



**Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Household Support Fund Scheme
October 2022 – March 2023**

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1.0 Purpose of the Scheme and background.

- 1.1** The purpose of this document is to set out the Council's intended use of the grant of Household Support Fund from Kent County Council to 31 March 2023.
- 1.2** Government has provided funding to Kent County Council (KCC). KCC has distributed part of their funding to all district councils across Kent. [Decision - 21/00107 - Household Support Grant \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)
- 1.3** The Council's scheme has been designed based on general guidance issued by the Department for Work & Pensions <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/household-support-fund-guidance-for-local-councils/household-support-fund-final-guidance-for-county-councils-and-unitary-authorities-in-england> and an agreement between Kent County Council and the Council dated 15 November 2022.
- 1.4** The Scheme is part of a national and local package of support for households in hardship through rising energy costs and general rise in costs of living.
- 1.5** The overall objective of the Scheme is to provide support to vulnerable households in most need of support to help with significant rising living costs.

2.0 Funding

- 2.1** KCC has allocated HSF funding to the Council totaling **£139,263.24**
- 2.2** This grant is to be used in the period 1 October 2022 until the end of March 2023. There is no carry forward of this grant into April 2023 beyond honouring any expenditure committed before 31 March 2023.

3.0 Administration costs

- 3.1** Reasonable costs incurred in administering the Scheme will be charged to the fund. These charges may include:
 - staff costs
 - advertising and publicity to raise awareness of the scheme
 - web page design
 - printing application forms
 - small IT changes, for example, to facilitate MI production

4.0 Eligibility criteria and awards

4.1 The Council supports and adopts the government and KCC statement in that, ‘the intention behind the grant is to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford food, energy and water bills, and other related essentials. Funding can also be used to support households who are struggling to afford wider essentials. 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.’

4.2 The Council has decided that funds will be used in the following ways:

4.2.1 Funding to foodbanks totalling £45,000 distributed on negotiation to the network of foodbanks across the Borough, having regard to those areas with highest demand.

4.2.2 An allocation of £20,000 for fuel voucher schemes operated by partnering organisations

4.2.3 A contingency element, amount agreed by Director of Finance & Transformation in consultation with Chief Executive, Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation & Property, to be immediately available to help households facing a disproportionate impact of cost of living increase or exceptional needs, and

4.2.4 The balance of funding to be targeted at those identified as most in need when evaluated in late January. The assessment and that decision where to direct funds to be made by the Director of Finance & Transformation with Chief Executive, Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation and Property.

4.2.5 Cover of reasonable administrative expenses as incurred.

Effective date

4.3 The effective date for the scheme to run is 1 October 2022 – 31 March 2023. Payments from the fund must be made or committed to be made by 31 March 2023. Payments will not be made based on any new information received after the close of Scheme. No balances can be rolled forward.

5.0 How payments will be made

5.1 Payments made to third party partnering organisations (including foodbanks) or individual households will be made by direct bank credit or at the discretion of the council, another form of payment deemed appropriate.

5.2 In all cases, the Council will ensure that payments are made correctly and where

appropriate, require households to verify that that they are eligible for the payment. Where no such verification can be made or where a household fails to respond to the Council's request, no payment shall be made.

5.7 Awards to relevant third party organisations will be agreed in consultation and made on condition of meeting Scheme criteria and agreement to provide required management information. Any assistance scheme operated by a relevant third party organisation must demonstrate compliance to the Council's equality duties.

5.8 The total fund to be distributed is limited to £139,263.24 or other amount should Kent County Council alter the grant allocation during the period the Scheme is running. Payments will be made promptly by bank transfer to each relevant organisation following agreement.

6.0 Scheme of Delegation

6.1 The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation & Property have authorised the Director of Finance & Transformation to establish this Scheme as set out in this document. The Scheme must align to criteria set by Government and Kent County Council.

6.2 Payments will be limited to the fund provided for these purposes by Kent County Council.

7.0 Further Funding

7.1 This policy may be amended by agreement of the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Finance, Innovation & Property, Chief Executive and Director of Finance & Transformation in order to accommodate further grants of Household Support Fund either directly from Government or through Kent County Council.

Any amendments will be compliant to criteria set by Government or Kent County Council and complement other key policies of the Council.

8.0 Reviews of Decisions

8.1 The Council will operate an internal review process and will accept a householder's request for a review of its decision. Any such request must be made by writing or email to the Council and should state the reasons why the householder is aggrieved with the decision of the Council. New information may be submitted to support the householder's review within the lifetime of the Scheme.

8.2 A request for review will be considered by a senior officer and the householder informed of the final decision. The decision of the Council on any eligibility matter will be final.

9.0 Taxation and the provision of information to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC)

- 9.1 The Council does not accept any responsibility in relation to a householder's HMRC tax liabilities. All payees should make their own enquiries to establish any tax position.

10.0 Managing the risk of fraud

- 10.1 The Council will not accept deliberate manipulation of this policy or fraud. Any person found to falsify information to gain a payment or goods will face prosecution and any amount awarded or the value of goods will be recovered.

11.0 Recovery of amounts incorrectly paid

- 11.1 If it is established that **any** payment has been made incorrectly due to error by the Council, or error, misrepresentation or incorrect information provided to the Council by any person or partnering organisation, the Council will look to recover the amount in full.

12.0 Data Protection and use of data

- 12.1 All information used to make awards, including information provided by households shall be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Data Protection policy and Privacy Notices which are available on the Council's website.

13.0 Equalities

- 13.1 The Council will operate the Scheme having consideration to the impact of its equality duties.
- 13.2 Consideration of equalities impact will form part of consultations to establish partners to act as third party organisations to support and assist in the fair distribution of the fund.

14.0 Monitoring and Management Information

- 14.1 Spend of the fund will be monitored and reported to KCC in accordance with the agreement between KCC and the Council. Monitoring and reporting, with required return dates will be agreed with relevant third party organisations in order for the Council to report fully to KCC.