

The meetings of the **Communities Scrutiny Panel**, held on **5th September 2024** and **21st November 2024**, made the following comments and resolutions.

To: **Cabinet**

BACKGROUND

The panel considered a report from the Assistant Chief Executive outlining how the council had utilised the Household Support Fund (HSF) and setting out suggested actions following the ending of this funding. It was noted that since the report had been circulated, the Government had announced a six-month extension of the HSF.

Details of the panel's consideration of this item are set out below and a suggested response has been included against each of the recommendations to Cabinet.

SPC.22 HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND / EXIT STRATEGY

The panel raised concerns about the continued uncertainty of future funding. Ms Isaacs reported on measures being proposed by the Government to improve the wellbeing of households.

The panel enquired about the Financial Inclusion Group and whether it would be possible to receive minutes of future meetings of this group.

Ms Isaacs explained the role of the group and was happy to share its minutes with the panel.

The Chair thanked Ms Isaacs and partner organisations for the excellent work carried out in North East Lincolnshire as a result of the HSF. However, she felt that more and more people were still struggling even though they were in employment. She was also concerned that partner organisations were feeling overwhelmed. Given that there was no indication of when the Government measures would be in place, she suggested a recommendation to Cabinet and the Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities that a letter be sent to the Chancellor the Exchequer requesting further clarification of the Government's plans beyond the additional six-month funding period. This was supported by the Panel.

RESOLVED –

1. That the high-level delivery plan set out in Appendix 1 of the report now submitted (as previously reported to Cabinet), and the evaluation report from HSF4, as set out at Appendix 2 of the report now submitted, be noted.
2. That the letter sent by the Portfolio Holder Safer and Stronger Communities (Appendix 3 of the report now submitted) which made representations to Government pressing the need for continued funding to alleviate household hardship, be noted.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET –

1. That Cabinet take stock of the funding situation after the Chancellor's statement and the Council's financial settlement, as there may be further decisions that impact on household finances.

This will be for Cabinet to consider as part of the Council's budget-setting process and subsequent to receipt of the financial statement.

2. That the council continue to promote and inform residents of the range of advice and support available to them.

Information is provided on the Council's website - [Financial support, advice and guidance | NELC](#)

3. That the council continue to work with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to identify opportunities to alleviate cost of living pressures.

A person has been appointed to administer the Household Support Fund until 31st March 2026 and this post will include close liaison with the VCS.

4. That Cabinet receive, in due course, public health plans to address the wider determinants of health in North East Lincolnshire.

This would be picked up in the Director of Public Health's Annual Report received by the Health and Well Being Board. Any key decisions emanating from that report would be directed to Cabinet. Cabinet has the option of requesting a specific report on this matter.

5. That the council continue to support food bank and other food providers, as part of the VCS, to reduce demand and dependency on emergency food, promoting growing, healthy eating, budgeting and skills to improve access to and the quality of food in North East Lincolnshire.

Funding has been provided as part of the latest round of HSF. The Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities chairs the Food Forum.

6. That a letter be sent by the Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities to the Chancellor the Exchequer requesting further clarification of the Government's plans beyond the additional six-month funding period.

This has been done. The Government indicated in the Budget that HSF and discretionary housing payments would continue. Further details are awaited on this.

The above update was further considered at the meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Panel on 21st November 2024 under 'tracking of recommendations' and it was further recommended:

That the Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities send a further letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, advocating for adjustments to the Household Support



Recommends ...

Fund to account for inflation from 2025 onwards. The letter should also emphasise the specific needs of our area, highlighting why sustained or increased funding is critical, with no reductions compared to previous years.

Scrutiny Chair: Councillor Aisthorpe

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