

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**CABINET MEMBER
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

Extension of the COVID Winter Grant Scheme (CWGS)

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 The report seeks approval to extend the (CWGS) provision up to and through the Easter Holiday 2021.
- 1.2 This will provide a platform for the return to education, catch up and assist children and families with the impact of COVID-19 and lockdown.
- 1.3 The extension will for this period run alongside however separate to the National Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) scheme.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Council recognises the impact that COVID-19 has had on families in many different ways and has in place a range of financial support mechanisms for households on low incomes. This including administering grants such as Council Tax COVID-19 hardship discount; emergency financial assistance and the self-isolation grant.
- 2.2 During the past year decisions have been made to support children and families by offering Free School Meals (FSM). The offer of FSM within the (CWGS) comes to an end on 31 March.
- 2.3 The national Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) scheme will cover all areas of England from 1 April. The intent is that children eligible for free school meals will be able to take part in an offer of funded activities that include a nutritious meal. The HAF offer will provide the equivalent of one week's worth of activities in each of the Easter and Christmas holidays, and four weeks during the schools' summer holiday. Due to COVID restrictions, it is likely that the vast majority of Easter 2021 offer will be limited to remote activities.

- 2.4 There are currently almost 6,000 North Lincolnshire children eligible for free school meals. The national (CWGS) scheme provided supermarket vouchers equivalent to £15 a week during Christmas and February school holidays. There are also over 600 children and families that have benefited from the (CWGS) to continue the level of this support by extending the wider hardship fund would amount to £265k including cost of administration of the scheme. The cost of this is currently not budgeted with council or school budgets, nor is there a specific government grant. The government have indicated that local authorities may utilise their allocations for COVID-19 emergency grant for locally determined responses.
- 2.5 Enabling children and young people families to access the ((CWGS) fund recognises the exceptional circumstances the COVID-19 pandemic has created for some families. As a one-off response the cost would be identified as part of the council's overall COVID-19 additional cost pressures, funded by the government grant for COVID-19.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Option 1

- 3.1 The cabinet member approves the extension of the Winter Hardship scheme to and including the Easter Holiday period.

Option 2

- 3.2 Do not extend the scheme.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

Option 1

- 4.1 The proposal provides a short term solution and complements the other schemes available to residents who experience financial hardship. This would commit approximately £265k to be funded from the COVID-19 grant.
- 4.2 Introducing as a temporary measure fits with the Council's enabling approach and provides an immediate response, bridging the gap until alternative community led arrangements and the Holiday Activity and Food scheme can achieve full impact.

Option 2

- 4.3 Not extending the scheme would see the Council end the current scheme in line with government timescales.

5. **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (e.g. LEGAL, HR, PROPERTY, IT, COMMUNICATIONS etc.)**

5.1 The scheme can be funded by utilising the COVID-19 grant. North Lincolnshire's allocation amounts to £13.3m.

6. **OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g. CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)**

6.1 The scheme is an extension of the (CWGS) scheme and will fully support the return to education.

7. **OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

7.1 None

8. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED**

8.1 None

9. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 That the (CWGS) is continued up to and including the Easter Holidays.

DIRECTOR LEARNING SKILLS & CULTURE AND DIRECTOR
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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report – None