

CLT Date: 01.12.2020

Item name: COVID Winter Grant scheme

Lead officer: Lee Kimberley – Head of Nottingham Catering

Director: Nicholas Lee - Director of Education Services

Estimated time required at CLT: 10 minutes

Purpose: **Briefing Note** on the proposed management and delivery process of the COVID Winter Grant Scheme

Recommendations:

- That CLT notes the content of this Briefing Note and provides feedback on the proposals for Nottingham City's allocation of the COVID Winter Grant Scheme.
- That CLT notes the future LKD and tight timescales for the approval, acceptance and allocation of this grant.

Background/context:

This briefing note is to inform CLT of the proposals for the use of the COVID Winter Grant allocated to Nottingham City, to support the subsequent Leaders Key Decision to follow promptly.

On 8th November 2020, the government announced a package of extra targeted financial support for those in need over the winter period. The £170 million COVID Winter Grant Scheme, available from December 2020, will see new funding issued to County Councils and Unitary Authorities to support those most in need across England with the cost of food, energy and water bills and other associated costs. Nottingham City Council's allocation is £1,414,274.00

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will provide funding to County Councils and Unitary Authorities, under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, who will administer the scheme and provide direct assistance to vulnerable households and families with children particularly affected by the pandemic. This will include some families who normally have access to Free School Meals during term time. County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England will have the ability to deliver the scheme through vouchers or grants. The Scheme will operate from early December 2020 and covers the period until the end of March 2021.

The Local Authority is able to determine eligibility in their area and target their support within the scope of the conditions set out below:

- at least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to support families with children, with up to 20% of the total funding to other types of households, including individuals.
- at least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to provide support with food, energy and water bills (including sewerage), with up to 20% on other items.

A cross departmental team of officers has been urgently convened to develop the proposals for the use of this grant and will continue to work collaboratively to implement this proposal:

- Julia Holmes – Schools Finance
- Ian Roper – Nottingham Revenues and Benefits
- Hayley Mason – Finance
- Phil Gretton – Finance
- Mary Lester – Head of Community Partnerships
- Louise Graham - Voluntary and Community Sector Partnerships Manager
- Esme MacAuley – Marketing & Comms
- John Dexter – Director of Education
- Lucy Lee, Head of Customer Services
- Ceri Walters, Head of Commercial Finance*
- Nick Lee, Director of Education Services
- Jennifer Hardy, Project Manager, Schools
- Lee Kimberley – Head of Nottingham Catering
- Jacquie Blake – Commercial Operations Manager
- Lisa Fox – Education Catering Manager

Consultation with 9 other SPOC for local authorities, both county and city authorities from the east midlands region held on 19th November confirms that the majority intend similar proposals for use and distribution of this grant funding.

In Nottingham it is proposed that:

1. Approximately £945,260 (66% of the available grant) would be spent on the provision of food to those families where children are in receipt of free school meals or free meals in Further Education

settings due to the low income of the household across the Christmas and February half-term breaks.

For the October half term the Council funded 4,700 vouchers as a one-off , through an application process for FSM pupils at a cost of £70,970 which was funded through the DEFRA Emergency Assistance Grant. This was administered through the customer contact centre due to the half term break.

The Christmas and February scheme would be delivered locally to parents by schools providing digital vouchers for local supermarkets, supported through Nottingham Catering in line with the voucher schemes operated since the first lockdown of March 2020.

Schools have been contacted to:

- verify all FSM eligible pupils,
- Identify the key administrative contact to manage the issue of vouchers
- Identify any discretionary vouchers for non-eligible pupils of families who are in need of additional support.

2. Approximately £282,854 (20% of the available grant) would be targeted at other types of households, such as (but not limited to) vulnerable adults with an allocated lead professional such as a Social Worker, Family Service or Children's Centre Service key worker or a professional in an allied service such as domestic violence charities. This would be targeted at households struggling with the provision of food, paying winter energy costs and water bills during the period up until March and based on an assessment of need by the relevant professional.
3. Approximately £135,000 (9.5% of the grant) would be focused on individual households not meeting the above eligibility but who have contacts the council in urgent need. This could include (but not limited to) care leavers, families with children those at risk of homelessness and those with no recourse to public funds. This would be in the form of financial assistance through a £50 or £100 voucher for food in a similar manner to the FSM vouchers, but administered through the Customer Hub.

4. It is proposed that £50,000 will initially be set aside for administration, although this can be reviewed once further details are confirmed.

The council will need to seek advice from partner organisations such as DWP, to ensure that the money is fairly and consistently targeted, to reduce the risks of any fraud and to account for the expenditure in line with the set criteria. It is likely that detailed records will need to be held on individual household allocations.

Where possible a version of the existing digital process will be used to administer the proposed allocation of this funding through schools or the customer hub, however the exact criteria is in development, to be confirmed.

Existing Voluntary and Community Sector small grant processes cannot be utilised to allocate this funding. This funding is specifically aimed at directly supporting individuals, VCS grants processes support organisations and have no authority, knowledge or expertise to directly fund individuals.

Governance

A Leaders Key Decision will be produced to confirm the acceptance of this grant and the relevant delegation of spending authority to Hugh White - Corporate Director for COVID Response & Recovery.

Due to the timescales involved a Special Urgency Notice and exemption from call-in will be completed.

Timetable

The forthcoming school holiday period presents a short timescale for a formal decision to be made and implemented in respect of this grant, to enable the allocation of FSM vouchers to be administered through schools prior to the end of term. It should be noted that some academies are intending to close 1 week early from Friday 11th December, therefore distribution will need to commence from Wednesday 9th December at the latest.

Other Options Considered

Due to the short timescales involved no other options have been considered.

Financial Implications

The council's revenue budget will be adjusted to reflect this new ring fenced grant and it will be monitored through the usual monthly financial monitoring process and in line with the grant conditions. A summary of the proposed grant allocation is in the table below:

Available grant			£	1,414,274.00
	Quantity	Cost per unit		
FSM vouchers - Christmas	23000	£15.10	£	347,300.00
FSM vouchers - February	11500	£15.10	£	173,650.00
FSM vouchers Feb contingency	11500	£15.10	£	173,650.00
Schools identify additional families 10%	4600	£15.10	£	69,460.00
Estimated under 5's - Christmas	6000	£15.10	£	90,600.00
Estimated under 5's - Feb	3000	£15.10	£	45,300.00
Estimated under 5's Feb contingency	3000	£15.10	£	45,300.00
20% to be spent on adults			£	282,854.80
Family Support Grant / JAM*	1350	£100.00	£	135,000.00
Allocation SubTotal			£	1,363,114.80
Admin costs - estimate			£	50,000.00
Subtotal			£	1,413,114.80
Remaining Grant			£	1,159.20

*Just About Managing

Supporting Commentary from Head of Commercial Finance

Detail financial commentary will be formally provided for the Leaders Key Decision.

END

Lee Kimberley – Head of Nottingham Catering / MCS Food Lead

Nicholas Lee - Director of Education Services