



**Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Household Support Fund Scheme
July 2023 – March 2024**

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1.0 Purpose of the Scheme and background

The purpose of this document is to set out the Council's intention for use of the grant of Household Support Fund from Kent County Council to 31 March 2024. 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.

- 1.1 Government has provided funding to Kent County Council (KCC). KCC has shared 20% of their funding across all district councils based on economic indices. [Decision - 21/00107 - Household Support Grant \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)
- 1.2 The Council's scheme has been designed in compliance with government guidance and an agreement between Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and Kent County Council.

Guidance can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/household-support-fund-guidance-for-local-councils/1-april-2023-to-31-march-2024-household-support-fund-guidance-for-county-councils-and-unitary-authorities-in-england>

2.0 Funding

- 2.1 KCC has allocated HSF funding to the Council totaling **£278,562**
- 2.2 This grant is to be used in the period 1 April 2023 until 31 March 2024. There is no carry forward of this grant into April 2024 beyond honouring any expenditure committed before 31 March 2024.
- 2.3 Previous grants have covered six month periods, mirroring government awards to KCC. This grant covers the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024, like that made by government to KCC this time around. Due to process the Scheme will not commence until Cabinet approval in July 2023.
- 2.4 KCC has made initial allocations of 40% of the annual grant to districts. Confirmation of the further 60% allocation is dependent on use of the initial allocation by 30 September 2023 to reduce the risk of underspends and reflect on residents having higher needs in the winter period.

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 Distribution of Funds

- 4.1** The Council champions the objective of the Scheme, to provide crisis support for households. The fund may be used for supplementary advice services, which in a change to previous guidance, can now include debt and benefit advice where authorities consider this appropriate.
- 4.2 Funds should be directed to:**
- 4.2.1 Continuing support for community/charitable foodbanks across the borough. Distributed to the established network with payments showing regard to areas in highest need.
 - 4.2.2 Continuing support for fuel voucher schemes operated by partnering organisations, with emphasis on the Autumn/Winter period.
 - 4.2.3 Support to schools to directly assist pastoral care activities for children and families identified as in need.
 - 4.2.4 Support to debt advice services for the development and provision of outreach face to face surgeries in parts of the borough most in need.
 - 4.2.5 Support to mental health services for households suffering as a consequence of the financial climate.
 - 4.2.6 Support community projects that directly help residents meeting the Scheme objective
 - 4.2.7 Cover of reasonable administrative expenses as incurred
- 4.3** The expectation is that a minimum of 50% of funding will be allocated to foodbanks and fuel voucher schemes
- 4.4** There is a responsibility to ensure the Scheme consistently meets the needs of vulnerable residents of the borough throughout the whole period. Flexibility to react and adapt to changing and emerging events is key in providing the effective support and producing the most value. As an indication, it is expected that over half of the funding will be used to support foodbanks or fuel voucher schemes.
- 4.5** When allocating funds, consideration will be given to the complementary nature of services and avoidance of duplicating support.

Effective date

- 4.6** The Scheme will run from the date the decision becomes live following agreement by the Council's Cabinet. It will end on 31 March 2024.
- 4.7** Payments from the fund must be made or committed to be made by 31 March 2024. Payments will not be made based on any new information received after the close of Scheme.

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 they are eligible for a payment.
- 5.3** Awards to third party organisations will be agreed by negotiation, conditional to meeting the Scheme requirements and on agreement to providing management information. Any assistance scheme operated by a third party organisation must be able to demonstrate compliance to the Council's equalities duties.

6.0 Scheme of Delegation

- 6.1** Cabinet has given approval to the Director of Finance & Transformation to establish this Scheme and, with agreement between Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance & Housing, Director of Finance & Transformation and Chief Executive, make any significant variance to the intention in **Distribution of Funds** caused through emerging needs or alteration to funding.
- 6.2** Any variance must comply to government guidance and any relevant agreement in place with KCC at the time. Payments will be limited to the fund provided for these purposes by Kent County Council.

7.0 Reviews of Decisions

- 7.1** The Council will operate an internal review process and will accept a partnering organisation or householder's request for a review of its decision. Any such request must be made by email to the Council giving reasons to for the challenge.
- 7.2** A request for review will be considered by a senior officer. The decision of the officer on any eligibility matter will be final.

8.0 Taxation and the provision of information to His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC)

- 8.1** 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.

9.0 Managing the risk of fraud

- 9.1 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.

10.0 Recovery of amounts paid incorrectly

- 10.1 The council will look to recover any payment made incorrectly due to error by the council, or error, misrepresentation or incorrect information provided to the council by any person or partnering organisation.
- 10.2 The council will look to recover any payment made incorrectly due to error by the council, or error, misrepresentation or incorrect information provided to the council by any person or partnering organisation.

11.0 Data Protection and use of data

- 11.1 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 website.

12.0 Equalities

- 12.1 The Council will operate the Scheme having consideration to the impact of its equality duties.
- 12.2 Consideration of equalities impact will be made when consulting partnering organisations to support and assist in the fair distribution of the fund.

13.0 Monitoring and Management Information

- 13.1 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 the partnering organisations in order for the Council to report fully to KCC.