

- Community based not for profit organisations who are known to the Council (RCT together) and who run a combination of activities and / or sporting activities will be invited to apply for this funding.
- It is anticipated that invitations will be distributed during October 2023.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 Due regard has been given to the Council's public sector equality duties under the Equality Act 2010, namely the Public Sector Equality Duty and Socio-Economic Duty.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no Welsh language implications as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 There are no consultation requirements as a result of the recommendations set out in the report.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The overall cost of the Local Cost of Living Support Scheme (2023) is £4.292M.
- 9.2 External Funding of £0.168M has already been secured and £0.130M is proposed to be allocated toward the Community Facility Energy Grant via the Council Corporate Plan – Investment Priorities report to Council on 20th September 2023. The balance of £3.994M will be funded from the release of earmarked reserves and resources already identified to support cost of living pressures across the Council and our communities.
- 9.3 The detail of the scheme including eligibility, assessment and its administration is delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director – Finance, Digital and Frontline Services in line with the Council's Constitution

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 The recommendations have been compiled ensuring continued compliance with the Council's legal requirement to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs as set out in Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

In addition, the proposals support the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities, in line with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

- 10.2 The Deputy Chief Executive and Group Director – Finance, Digital and Frontline Services will administer the Local Cost of Living Support Scheme (2023) and make the necessary determinations in accordance with the Council's 'officer scheme of delegation'.

11. LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 11.1 The proposals are aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan "Making a Difference" 2020-2024, in particular the priority 'Prosperity – Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper' and also the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 well-being goal of "A more prosperous Wales".

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 This further cost of living support package will provide financial support to residents and community organisations across Rhondda Cynon Taf. It will also provide a one-off supplementary payment to the lowest paid employees of the Council and provide further financial support to our foodbanks that continue to provide invaluable help to residents.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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