

Briefing Household Support Fund Round 5

Objective:

The purpose of this briefing is to provide councillors with comprehensive information regarding the utilisation of the Household Support Fund Round 5 within Spelthorne Borough Council, ensuring effective allocation and distribution of funds to eligible households within our borough.

Background:

The Household Support Fund was established by Government to address the immediate financial needs of vulnerable households adversely affected by various economic challenges, including but not limited to, the recent pandemic, economic downturns, and unforeseen crises. Round 5 of the fund aims to continue supporting these households by providing targeted assistance.

Rationale:

Round 5 Household Support Fund (relating to the six month period to end of September 2024). Given the relatively small amount (£168k) being allocated to the Council, that the distribution methodology by SCC is based on the previous round's methodology, and that Government is not emphasising any new prioritisation criteria, officers suggest we distribute on the same methodology as used for round 4- this is consistent with the recommendation approved by CWHC on 17th January 2023 which said ".Agree that this becomes, subject to any new national criteria, the ongoing approach for the HSF when it extends to phases 4 and beyond from April 2023". See attached committee report.

Housing Benefits officers will review details of previous recipients to check they are still eligible, and we will invite new applicants through a mix of digital and physical communication channels. On the basis of the last round, we anticipate approximately 3,000 eligible households and therefore we suggest a fixed sum of £50 per household which equates to £150k leaving about £18k contingency for new applicants – if at the end of the process we have unused funds, then as with Round 4 we would seek to gain approval to move the remainder through Spelthorne Healthy Communities Board to distribute based on the broader remit of the HSF scheme.

Communication:

The Council will undertake a focussed campaign to inform residents about the availability of the Household Support Fund Round 5. This will include dissemination of information through social media, council website, and partnerships with local community groups.

Application Process:

Clear and accessible application guidelines will be provided to facilitate the application process for eligible households including hard copies distributed to community centres and food banks.

Stephen Mortimer-Cleevely
Strategic Lead Independent Living
13th May 2024