

# HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Executive Decision Record

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Executive Lead Member for Children's Services and Young People
<b>Date:</b>	30 November 2020
<b>Title:</b>	COVID Winter Grants – Funding for Schools, Colleges and Early Years Providers
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Children's Services

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### 1. The decision:

1. That the Executive Lead Member approves the grant of £1.56M funding to schools, colleges and early years setting for them to purchase and provide one £15 voucher per child per week for the two-week Christmas holiday and the February half term week, in accordance with the grant criteria set out in paragraph 7 of the report. Vouchers will be available for all children eligible for free school meals (FSM) and additionally all children with a social worker, all children open to early help, 16-18 year olds previously eligible for FSM, all 2-4 year olds accessing childcare and eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium, as described in paragraph 18 of the report. An estimated 34,620 children will be able to access vouchers as a result of this initiative.
  - 1.1. That the Executive Lead Member approves funding of grants of up to £290,000 to be made to schools and colleges by way of a discretionary grant that they can use to support vulnerable families, including those not currently eligible for free school meals and other benefits/financial support. The value of individual grants to schools and colleges will be dependent upon the number of children on roll and at the values set out in paragraph 21 of the report.

### 2. Reasons for the decision:

- 2.1. On Sunday 8 November 2020, the government announced a significant package of extra targeted financial support for those in need over the winter period.

2.2. The £170 million COVID Winter Grant Scheme is being distributed through County and Unitary Councils and aims to support those most in need across England with the cost of food, energy and water bills and other associated costs.

2.3. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the government department that is providing the funding, expects top tier local authorities to administer the scheme and provide direct assistance to vulnerable households and families with children particularly affected by the pandemic. This is expected to include families whose children are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) as well as those who qualify by age for the universal free school meal offer.

2.4. The conditions of the COVID Winter are that:

- at least 80% of the total funding will be ring-fenced to support families with children, with up to 20% of the total funding allocated for 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% made available for other essential items.

2.5. The very short notice given, and the need to distribute funding very quickly, necessitates an urgent Executive Lead Member Decision as set out in the report, such that funding can reach schools in sufficient time for them to purchase vouchers and distribute them before the children break up for Christmas.

### **3. Other options considered and rejected:**

3.1. Hampshire County Council could purchase vouchers or deliver food on behalf of schools, colleges and early years providers. However, in response to a quick survey, 71% of the 332 schools who responded expressed a preference for a voucher scheme and flexibility in respect of the voucher provider they were able to use. Given the timescales, direct delivery of food to children was logistically prohibitive.

### **4. Conflicts of interest:**

4.1. Conflicts of interest declared by the decision-maker: None

4.2. Conflicts of interest declared by other Executive Members consulted: None

### **5. Dispensation granted by the Conduct Advisory Panel: None**

**6. Reason(s) for the matter being dealt with if urgent:**

- 6.1 It was impracticable to give the required 28 day notice of a Key Decision, nor the 5 day notice of an Urgent (General Exception) Key Decision due to the timing of the Central Government announcement on the Covid Winter Grant Scheme and funding allocation, and the expectation from Government that delivery against the grant commences in December.
- 6.2 In accordance with Regulation 11 (Special Urgency), agreement has been obtained from the Chairman of the Children and Young People Select Committee, that the “Special Urgency” procedure be applied to this Key Decision.

**7. Statement from the decision maker:**

<b>Approved by:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
----- <b>Councillor Patricia Stallard</b> <b>Executive Lead Member for Children’s Services and Young People</b>	<b>30 November 2020</b>