

Nottingham City Council Delegated Decision



Nottingham
City Council

Reference Number:

4922

Author:

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Department:

Communities, Environment and Resident Services

Contact:

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Subject:

Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding (EBSS AF) & Alternative Fuel Payments (AFP)

Key Decision (decision affects 2 or more wards):

Yes

Total Value:

£1,231,200.00 - EBSS AF

£94,000.00 - AFP (Type: Revenue)

Decision Being Taken:

To approve the S151 officer for the Council to sign both the EBSS Alternative Funding and the Alternative Fuel Payments Grant Determination 2023 letters and to delegate authority to the Head of Enviroenergy, in consultation with the Director of Environment and Sustainability to:1)Accept and issue grant funding for the EBSS AF totalling £1,231,200.00 from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), Business Grants and Investments Directorate to deliver the EBSS Alternative Funding payments to eligible City residents. 2) Accept and issue grant funding for the Alternative Fuel Payments scheme totalling £94,000.00 from Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), Business Grants and Investments Directorate to deliver the Alternative Fuel Payments to eligible City residents .3) The S151 Officer to sign and return to DESNZ a copy of EBSS Alternative Funding and Alternative Fuel Payments grant determination notices, grant claim form S151 officer declarations. 4) The S151 Officer to sign and return to DESNZ, Business Grants and Investments Directorate the Data Sharing Agreement for both the EBSS AF and AFP schemes upon confirmation that the Information compliance team accept the document and that a Data Protection Impact Assessment is produced for both schemes 5) To spend the funding in-line with the grant conditions cited on both grant declaration forms 6) Approve the Environment and Sustainability Customer Service Team to manage and administer both schemes, issuing £400 and £200 grant payments to each eligible resident after applicant clarification checks are completed 7) .Non Executive decision, using the grant funding to:1) establish and approve recruitment to 1 x 0.6 FTE post - Customer Support Officer to process applications and issue payments to eligible residents. DESNZ will provide burden funding for this post and any other costs incurred by us to enable the grants to be issued to eligible Citizens.

Reasons for the Decision(s)

Nottingham City Council have been advised by DESNZ Business Grants and Investments Directorate that as per the Energy Prices Act 2022, they have given direction us as an issuing authority to manage and administer the Energy Bill Support Scheme, Alternative Funding and Alternative Fuel Payments grant scheme payments to eligible City residents. The EBSS AF grant is a one off £400 payment to eligible residents and will be paid to residents that do not have a direct relationship with an energy supplier meaning they were unable to receive the Energy Bill Support Scheme payments which began from 01st of October 2022. The AFP grant is a one off £200 payment to eligible residents and will be paid to residents that use alternative fuels for heating. This is where the resident has not received the eligible support through their current electricity supplier and can show they have spent at least £200 since September 2022. The Government made a commitment to provide financial support to all UK households via the Energy Bill Support Scheme. This grant funding will provide the £400 and £200 payment to people in care homes, private wire electricity customers, park homes, homes heated with kerosene, smokeless coal or other alternative fuels and any other resident that doesn't have a direct relationship with an energy provider. DESNZ have set up a customer application portal using the Salesforce platform. We (NCC), will access applications through this portal and perform checks to ensure the resident is eligible and is a City resident. Payments will be made via the NCC banking team as a daily bulk upload. Both schemes have been opened up already by DESNZ, the end date for applications for both schemes is 31st May 2023, any applications made to DESNZ after this date will not be processed by them. The £94,000 Alternative Fuel Payment monies will be paid to us in full. The EBSS Alternative Funding payment of £1,231,200.00 will be paid as 80% initially issued, with the remaining 20% issued after scheme closure, it is expected that the remaining 20% of the monies will be paid to us in early June, this will allow us to issue the final payments to eligible applicants upon receipt of the remaining funding being made available to us. Recent conversations with other local authorities suggests that based on the amount of applications they have received so far, the 80% initially issued to local authorities may not be claimed, therefore the 20% outstanding may not need to be issued to us by DESNZ. All monies not issued by us upon issuing final grant payments to eligible applicants will be returned to DESNZ after a final financial reconciliation is complete. The cost burden to us as an issuing authority will be reimbursed by burden funding from DESNZ/The Treasury, this will include: staffing costs and admin costs covering items like postage, bank transaction charges and stationary should it be required. For any payments made to applicants that are done incorrectly where it is identified after issuing that the claim should have been rejected, NCC must take reasonable steps to reclaim the money. After NCC have taken reasonable steps for recovery and exhausted all options, it is now confirmed: The

Secretary of State confirmed (on 27 March 2023) that the Department will stand behind any erroneous payments, subject to Local Authorities taking all reasonable and practicable measures to avoid making payments to ineligible recipients. Having exhausted all reasonable and practicable steps to recover any ineligible or over-payments, the Department will be accountable for any sums not recovered. Any recovery costs incurred by NCC will be claimed via the burden funding made available.

Briefing notes documents:

- 1. AMENDED ENERGY BILLS SUPPORT SCHEME ALTERNATIVE FUNDING GRANT DETERMINATION 2023.docx, AFP Grant Determination Letter Final.docx

Other Options Considered: Not to accept these grants, this option was not considered as it would be detrimental to the residents within the City who have not yet received the £400 Energy Bill Support Scheme payment and the £200 Alternative Fuels Payment. These grants will help tackle fuel poverty across the City and ensure financial support is in place for those that have not yet received this in the face of rising energy costs.

Background Papers: Energy Bills Support Scheme Grant Determination Letter 2023 Alternative Fuels Payment Grant Determination Letter 2023 EBSS AF Data Sharing Agreement 2023 AFP Data Sharing Agreement 2023

Unpublished background papers: Alternative Fuel Payment Scheme Alternative Funding latest DSA March 2023.pdf, AFP Grant Determination Letter Final.docx, 2. DATA SHARING AGREEMENT 2023 - 1. ENERGY BILLS SUPPORT SCHEME ALTERNATIVE FUNDING BEIS-LA.docx, 1. ENERGY BILLS SUPPORT SCHEME ALTERNATIVE FUNDING GRANT DETERMINATION 2023.docx

Published Works: N/A

Affected Wards: Citywide

Colleague / Councillor Interests: N/A

Consultations: Those not consulted are not directly affected by the decision.

Crime and Disorder Implications: N/A

Equality: EIA not required. Reasons: EIA not required. Reasons: Recruitment of staff will adhere to existing EIA

Relates to staffing: Yes

Decision Type: Leader's Key Decision

Subject to Call In: No
The call-in procedure does not apply to the proposed decision because the delay likely to be caused by the call in process would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interests. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (or Vice-Chair) in his/her absence has been consulted and agreed both that the decision proposed is reasonable in all circumstances and that it should be treated as a matter of urgency.

Person Consulted: Councillor Sam Gardiner
Consultation Date: 21/04/2023

The decision is urgent and the business cannot be deferred because it provides the ability to alleviate the extreme financial hardship experienced by some citizens due to the cost of energy

Advice Sought:

Legal, Finance, Human Resources, Other: Theresa Pollard(theresa.pollard@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)

Legal Advice:

The proposed grant funding from BEIS is for (1) EBSS Alternative Funding and (2) DESNZ Alternative Funding whereby NCC would manage and administer the Energy Bill support schemes. Under schemes (1) and (2) eligible Nottingham City citizens can apply for, and - provided they meet the eligibility criteria - receive a one-off payment of £400 and £200 respectively. The funding is subject to grant funding conditions which if not adhered to, will enable the Secretary of State to reduce, suspend, withhold payment or require repayment of grant in relation to (1) and/or (2) above from NCC. Advice provided by Sarah O'Bradaigh (senior solicitor) on 04/04/2023.

Finance Advice:

This decision is to confirm grant funding of:

- . £1,231,200 from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) to deliver the EBSS Alternative Funding payments to eligible City residents
- . £94,000 from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) to deliver the Alternative Fuel payments to eligible City residents

The EBSS Alternative Funding payment will be as 80% (£984,960) initially, with the remaining 20% issued after the scheme closure. Conversations with other local authorities suggest that based on the number of applications received so far, the 80% initially issued may not be claimed. The 20% outstanding, therefore, may not be issued by DESNZ. The £94,000 for alternative fuel payments will be paid in full. All monies not issued by us upon issuing final grant payments will be returned to DESNZ after a final reconciliation is complete.

The cost burden to us as an issuing authority will be reimbursed by burden funding from DESNZ/The Treasury. Costs include - staffing, postage, bank transaction charges and stationery should it be required.

Sejal Mistry - Senior Commercial Business Partner (Environment & Sustainability)
April 2023

Advice provided by Sejal Mistry (Senior Commercial Business Partner) on 13/04/2023.

HR Advice:

The service area wish to recruit 0.6FTE Administrative staff at Grade C for a 4 month period through the casual pool. This is due to the short term nature of this initiative. The Administrative colleagues will support the service area to manage and administer the Energy Bill Support Scheme, Alternative Funding payments to eligible City residents.

Due to the limited time available to carry out a full recruitment process, the critical nature of the work and the requirement to undertake the work immediately once the scheme starts on 27 Feb 2023 to the end of May 2023 the service wish to recruit casual staff for the posts. Advice provided by Shakeel Khalil (Senior HR Consultant) on 14/02/2023.

Other Advice:

The checks being requested to be carried out by NCC have reduced so bank details are not now being checked by NCC. A Privacy Notice has been drafted for citizens explaining how their data will be used and will be placed on our website about applying for the scheme. The DPIA will be updated accordingly and sent to the DPO for review and sign off.

Theresa Pollard, Deputy Data Protection Officer I Solicitor, Legal Services - Information Compliance. 24th April 2023 Advice provided by Catherine Ziane-Pryor (Governance Officer) on 24/04/2023.

Signatures:

David Mellen (Leader/ PH Strategic Regeneration Communications)
SIGNED and Dated: 26/04/2023
Dr Ita O'Donovan (Interim Corporate Director, CERS)
SIGNED and Dated: 25/04/2023