

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Cabinet **DATE:** 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018  
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**WARD(S):** All  
**PORTFOLIO:** Cllr Mohammed Nazir, Cabinet Member for  
Corporate Finance & Housing

### **PART I** **KEY DECISION**

#### **LOCAL WELFARE PROVISION POLICY**

1 **Purpose of Report**

To provide a revised Council policy for the financial year 2018-19 in respect of Local Welfare Provision (LWP).

2 **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Cabinet is requested to resolve:

- (a) That the policy for Local Welfare Provision 2018-19 as set out in Appendix C be approved
- (b) That Cabinet receive a report on the first half year spend and the reasons for the spend including the impact of Universal Credit as soon as this is available

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

This report supports the 5 Year Plan through support to housing outcome and adult's outcome through the use of the Local Welfare Provision funding stream.

3a **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

This report sets out the policies to ensure that residents of Slough can help support themselves when they are in a difficult situation e.g. loss of income, the need to move to more affordable accommodation etc which will support both vulnerable adults and children as well as those with poor mental health.

### 3b **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

This report will primarily have implications for Outcomes 1, and 2, as it will assist customers to who are experiencing hardship for a one off payment while they move to cheaper alternative accommodation or claim benefits and while their claim is being assessed. It will also support people who have a one off loss of income e.g. benefits being stolen etc.

### 4 **Other Implications**

#### (a) **Financial**

- 4.1 The Council would like to maintain spend within the respective budget levels so as not to put any additional pressure on the Council's general fund budget.
- 4.2 The Council has proposed a budget of £300k for Local Welfare Provision costs for 2018-19 which includes administration; this is the same figure as 2017-18.
- 4.3 However the Council acknowledges that as the current live date for Universal Credit full service in Slough is April 2018, it is expected that this will have an impact on the number and costs of LWP claims, as it may impact on the residents of the borough and their ability to pay for certain essential items leading to an increase in LWP claims.
- 4.4 The Council will therefore re-profile the budget giving greater emphasis to the profile immediately after Universal Credit full service go live date.
- 4.5 A report will be provided to Cabinet once the half yearly returns are available in order to consider the spend to date, the impact of Universal Credit and the level of support that residents will need for the remainder of the financial year.
- 4.6 The budget for 2017/18 was set at £300k which includes the costs of administration as well as the awards, the budget for the awards was £270k and was profiled over the financial year taking into account the peak periods over the summer and at Christmas.
- 4.7 The spend in 2017/18 has been in line with the profile, and the full budget is on track to be spent by the end of the financial year a breakdown is supplied of spend to date at Appendix A.
- 4.8 Where possible vouchers are issued, either Argos vouchers for beds and white goods, Sainsbury's vouchers for food that cannot be obtained via the food bank e.g. baby formula, paypoint vouchers for utility costs, food bank vouchers or where none of the above is possible cash is issued.

(b) Risk Management

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigating action</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
Legal	The current LWP scheme has been in place for 5 years and again with minor changes, the original draft was approved by Counsel.	
Property		
Human Rights		
Health and Safety		
Employment Issues		
Equalities Issues	Please see EIA	
Community Support		
Communications		Ensuring by various publicity and communications that those eligible receive LWP
Community Safety		
Financial	The LWP allocation will be profiled to ensure that there is fund available throughout the year but this may be at a lower rate than customers would wish	
Timetable for delivery	April 2018	
Project Capacity		
Other	The scheme is in many cases reactionary to the Government welfare reforms so risks remain over how and when these reforms will occur	

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no direct legal implications.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

A completed EIA is attached at Appendix D.

## 5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 Local Welfare Provision (LWP) was originally administered by the Department of Work and Pensions as Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans, these grants and loans were transferred with the budget to the Local Authority in April 2013
- 5.2 LWP was funded by the DWP for the first three years and since then has been funded by SBC from the general fund.
- 5.3 A number of Local Authorities have chosen not to continue with a budget for LWP due to financial constraints.
- 5.4 However LWP continues to be needed to support the residents of Slough, when they are experiencing extreme financial difficulties, which would leave them or their families more vulnerable.
- 5.5 The implementation of Universal Credit full service in Slough in April 2018 is expected to also have an impact on the number and costs of LWP claims. The Council wants to support customers through this difficult process and to ensure that all customers can obtain essential items.
- 5.6 **The spend to date for the financial year 2017-18.**
- 5.7 As at the end of November 2017 we have received 1254 applications, approved 975 for payments, declined 229 (including 5 that never provided the requested information) and the remainder, 50 are in pending awaiting further information from the customer.
- 5.8 Where possible vouchers are issued, either Argos vouchers for beds and white goods, Sainsbury's vouchers for food that cannot be obtained via the food bank e.g. baby formula, paypoint vouchers for utility costs, food bank vouchers or where none of the above is possible cash is issued.
- 5.9 The contract with Sainsbury's has been in place for just over 4 years, the contract gives the Council a 2.5% discount on expenditure.
- 5.10 The contract with Argos has been in place for just over 3 years as originally the council were supplying recycled white goods but this was not found to be cost efficient and the contract with Argos was set up, the contract gives the council a 4% discount on purchases.
- 5.11 LWP will support people who have a direct and immediate financial need for example awaiting DWP benefits, food bank vouchers can be issued, the need to move to cheaper alternative accommodation in order to minimise the impact of the benefits cap, if previous

accommodation was furnished essential furniture and white goods can be provided. Help is also provided for baby formula, payment for utilities especially gas/ electric in winter in order to keep warm, case study examples are attached at Appendix B

- 5.12 LWP is available for all residents of Slough no matter age, if they are in a vulnerable situation, it is not provided to those who can help themselves and this is assessed at application stage.
- 5.13 The policy for 2018-19 has been updated to take into consideration the implementation of Universal Credit and to ensure that it is only used for those who are most vulnerable.

## 6 **Comments of Other Committees**

This report has not been considered by any other committees.

## 7 **Conclusion**

That members are requested to review and approve these policies and members agree that Cabinet receive a report on the first half year spend and the reasons for the spend including the impact of Universal Credit as soon as this is available

## 8 **Appendices Attached**

- “A” - LWP Awards 2017-18 to end of November 2017
- “B” - Case Studies 2017-18
- “C” - Local Welfare Provision
- “D” - EIA LWP

## 9 **Background Papers**

- “1” - Welfare Reform Act 2012
- “2” - Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001 (and amendments)
- “3” - Council Tax Benefit abolition (consequential amendments) regulations 2013
- “4” - Universal Credit consequential amendments regulations 2013.

**APPENDIX A**

Local Welfare Provision Budget	Foodbank Vouchers	Cash	PayPoint	Sainsbury Vouchers	Argos		Total	Budget
			Payments		Orders	Vouchers		£270,000.00
<b>Apr-17</b>	20	£11,740.00	£1,090.00	£4,595.00	£2,510.00	£3,990.00	<b>£23,925.00</b>	<b>£246,075.00</b>
<b>May-17</b>	18	£10,860.00	£835.00	£6,045.00	£2,260.00	£1,200.00	<b>£21,200.00</b>	<b>£224,875.00</b>
<b>Jun-17</b>	20	£10,930.00	£395.00	£4,075.00	£4,200.00	£2,665.00	<b>£22,265.00</b>	<b>£202,610.00</b>
<b>Jul-17</b>	13	£12,640.00	£385.00	£4,540.00	£4,660.00	£3,995.00	<b>£26,220.00</b>	<b>£176,390.00</b>
<b>Aug-17</b>	16	£15,950.00	£710.00	£5,145.00	£2,560.00	£3,380.00	<b>£27,745.00</b>	<b>£148,645.00</b>
<b>Sep-17</b>	10	£13,480.00	£450.00	£4,560.00	£4,800.00	£1,350.00	<b>£24,640.00</b>	<b>£124,005.00</b>
<b>Oct-17</b>	11	£9,640.00	£350.00	£3,620.00	£3,580.00	£1,200.00	<b>£18,390.00</b>	<b>£105,615.00</b>
<b>Nov-17</b>	17	£8,940.00	£320.00	£3,645.00	£4,500.00	£2,440.00	<b>£19,845.00</b>	<b>£85,770.00</b>
<b>Dec-17</b>							<i>£27,000.00*</i>	<i>£58,770.00</i>
<b>Jan-18</b>							<i>£20,000.00*</i>	<i>£38,770.00</i>
<b>Feb-18</b>							<i>£20,000.00*</i>	<i>£18,770.00</i>
<b>Mar-18</b>							<i>£18,770.00*</i>	<i>£0</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>£94,180.00</b>	<b>£4,535.00</b>	<b>£36,225.00</b>	<b>£29,070.00</b>	<b>£20,220.00</b>	<b>£184,230.00</b>	<b>£85,770.00</b>

\*profile to year end

## **APPENDIX B**

LWP have assisted a large number of households to date this financial year, for a large number of reasons, some of which are outlined below:

- LWP has helped about six households where disasters such as fires have struck, helping them out with bedding, clothing, food, travel and other assistance that they require.
- LWP has paid travel costs where tragedies strike such as deaths or people falling ill and in hospital, we help our residents make arrangements so that they can go and visit their loved ones or attend funerals.
- In situations where tax credits or benefits have stopped or when people are waiting for their DWP awards and they do not have any other monies help is supplied via Sainsbury's or food bank vouchers
- When people move into temporary accommodation they sometimes need assistance in providing a deposit for utilities or for essential furniture or white goods if the property is not furnished.
- On a day to basis we help about eight to ten families with food and utilities such as gas and electric.
- On a weekly basis we help about six to eight families with furniture and white goods
- An example of this is a recent case where customer has had bed bugs, once the temporary accommodation team had moved the customer LWP assisted the customer with a new mattress and bed frame.
- LWP has also recently assisted a care leaver who had moved out of Slough for university, but did not complete the course, upon return housing provided accommodation, LWP assisted with the relocation expenses and vouchers for food until her DWP Benefit claim had been assessed.
- In addition domestic violence is a real issue with people having to leave home without funds and in this instance without clothes or money, when the customer is placed in temporary accommodation this is only the beginning and LWP assisted with food clothing and emergency funds.