



## Emergency Officer Key Decision

### Report to the Chief Executive

# AUTHORITY FOR EMERGENCY ALLOCATION OF FUNDING TO SUPPORT CLINICALLY EXTREMELY VULNERABLE AND OTHER VULNERABLE RESIDENTS IN BRENT DURING THE SECOND WAVE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Key Decision
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	0
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Sadie East Head of Transformation Customer and Digital Services Tel: 0208 937 1507 Email: <a href="mailto:sadie.east@brent.gov.uk">sadie.east@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report seeks approval for emergency allocation of funding to support Clinically Extremely Vulnerable and other vulnerable residents in Brent during the second wave of the Covid-19 Pandemic

## 2.0 Recommendation(s)

That the Chief Executive exercising urgency powers pursuant to paragraph 9.3.2 of Part 3 of the Constitution:

2.1 Approves grant funding of food banks operated by Established Food Aid Agencies in the borough, working with the Food Aid Network to support the supply of emergency food to Clinically Extremely Vulnerable residents and those in food poverty as a result of Covid-19

(up to a total value of £80,000 and with a maximum grant per organisation of £10,000)

- 2.2 Approves the provision of up to £10,000 for mutual aid groups to be accessed via the Brent Solidarity Fund to provide support to Clinically Extremely Vulnerable and other vulnerable residents including food support
- 2.3 Approves the purchase of supermarket vouchers to be used to provide urgent support Brent residents and families who are unable to afford food as a result of the Pandemic (up to a value of £60,000)
- 2.4 Approves the purchase of fuel vouchers to be used to provide urgent support Brent residents and families who are at risk of losing access to utilities as a result of the Pandemic (up to the value of £100,000)
- 2.5 Approves the transfer of £3m from Reserves to the Resident Support Fund to enable longer term support to be provided to residents who have been impacted by Covid-19

### **3.0 Background**

- 3.1 During the first wave of the Covid-19 Pandemic, councils were asked to support residents identified as Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) to shield. This included providing food to those unable to access it themselves or via the Government food box scheme (for example those with special dietary requirements). During the period from 23 March to the pausing of the shielding programme in August 2020, 1347 CEV residents received food support from Brent.
- 3.2 Brent also provided emergency food to 2165 non-CEV residents who were vulnerable and unable to access food during the same period. In October 2020 the Council also provided vouchers to the value of £15 per child for families eligible for free school meals during the half term break.
- 3.3 The Council has also set up its Resident Support Fund to help residents experiencing hardship and debt as a result of the Pandemic. To date 1,873 applications have been received and over £100K has been spent on grants alone. The value of outstanding applications far exceeds the initial £2.7m funding allocation.
- 3.4 The average grant payment is around £1.5K. The areas residents needed most help with were: paying off debt (60% of applications); household spending (56%); rent arrears (38%) and utility bills (37%). A further 35% requested the digital support package. Most people asked for support across more than one area.

- 3.4 Analysis of data regarding shielding and food provision, the RSF, digital exclusion, benefits and deprivation shows that there are areas of Brent, in particular Harlesden, Stonebridge and Kilburn, which are severely impacted by the Pandemic and its economic impact. These are also areas which had high number of infections and deaths during the first wave of the Pandemic. Other indicators of hardship include an increase in DHP payments and council referrals to food bank.
- 3.5 Local Authorities have been asked to ensure support is in place for all CEV residents during the England-wide lockdown in place from 5 November 2020 to enable them to comply with guidance to stay at home. There are currently 17,215 CEVs in Brent. Of these around 3,300 received some form of support during the first lockdown.
- 3.6 It is clear that the initial four week lockdown period could be extended and there could be further lockdowns in the new year. The economic impact of the Pandemic will also continue to adversely affect people in Brent, in particular those from disadvantaged communities. Other groups such as older people are likely to incur additional expenditure over the winter months.

#### **4.0 Detail**

- 4.1 In order to ensure sufficient support is in place for CEV and other vulnerable residents across the borough during the second 4 week lock down and any extension, as well as during the winter months a package of additional support has been developed. This will enable the Council to respond quickly to ensure there is enough support in place for Brent residents during this evolving situation,
- Additional funding for Food Banks to support them to increase capacity to deal with an increase in demand from CEVs and vulnerable residents
  - Additional funding for Mutual Aid organisations to support an increase in capacity to be distributed via the Brent Solidarity Fund
  - Supermarket shopping vouchers which can be issued by the Council or its agents to support those at risk of losing access to food while longer term issues are being addressed
  - Fuel vouchers which can be issued by the Council or its agents to support those at risk of losing access to utilities while longer term issues are being addressed
- 4.2 All of the above is designed to ensure urgent needs can be met, avoiding the risk of residents feeling unable to comply with lockdown measures and of other health issues arising as a result of a lack of access to food and utilities.
- 4.3 Provision of urgent support would be coordinated through Brent Hubs who already carry out holistic assessments of those presenting with

financial hardship, working closely with the food bank network and other hub partners. Basic eligibility checks would be carried out and provision of support would be for urgent need with help to access longer term solutions including through the benefits system and the RSF.

4.4 Use of this funding will be monitored and tracked. The Council will also provide returns to Government which will include data on spend to support CEV residents.

4.5 Provision of the RSF will be in line with the approach that was agreed by Cabinet on 20 July 2020.

## **5.0 Financial Implications**

5.1 The package of measures outlined above will release up to £250k to support residents and voluntary groups during the lockdown period. The recommendations also propose a transfer of £3m to the Resident Support Fund to facilitate longer term support for residents who have been impacted by the pandemic.

5.2 These measures will be paid for from grant funding provided to the council to address pressures arising from the pandemic, namely the COVID-19 emergency fund and grant allocations for the clinically extremely vulnerable.

## **6.0 Legal Implications**

6.1 The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (the “Act”) established a legislative framework for civil protection in the United Kingdom. Part 1 of the Act, the supporting Regulations and statutory guidance, establish a clear set of roles and responsibilities for those involved in emergency preparation and response at the local level. Local responders are divided into two categories, with a different set of duties applying to each. Local authorities are a Category 1 responder under the Act, and have a key role to play in respect of discharging their duties in the legislation to include:

- assessing the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning in the form of a Community Risk Register;
- Put in place emergency plans;
- Create business continuity plans to ensure that they can continue to exercise critical functions in the event of an emergency;
- Make information available to the public about civil protection matters, and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise

- the public in the event of an emergency;
  - Share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination
  - Co-operate with other local responders to enhance coordination and efficiency;
  - Provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management (Local Authorities only).
- 6.2 The decisions which are the subject of this report are consistent with the Council's duties as a Category 1 responder under the Act.
- 6.3 The Chief Executive is authorised pursuant to Paragraph 9.3.2 of Part 3 of the Constitution to exercise either executive or non-executive functions where the matter is urgent unless this is prohibited by law. The decisions which are the subject of this report are not prohibited by law and she may therefore exercise such powers if she is of the view that proposals are urgent.
- 6.4 The decision to approve the transfer of funds from Reserves into as set out in Recommendation 2.5 is considered to be a Key Decision. This would ordinarily require notice of the key decision to be publicised for 28 days prior to the key decision being taken and for the decision not to be implemented until the expiry of a call in period. The Chair of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee has however agreed to dispense with the usual requirements for prior notice of the decision and to dis-apply the usual call-in period following the decision. In the circumstances, it is legally permissible for the Chief Executive to proceed approve the Recommendations in this report.

## **7.0 Equality Implications**

- 7.1 The public sector equality duty, as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have "due regard" to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who have a "protected characteristic" and those who do not share that protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 7.2 Having due regard involves the need to enquire into whether and how a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic and the need to consider taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. This includes removing or

minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.

7.3 There is no prescribed manner in which the council must exercise its public sector equality duty but having an adequate evidence base for its decision is necessary.

7.4 Due to the urgency of the situation, formal assessments have not been undertaken in respect of the decisions which are the subject of this report. Such formal assessments are not a requirement of the duty. An underlying purpose of the recommended decisions is to have regard to the protection of those with protected characteristics e.g. those over 70 and those with underlying health issues by restricting the potential spread of the virus. In the circumstances, Officers do not consider that there are any adverse equalities impacts but Officers will keep the equalities impact of the decisions under review.

## **8.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders**

8.1 It is not considered in the circumstances that non-statutory public consultation is a viable or reasonable option for the Council in taking the decisions which are the subject of this report, even if at other times it would have considered consultation with the public and / or stakeholders affected by the decision.

## **9.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)**

9.1 It is not considered at this time that there are any Human Resources/Property/Environmental Sustainability Implications arising from decisions which are the subject of this report.

**Report sign off:**

**PETER GADSDON**

Strategic Director of Customer &  
Digital Services