



Cabinet Report

Date **11 MAY 2023**

Title **HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND 4**

Report of **CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EDUCATION AND LIFELONG SKILLS**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of this report is to outline the proposed approach and offer for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Household Support Fund (HSF) extension across the Isle of Wight. This report seeks approval from Cabinet for spend and grant funding to organisations in support of vulnerable households for this financial year.
2. Approval of the initiatives described in this report will enable vulnerable Island residents to be supported with the rising cost of living, through assistance with food vouchers and through Community Pantries, support with utility costs via Citizens Advice Isle of Wight and wider essentials through community and voluntary organisations and Town, Parish, and Community Councils.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Cabinet approves the following:

3. The approval of funding of up to £945,390 to be granted to provide food vouchers for up to 12,101 households, as detailed in paragraph 36 of the report.
4. A grant of £100,000 to be held by the connect4communities programme to be allocated to schools in the form of a discretionary grant that will enable them to provide financial support to families in need with food, generic uniform, warm clothing / bedding or wider essential, as detailed in paragraph 42 of the report.
5. A grant of £150,000 is made available to Citizens Advice for them to financially support over 500 households with fuel bills, provide a telephone signposting service to the connect4communities programme, offer an outreach support and advice service in Foodbank Café's and Community Pantries and for the provision of energy efficient white goods where the need is identified. Such grant will be provided on terms to be agreed by the Director of Children's Services and in accordance with the grant criteria set out in paragraph 18 of the report.

6. Funding of £55,000 to be granted to the Footprint Trust to provide advice to households on reducing energy costs, and for the provision of energy efficient white goods across the Island, as well as items such as hot water tank insulation, draft excluders etc. in. This grant is expected to benefit around 800 households.
7. Grants of £170,000 to be used to expand and support the network of community pantries across the Isle of Wight, offering a more sustainable approach to helping households, as detailed in paragraphs 55-58 of the report. Such grants will be provided on terms to be agreed by the Director of Children's Services.
8. A grant of £30,000 to be awarded to The Isle of Wight Foodbank for the purchase of food, energy efficient kitchen appliances and assisting with the set-up of a community garden to grow fresh vegetables, as detailed in paragraph 63 of the report.
9. It is recommended that Cabinet delegates approval to the Director of Children's Services to approve community grant awards to organisations delivering services that meet the criteria of the grant (as set out in paragraph 18 of the report for targeted financial support for those in need until 31 March 2024 in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Lifelong Skills totalling £500,000.
10. Funding of up to £30,000 be ringfenced to commission Third Party Organisations to provide support and advice on budgeting, finances, maximising income as well as accessing other help, as detailed in paragraph 70 of the report. Such grant will be provided on terms to be agreed by the Director of Children's Services.
11. A grant of £45,000 to IW Carers who support c. 800 unpaid carers on the Island. The grant is to be used to support 200 unpaid carers with clothing, travel, medical equipment, and kitchen appliances. Detail is set out in paragraph 72 of the report.
12. A grant of £50,000 to Age UK for the delivery of hygiene packs to 1,000 pensioners, particularly those struggling with the cost of incontinence products and in rural areas as detailed in paragraph 74 of the report.
13. It is recommended that Cabinet delegates approval to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Lifelong Skills, to agree a fund of £20,000 to be used to assist exceptional and genuine emergency cases with housing costs in accordance with DWP grant conditions, as detailed in paragraphs 76 – 80 of the report.
14. That Cabinet delegates approval to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Lifelong Skills to approve the reallocation of any Household Support Fund underspend to organisations delivering services that meet the criteria. This will ensure that where spend does not meet the approvals set out in this report, the Isle of Wight Council can rapidly adapt the approach to ensure needs are met.

BACKGROUND

15. On 17th November 2022, the Government announced an extension to the Household Support Fund as targeted financial support for those in need over the 2023/2024 financial year. Guidance and grant determinations were also confirmed

on this date. Although this has been announced as an extension, unallocated funds from previous grant rounds are unable to be carried forward due to a change in the spend criteria, namely the extension of the grant period from six to 12 months and the addition of advice now included within allowed criteria.

16. The £842 million Household Support Fund is being distributed through County and Unitary Councils and is to be used primarily to support households in the most need with utility costs, food, and water bills. It can also be used to support households with essential costs related to those items and with wider essential costs. In exceptional cases of genuine emergency, it can additionally be used to support housing costs where existing housing support schemes do not meet this exceptional need.
17. The Department for Work and Pensions, the government department that is providing the funding, expects top tier local authorities to administer the scheme and provide direct assistance to vulnerable households. Rather than focus on one specific vulnerable group, Authorities should use the wide range of data and sources of information at their disposal to identify and provide support to a broad cross section of vulnerable households in their area. Support is not restricted to vulnerable households in receipt of benefits; therefore, Authorities should also use other sources of information to identify vulnerable households, including advice from professionals who encounter vulnerable households such as social workers and Supporting Families advisors.
18. The conditions of the Household Support Fund extension state that assistance should be focussed on households in the most need, particularly those who may not be eligible for the other support government has recently made available. This may include households not currently in receipt of DWP welfare benefits or those only in receipt of Housing Benefit who are not eligible for the Cost-of-Living payment, pensioners who have no way of increasing their income, households with children, disabled people, and care leavers. It may also include those who are entitled to, but not claiming qualifying benefits and people who begin a claim or return a payment of a benefit after the relevant qualifying date.
19. The Isle of Wight's share of the Household Support Fund is £2,263,152 to be spent between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024.
20. The Household Support Fund is similar to previous DWP funding through the Covid Winter Grant and the Covid Local Support Grant, administered by IWC and known as the connect4communities programme.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

21. This project links to the Economic Recovery aspect of the Corporate Plan 2021 – 2025, addressing poverty and working towards reducing the number of residents who are living in poverty.
22. The recommendations also help to meet the Administration's aspirations relative to strategic partnerships and Covid-19 recovery of addressing poverty and inequalities in the Island's most deprived areas and improving the Island's resilience to wellbeing relative to its position when national lockdown ended in July 2021.

23. The proposed delivery plan would also help to address the Administration's aspirations around strategic finance, transformational change, and corporate resources by providing greater support to those on low incomes.
24. Relative to the Administration's aspirations around adult social care and public health, approval of the recommendations would link to placing the health and wellbeing of residents at the centre of what we do.
25. Through our work with established community pantries and additional pantries to the network we will help to reduce the Island's food waste, working with Island supermarkets and food providers to promote the re-distribution of unused edible food.

Responding to climate change and enhancing the biosphere

26. The Household Support Fund has a target to help low-income households manage energy costs through use of measures such as insulation, efficient LED lighting, and draught proofing. Reducing energy use via these measures will also help to decrease carbon emissions from households. However, a precise estimate of emissions reductions cannot be given at this stage and will need to be assessed further as the programme progresses.
27. It is hoped the community pantries will work with Keert to offer a delivery service for rural and hard to reach residents. Using bikes for delivery may have a small impact on carbon emissions, reducing car use.

Economic Recovery and Reducing Poverty

28. The project links to the Economic Recovery aspect of the Corporate Plan 2021-2025, addressing poverty and working towards reducing the number of residents who are living in poverty.
29. The primary purpose of the DWP Household Support Fund is to provide immediate support to residents in need. IWC have devised schemes that will deliver instant benefit, by way of food vouchers, as well as schemes where residents can apply for support through Third Party Organisations (TPO's) to help with the cost of food, utility costs and wider essentials.

The Council are looking to support the established Isle of Wight community pantries with additional funding, helping their sustainability, whilst also looking at extending the pantry network to other areas of the Island, bringing that level of help closer to a higher number of residents.

Impact on Young People and Future Generations

30. Approval of the proposed IWC connect4communities programme should have a positive impact on reducing child poverty. A reduction has been seen of around 500 households in the number of those meeting eligibility of the largest food voucher scheme compared to those meeting that same criterion in January 2022. Whilst not all these households will be those with children, a number will be young families with children.

31. We have consistently supported the Island's Care Leaver cohort through this funding. The support provided to these young people is benefiting not only the Care Leavers themselves, but also their children.
32. This report has been presented to Youth Council for their input.

CONSULTATION

33. We have held a number of stakeholder consultation meetings, both with internal Council colleagues as well as Town, Parish and community council representatives, Citizens Advice IOW, Schools, Community and Voluntary Organisations to determine the wider need of specific cohorts and how best to utilise the funding.
34. In addition to these meetings, engagement has been undertaken with the existing community pantries to ascertain the required level of onward funding.
35. This engagement has resulted in an offer, under the programme name connect4communities, proposed across IOW.

The IOW Offer

36. It is recommended that Cabinet approve the grant of £945,390 to purchase and provide food vouchers for residents, providing support to several different cohorts including:
 - (a) Two separate £100 food vouchers, sent across the 23/24 financial year to young carers registered with the IWC young carers service on 1st April 2023 and 1st October 2023. These vouchers would be sent in June and November 2023 and would utilise a total budget of up to **£80,000**. It is anticipated that 400 young carers will benefit from these vouchers.
 - (b) Two separate food vouchers, sent across the 23/24 financial year period to around 181 care leavers registered with the IWC Leaving Care service on 1st April and 1st October 2023 and will spend a budget of **£36,200**. These vouchers will be sent in July and December.
 - (c) A one-off £50 food voucher sent to all Island households in receipt of Local Council Tax Support (as of 1st April 2023), to be issued in October 2023. 10,000 households are expected to benefit from these vouchers, at a cost of **£500,000**. Whilst this voucher is a lower value to other cohorts being targeted, this is due to the fact they have received support on a continuous basis through every previous round of the Household Support Fund. Targeting this cohort however does allow us to spread the reach of the funding.
 - (d) Two separate £100 food vouchers sent across the 23/24 financial year to around 1,000 Children in Need registered with Children's Social Care on 1st April and 1st October 2023. These vouchers will be sent in August and January and will cost **£200,000**.
 - (e) Two separate £100 food vouchers, to be sent across the 23/24 financial year to around 210 children registered with the Disabled Children's Team on 1st April and 1st October 2023, at a cost of **£42,000**. The vouchers will be sent in July and December.
 - (f) Two separate £100 food vouchers, to be issued during the 23/24 financial year period to 310 households registered with the IWC Children's Services Early Help service on 1st April and 1st October 2023. This would utilise

£62,000 of the overall budget, issuing the vouchers in September and February.

37. These vouchers would be proactively sent to eligible households by way of a data sharing agreement between the Isle of Wight Council and a third-party voucher company, reducing the resource requirements in-house. An administration cost of £1 per voucher, plus postage of 0.68p + VAT would be chargeable, costing another **£25,190** across the year. This is a lower cost than employing additional IWC staff to undertake the tasks.
38. The vouchers can be used in any UK store of the allocated supermarket, for goods including food, household items such as washing powder, nappies, soaps, and shampoo as well as clothing and bedding, if available in store, but not valid for use on alcohol, tobacco products, or lottery. Issuing the vouchers, which can only be used at the allocated supermarket offsets money residents spend on these items, freeing up funds for use against utility bills. As there are no secure vouchers available for the use of utilities, issuing food vouchers mitigates the risk of fraud.
39. **Discretionary funding to schools**
40. The connect4communities team have received numerous requests from vulnerable families requesting support with everyday essentials such as food, school uniform and other essentials.
41. It is recommended that approval is given for grant funding of **£100,000** to be provided to schools by way of vouchers that can be obtained in relation to these costs. These vouchers would allow schools to target all families known to them as being in need, not just those in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) or benefits.
42. Schools know their families, are aware of those that are in need whether they are working poor families just above the benefits threshold, or those recently starting to experience hardship due to the Cost-of-Living crisis. Working with a voucher provider, funding would be held on account by IWC, that schools can draw down on, either for food vouchers to help those families most in need, uniform costs, or essentials such as weather appropriate clothing that can be used at a variety of supermarkets. Schools will be given discretion to distribute the vouchers as they see fit, mindful of the grant criteria set by DWP, and would need to report back to the Council on how they have allocated the funding. Parents would apply directly to their child's school to access support.
43. **Support and advice for food and utility costs**
44. The DWP have extended the remit of the Household Support Fund to include advice services in the eligible spend. The Fund may be used to provide supplementary advice services to award recipients, including debt and benefit advice, where Authorities consider this appropriate. Authorities are reminded that the primary intention of the Fund is to provide crisis support for households, and it is expected any advice services would complement this. It is not expected that a large portion of funding is spent on advice services but a connection between the funding provided for advice services and the practical support provided under Household Support Fund. It is anticipated that a significant proportion of this will be through signposting to existing advice services funded through other routes, such as the Help to Claim scheme which supports those making a claim to Universal Credit.

45. It is recommended that funding of **£150,000** is granted to Citizens Advice. This will be used to support and deliver three schemes, benefitting 500 households. They will also provide a single point of contact for IOW residents to understand the sources of support that may be available to them through the connect4communities programme, and via other means.
46. Citizens Advice will provide an outreach service to those attending the Foodbank Café's and Community Pantries to offer advice around budgeting and debt management.
47. Secondly, Citizens Advice will use the funding over the next twelve months to provide food vouchers (to those not eligible for one of the food voucher schemes above) as well as direct financial support to households with fuel bills and wider essentials. They will be the dedicated source of utility payments for the Island, being able to offer secure top-ups remotely to pre-payment meters, whilst also having an established trusted relationship with utility companies to provide support to those paying by Direct Debit, mitigating the risk of fraud.
48. It is felt that ring-fencing this support to Citizens Advice will reduce the potential for double funding with other grants available and asking Citizens Advice to administer this fund will ensure that any financial support can be provided alongside broader support and advice. Citizens Advice are also well placed to undertake ID and benefits checks to mitigate the potential risks of fraudulent claims. IOW Council may require Citizens Advice to target communities where there is specific local need.
49. Citizens Advice will also be able to assist those they are working with to provide energy efficient white-goods and work closely with Footprint Trust to alleviate potential double-funding.
50. **Footprint Trust**
51. It is recommended that **£55,000** is granted to the Footprint Trust who will provide an Island wide service, delivering outreach support with advice on how to reduce energy costs, working alongside the budget management advice provided by Citizens Advice, as well as energy efficient white goods. The funding will also allow them to assist people with domestic insulation.
52. The proposal from the Footprint Trust also includes assisting residents with reducing their water costs by providing water butts to collect rainwater which can be used for gardens etc. Suitable planters, compost, and vegetable seed etc to get residents growing their own vegetables, subsequently reducing their food bills whilst offering healthy fresh vegetables will also be provided.
53. **Community Pantries**
54. Community pantries work on the principle of giving those in need the opportunity to have a 'helping hand' by getting food at a lower rate on a weekly basis. Items found in the pantry will be a range of fresh, frozen, and general foods which will change on a weekly basis. Access to the community pantry is by way of membership, and for a weekly contribution, members receive food to a significantly higher value. For example, members are charged a sum of £5 per shop and receive in excess of £15

worth of goods. Community pantries will be encouraged to provide a delivery service for those who are not able to come and shop for whatever reason.

55. It is proposed that funding is provided to establish three new community pantries across the Island in the West Wight, Cowes and Sandown/Shanklin areas. Approval is sought from Cabinet to delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services to approve grant awards to organisations for the delivery of such schemes in consultation with the Executive Lead Member up to the value of **£75,000**.
56. The aim of this funding would be to expand the network of community pantries across the Island, thus developing the experience and expertise to continue establishing further pantries if required in the future. Proactive exploratory discussions are underway with schools, community groups and family hubs to identify suitable organisations with the ethos and interest to operate a community pantry. Furthermore, organisations will be able to apply for grant funding should they wish to operate a community pantry on the Isle of Wight.
57. It is also proposed that further funding of **£95,000** is approved to support the four existing pantries on the Isle of Wight. The rise in the cost of food, coupled with the sharp increase of members is hitting the pantries' limited budget and this will help them to continue providing a sustainable source of food for those in need.
58. The allocation of this funding would be for up to £20,000 for each of the community pantries, based on an assessment of need. Whilst the remaining £15,000 would be used to fund consultancy for the pantries, helping them to strengthen their provision, assistance with grant applications etc and an additional allocation of £2,500 per pantry for them to work with Keert Cargo Bikes, delivering food parcels to residents who live in rural locations, are hard-to-reach or those unable to travel.
59. **Isle of Wight Foodbank**
60. The connect4communities team have been working closely with the Isle of Wight Foodbank to develop the connection between the foodbanks and community pantries on the Island, providing a Food Ladder approach to help residents out of food poverty.
61. Food Ladders are described as community-wide interventions aimed at building resilience to food insecurity. There are three rungs to a food ladder; Catching, Capacity building to enable social innovation and Self-Organised community change. With the Foodbank 'catching' those in crisis and offering short-term intervention, it is hoped that residents will be able to move on to accessing community pantries who will also provide a holistic service working alongside services such as Citizens Advice and Barnardo's, whilst also providing a social aspect. Community Services such as family cookery sessions and eating activities will help overcome loneliness and cross-social divides.
62. The Isle of Wight Foodbank is working with the community to provide a community garden established and maintained by volunteers, allowing those accessing the foodbank to pick their own vegetables. They have also seen a reduction in the amount of donations both by way of food and finances, but an increase in the number of residents accessing the service.

63. It is recommended a grant of **£30,000** is approved for direct provision of supplies to the Isle of Wight foodbank to allow them to source food to increase their stock, along with seeds and equipment for the community garden. It is anticipated an amount of £20,000 being used for food, benefitting around 570 people (based on a per person cost), £7,500 for the purchase of kitchen appliances for around 100 people and £2,500 for the community garden which will be of benefit to anyone visiting the provision for years to come.
64. **Community Grants**
65. A fund of **£500,000** is recommended to develop local initiatives where community and voluntary groups along with Town, Parish and Community Councils can apply for funding to support the community with food and fuel projects, either by proactively working with residents already known to them or by offering an application scheme.
66. Community organisations will be proactively approached and encouraged to apply for a proportion of this fund, along with those working in the energy sector to specifically target those households using LPG for heating, and residents struggling with the rising cost of utilities and organisations supporting cohorts that support rough sleepers and sheltered accommodation.
67. It is recommended that Cabinet delegates authority to the Director of Children's Services to approve grant awards to organisations delivering services that meet the criteria of the grant (as set out in paragraph 18) for targeted financial support for those in need over the financial year in consultation with the Lead Member for Children's Services, Education and Lifelong Skills.
68. Applications from Town, Parish and Community Councils will need to detail information around match-funding and how the support will be sustainable moving forward, after the end of the grant period.
69. **Advice Services**
70. It is recommended that up to **£30,000** be ringfenced to commission Third Party Organisations to provide advice on budgeting, finances, maximising income as well as accessing other help. Council staff will work with local communities to identify those organisations best placed to deliver such advice services, which may include community-based organisations such as outreach from DWP job seekers support in libraries and community pantries. Approval is sought from Cabinet to delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services, in conjunction with the Lead Member for Children's Services, Education and Lifelong Skills to work with such organisations and grants will be provided on terms to be agreed by the Director of Children's Services and in accordance with the grant criteria as set out in paragraph 18.
71. **Unpaid Carers**
72. It is recommended that approval is given for a grant of **£45,000** to be provided to IW Carers, a community organisation working with unpaid carers on the island, over the age of 18 caring for someone also over the age of 18. This funding would be made available for this cohort of residents to apply for assistance with the cost of

clothing, travel, equipment promoting independence, and kitchen appliances to reduce energy costs.

73. Age UK

74. It is recommended that approval is given to a grant of **£50,000** to Age UK to provide hygiene packs for pensioners in need. These packs will include incontinence products, soaps, shampoos etc. Age UK work with a high number of pensioners and through their home help and befriending services can also reach those in rural areas or that are housebound. This funding will be to the benefit of up to 1000 pensioners.

75. Exceptional Housing Costs

76. As with previous DWP Household Support Funds, the grant guidance states that in exceptional cases of genuine emergency and where existing housing schemes do not meet the exceptional need, support for housing costs can be met.
77. In the case of providing financial support around housing, eligibility for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) must first be considered before emergency housing support is offered through the Household Support Fund. Similarly, the Authority must also first consider whether the claimant is at statutory risk of homelessness and therefore owed a duty of support through the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG).
78. The Fund can exceptionally and in genuine emergency be used to provide support for historic rent arrears built up prior to an existing benefit claim for households already in receipt of Universal Credit and Housing Benefit. This is because these arrears are excluded from the criteria for Discretionary Housing Payments. However, support with rent arrears is not the primary intent of the fund and should not be the focus of spend.
79. The Household Support Fund should not be used to provide housing support on an ongoing basis or to support unsustainable tenancies, nor can it be used to provide mortgage support, though homeowners could still qualify for the other elements of the Fund (such as food, energy, water, essentials linked to energy and water and wider essentials). Where a homeowner is having difficulty with their mortgage payments, they should contact their lender as soon as possible to discuss their circumstances as lenders will have a set procedure to assist.
80. In assessing cases where exceptional housing support may be required, the connect4communities team will work the IWC's Homeless Prevention team and Revenues and Benefits team to establish eligibility and the value of any financial support on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with the DWP criteria set out in paragraphs 76-79.
- 81. Administration and Communication Costs**
82. The Household Support Fund allocation includes reasonable administration costs to enable local authorities to deliver the scheme and it is therefore permitted for IWC (and partners) to deduct estimated administration costs from the total allocation to determine the amount remaining.

83. IWC is seeking to minimise administration costs and funding of up to £120,000 (5.3%) will be top sliced from the IWC grant allocation to cover centralised administration costs which will include staff costs for a Project Manager, Project Officer and Administration Support, web page design communications and marketing support.
84. It is further recommended that Third Party Organisations applying for funding are also granted up to a 5% allowance for administration costs towards the delivery of their schemes.

FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

85. A summary of the proposed funding across the initiatives to be delivered through the connect4communities scheme is set out in table 1:

Table 1:

connect4communities – IOW's Household Support Fund	
Component	Funding Allocation (£)
<p>Food Voucher Scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two separate £100 food vouchers, sent across the 23/24 financial year to young carers registered with the IWC young carers service on 1st April 2023 and 1st October 2023. These vouchers would be sent in June and November 2023. It is anticipated that 400 young carers will benefit from these vouchers. Two separate food vouchers, sent across the 23/24 financial year period to around 181 care leavers registered with the IWC Leaving Care service on 1st April and 1st October 2023. These vouchers will be sent in July and December. A one-off £50 food voucher sent to all Island households in receipt of Local Council Tax Support (as of 1st April 2023), to be issued in October 2023. 10,000 households are expected to benefit from these vouchers. Two separate £100 food vouchers sent across the 23/24 financial year to around 1,000 Children in Need registered with Children's Social Care on 1st April and 1st October 2023. These vouchers will be sent in August and January. Two separate £100 food vouchers, to be sent across the 23/24 financial year to around 210 children registered with the Disabled Children's Team on 1st April and 1st October 2023. The vouchers will be sent in July and December. Two separate £100 food vouchers, to be issued during the 23/24 financial year period to 310 households registered with the IWC Children's Services Early Help service on 1st April and 1st 	945,390

October 2023, vouchers would be issued in September and February.	
Discretionary funding for schools to draw down vouchers	100,000
Grant to Citizens Advice for Open Access to Individuals	150,000
Footprint Trust	55,000
Community Pantries (new and existing)	170,000
Isle of Wight Foodbank	30,000
Community Grants	500,000
Grants for Advice on budgeting, finances, and maximising income etc.	20,000
Unpaid Carers	45,000
Age UK	50,000
Exceptional Housing Costs	20,000
Administration costs	120,000
Sub-Total	2,205,390
Contingency	57,762
Total Plan	2,263,152

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

86. The Council are limited to the use of the funds within the restrictions of the DWP grant guidance.
87. All funding granted to third party organisations (including schools, colleges, and early years providers) will be supported by a grant agreement setting out the conditions of the funding as well as reporting requirements.
88. Third party organisations will be required to report to the Council on how they have spent the funding provided, in line with the DWP grant criteria set out in paragraph 18.
89. Allocation of funding across the grant criteria set out in paragraph 18 should be monitored to ensure spend remains compliant with the terms of the grant.
90. For this latest allocation of Household Support Fund, DWP have kept the increased level of Management Information that is required to be collected by councils and TPO's. This includes a breakdown of the number of awards provided by household composition, a breakdown of the category of support i.e., food / energy and water etc. in addition to how the support is awarded (vouchers, tangible items etc.) and by whom (LA, TPO etc). This data is required by the DWP to inform future methods of support.
91. One further level of detail that needs to be captured, where possible, is the number of individual households we have assisted. It is thought best to monitor this by individual organisation and then collated centrally. This poses the risk of the same household being recorded multiple times if visiting multiple organisations, but the DWP are aware of this.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

92. Consultation has been undertaken with community and voluntary organisations, town, parish and community council representatives, school representatives, internal council departments, and Citizens Advice IOW.
93. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and is included as Appendix 1 to this report.

PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

94. There are no property implications associated with this funding due to the nature of the grant conditions.

OPTIONS

95. The options available to Cabinet are as follows:
 - (a) To approve the recommendations described in the IOW offer above which will provide support to a high number of Island residents with the cost of food, utilities, and wider essentials.
 - (b) Not to approve the recommendations proposed in the IOW offer but recommend an alternative delivery plan.

RISK MANAGEMENT

96. To mitigate risk of fraud as much as possible, we have devised schemes that deliver closed-loop vouchers or tangible items, as opposed to awarding cash or bank transfers.
97. Community and Voluntary Organisations along with Charities, Town, Parish, and Community Councils must apply for funding, detailing the delivery of the project, estimated beneficiaries and eligibility criteria. The application will follow a process and if approved, a grant agreement confirming grant instructions will be issued before funds are released.
98. Intermittent checks will be undertaken by the connect4communities team to ensure grant conditions are being followed, and audits carried out at the end of the grant period.
99. There is a risk that if Cabinet do not approve the proposed delivery plan that Isle of Wight residents will not be supported with the rising cost of living, and the number living in poverty will increase.
100. As with the granting of other discretionary schemes, the programme will only be delivered in line with the specific grant conditions specified in the DWP guidance. Spend is reviewed by DWP and there is a risk of future funding being withheld if guidance is not followed.
101. There is a risk that when the funding from the Household Support Fund stops, residents that have become reliant on the support will find themselves unable to afford basics. Match funding from the Town, Parish and Community Council's will

mitigate this risk slightly as they will be able to continue past the end of the fund, as is the intention with community pantries.

EVALUATION

102. The proposed delivery plan is similar to schemes delivered through earlier rounds of the Household Support Fund, which has shown residents feel supported with the immediate benefit provided by way of food vouchers. However, they quickly become dependent on the vouchers which is why schemes have moved away from delivering food vouchers over the school holiday periods as families fast became reliant on receiving them. Each round of funding has targeted different cohorts in need.
103. Devising schemes additional to the food vouchers, provides alternative forms of support and by supporting the community pantries helps to give longer-term support for the Island.

APPENDICES ATTACHED

104. Appendix 1 – Equalities Impact Assessment

BACKGROUND PAPERS

105. This paper is based on the Department for Work and Pensions Household Support Fund (2023-2024) Final Guidance document. A link to the document can be found [1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024: Household Support Fund guidance for county councils and unitary authorities in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115444/1_April_2023_to_31_March_2024_Household_Support_Fund_guidance_for_county_councils_and_unitary_authorities_in_England.pdf).

Contact Point: Laura Hales, connect4communities Project Manager, ☎ 821000
e-mail laura.hales@iow.gov.uk

STUART ASHLEY
Director of Children's Services

(CLLR) DEBBIE ANDRE
*Cabinet Member for Children's Services,
Education and Lifelong Skills*