

# Community Wellbeing & Housing Committee



**Date of meeting – 28<sup>th</sup> November 2024**

<b>Title</b>	Household Support Fund Phase 6 (HSF)
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report Author</b>	Stephen Mortimer-Cleevely
<b>Ward(s) Affected</b>	All Wards
<b>Exempt</b>	No
<b>Exemption Reason</b>	<i>Not applicable</i>
<b>Corporate Priority</b>	Community and Service Delivery
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p><b>Committee is asked to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree the proposed scheme of distribution of Household Support Fund Phase 6.</li> <li>• Agree that in the event of any funds being unallocated that they are moved to the “General Allocation Pot” at the end of March 2025.</li> </ul>
<b>Reason for Recommendation</b>	It is important that the Committee is aware of the potential support available to Spelthorne residents, who are experiencing financial hardship.

## 1. Summary of the report

<b>What is the situation</b>	<b>Why we want to do something</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A further reduced allocation (paragraph 2.1) of Household Support Fund has been allocated to Spelthorne Borough Council via Surrey County Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee must decide how to distribute the allocation</li> </ul>
<b>This is what we want to do about it</b>	<b>These are the next steps</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council wants to use the Household Support Fund to relieve food and fuel poverty across the Borough.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the appropriate process</li> </ul>

## 2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The Government has extended the national Household Support Fund scheme by a further £421m to help households struggling with the increase in energy bills, price of food and essentials for the period 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024 to 31 March 2025. The Government allocated funding to upper tier local authorities, i.e., Surrey County Council, to agree with lower tier councils a basis for apportionment across the districts and boroughs and a methodology for getting funds to local residents in need. In this round Surrey County Council has been awarded £5,590,830. The County Council has decided to allocate £750,000 to District and Borough Councils, 50% less than Phase 5. Spelthorne's Borough Council's Round Allocation is £84k

Table 1. HSF Allocation Phase 6

Name	Share of HSF6 grant funding £
<b>Surrey</b>	<b>750,000</b>
Elmbridge	73,755
Epsom and Ewell	44,367
Guildford	87,892
Mole Valley	50,714
Reigate and Banstead	103,481
Runnymede	62,834
<b>Spelthorne</b>	<b>84,091</b>
Surrey Heath	47,856
Tandridge	62,235
Waverley	66,145
Woking	66,630

Table 2. HSF Previous Phase Awards

Phase	HSF Allocation	Resident Payment
1 (6 months)	£345,000	£50 for pensioners / £60 for single people or families without children / £80 for households with children
2 (6 months)	£265,313	£55 for working age claims / £100 for pensioners
3 (6 months)	£244,000	£70
4 (12 months)	£413,029	£50 Summer & £70 winter
5 (6 months)	£168,000	£50
<b>6 (6 months)</b>	<b>£84,091</b>	

- 2.2 In **Phase 1** which had to be distributed between November 2021 and 31 March 2022, Spelthorne received an allocation of £345k which was fully applied (after taking into account a £14.4k administration set aside to cover resourcing costs). For Phase 1, the Government put a particular emphasis on supporting households with children with at least 50% of the funds required to go to such households. In Phase 2 the Government shifted the emphasis towards supporting households with pensioners, with at least a third of the funds to go to such households.
- 2.3 For **Phase 2** Spelthorne was allocated by Surrey County Council a total pot of £265,313. £182,866 to be distributed to pensioner households and £82,447 for a general pot to provide support for working age households. Collectively, the Surrey Councils had agreed to aim to pay £100 per household with pensioners. Spelthorne successfully distributed just under a 100 % of the Phase 2 allocation.
- 2.4 The allocation for **Phase 3** was £244,000 and in this round of funding there has been additional emphasis on ensuring those with a disability receive support alongside those in receipt of funding in Phases 1 and 2. The Housing benefits team have already spent some significant time analysing the applications for Phase 2, demonstrating that a significant number of applications are in receipt of a disability related benefit.
- 2.5 Spelthorne Borough Council had approximately 1,600 households with pensioners claiming Local Council Tax Support so this would essentially allocate a significant proportion of HSF Phase 3 funds for pensioners if all took up the option to apply for Phase 3 funding.
- 2.6 As there was specific guidance in relation to the improvement in the impact on families with disabilities, the Committee was asked to consider 'ring fencing' a proportion of the fund. The suggested amount being £25,000, (roughly 10% of the total allocation) that can be directed with the support of the children's locality team (SCC), for those children and families that have been identified as having high energy costs for both heating and equipment usage. Those 25 families currently identified could receive support s of about £1000 per family. These are families who have children with potential life limiting conditions and require hoists, lifts and other powered equipment and need to heat their homes continuously. The Chair and Vice Chair of Community Wellbeing and Housing Committee have recommended that this provision was catered for via the £200,000 that the Council has earmarked for cost-of-living interventions and the process deciding final allocation and distribution.
- 2.7 **Phase 4** of the Household Support Fund covered the whole of the financial year 23/24 with a total payment of £413,029. The Council split this into a winter and summer payment for applications giving all applicants £50 summer payment and £70 winter payment.
- 2.8 **Phase 5** Household Support Fund relates to the six-month period to end of September 2024. The Government did not emphasised any new prioritisation criteria, and so it is suggested distribution be on the same methodology as used for Round 4, which would be consistent with the recommendation approved by this Committee on 17th January 2023.

2.9 Housing Benefits officers have reviewed details of previous recipients to check they were still eligible and invited new applicants through a mix of digital and physical communication channels. Approximately 3,200 eligible households applied and received a fixed sum of £50 per household.

### **3. Options analysis and proposal**

3.1 **Option 1:** The Council could adopt for Phase 6 the approach taken in Phase 5 of including pensioners and working age households in receipt of Local Council Tax support and guaranteed pension tax credit then each eligible household is likely to receive somewhere in the region of **£25** (based on 3,200 applicants).

3.2 **Option 2: (Preferred Option)** The Council could adopt a new approach compliant with government guidance and fund preventative work in the borough by sustaining the current level of meals on wheels subsidy. See Appendix A.

3.3 **Option 3:** Allocate HSF Phase 6 funding to Spelthorne Healthy Communities Partnership Board and use the application process, terms of reference and checklist for this board to enable partners to decide on allocation to community groups who apply.

3.4 **Option 4:** Allocate HSF Phase 6 funding to the Food and Welfare Network to be shared equally amongst each of the members of the network, of which there are 9, £9,555 per organisation.

3.5 **Option 5:** Allocate HSF Phase 6 funding to support the warm hub offer provided at Fordbridge and Greeno Community Centres.

3.6 **Option 6:** Do nothing, this would require funds are returned to Surrey County Council and jeopardise any future award phases.

### **4. Financial implications**

4.1 Spelthorne Borough Council's combined funded budget for this phase is £84,091. The proposed preferred approach to distribution would minimise administration and resourcing pressures. No administration budget has been allocated, though £14,000 was 'ring fenced' in the prior phase based on previous phase administration. There is no expectation from central government for the authority to spend more than its allocated budget

### **5. Other considerations**

5.1 All funding needs to be allocated to residents by the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2025 for Phase 6, so the scheme needs to be completed promptly and the Council want to get support distributed as winter approaches.

### **6. Risk Considerations**

6.1 The proposed approach will minimise the risk of insufficient take up and of not getting this much needed support out as quickly as possible. There are risks

in relation to staff capacity in Housing Benefits, IT and Finance but if options are agreed, the same funding can be applied for potential future phases.

## **7. Equality and Diversity**

- 7.1 All options are likely to have limited reach as this round of funding is greatly reduced. Create a significant impact requires focusing on specific and targeted interventions.

## **8. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications**

- 8.1 This scheme will help residents in financial difficulty.

## **9. Timetable for implementation**

- 9.1 All funding needs to be allocated to residents by the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2025.

**Background papers:** [1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025: Household Support Fund guidance for county councils and unitary authorities in England - GOV.UK](#)  
[List the other appendices](#)

### **Appendices:**

#### **Appendix A – HSF MOW Justification**