

## Delegated authority officer decision notice

<b>Decision made by</b>	Adrianna Partridge, Deputy Chief Executive Transformation and Operations.  Simon Hewings, Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer.
<b>Lead officer contact details</b>	Jayne Bolton Community Wellbeing Manager <a href="mailto:jayne.bolton@southandvale.gov.uk">jayne.bolton@southandvale.gov.uk</a>
<b>Decision</b> (Keep this succinct)	To approve the allocation of £80,000 for South Oxfordshire and £80,000 for Vale of White Horse of Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) for a Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) grant for projects that mitigate against the public health impact of lack of access to warm homes and food.  To approve the grant policy attached at appendix one.
<b>Key decision?</b> (see notes below)	Yes
<b>If key decision, has call-in been waived by the Scrutiny Committee chair(s)?</b>	No
<b>Confidential decision, and if so under which exempt category?</b>	n/a
<b>Delegated authority reference from the constitution</b>	See legal implication section below.
<b>Risks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The COMF grant determination letters state that funds should be spent in the financial year 2021/22. 2021 03 11 ICMD COMF FINAL SOUTH and 2021 12 17 ICMD COMF FINAL VALE accepted the risk that funding spent past this date could be recalled and later government agreed that funds can be carried over into financial year 2023/24. To mitigate against this risk, officers will closely monitor spend and take appropriate action to ensure that funds are spent or reallocated.</li> <li>There is a risk that organisations will not complete the project, or that they may spend the funds in ways that haven't been agreed. To mitigate this risk, expectations around how the funds should be spent will be made clear in offer letters. Successful applicants will also be required to keep a financial record of spend.</li> <li>There is a risk that the budget for the grant isn't enough to fund all applications. We will score applications using a simple</li> </ul>

	<p>scoring matrix to ensure that those most in line with the grant's goals are successful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a risk that organisations may not have time to spend the funds by March 2024. To mitigate this risk, we will launch the grant as soon as possible, and make it clear to applicants when funds must be spent.</li> <li>• There is a risk that a successful organisations folds. To mitigate this risk, we will audit account records.</li> <li>• There is a risk that applicants apply for short-term rent/hire costs where the council is the corporate landlord. Officers consider this to be an acceptable use of these grant funds if they meet the eligibility criteria.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reasons for decision</b></p>	<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>The grant is designed to provide funding for local voluntary and community groups supporting vulnerable people in our communities and seeks to address inequalities in our districts.</p> <p>COVID-19 worsened public health inequalities and has resulted in an increase in the number of residents living in fuel poverty and experiencing food insecurity. The cost-of-living crisis has further heightened this problem.</p> <p>Many vulnerable people were already disproportionately impacted by the pandemic both financially and in terms of their health, and this grant scheme will play an important role in building resilience and funding projects for these groups this winter.</p> <p>Provision of support for the VCS organisations meets the objectives of COMF post pandemic as it helps to mitigate health inequalities or unequal impact on populations. This grant would fund projects providing food and warmth to vulnerable residents who may otherwise struggle to access these crucial essentials over the winter.</p> <p>The Food and Warmth Grant will enable VCS organisations to apply for grants between £2,000 to £5,000, or up to £10,000 for collaborative projects between groups. The grant can cover capital and revenue costs that relate to projects that support residents in relation to food and warmth. Further details can be found in the policy document (appendix one).</p> <p>In recognition of the rapidly changing landscape of COVID and the need to quickly adapt the council's approach to best meet the needs of residents as they emerged from the pandemic, the following delegation was written into the previously referenced ICMDs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to review and amend the allocation of this spend and any future COMF allocation to the Head of Finance and Section 151 officer</li> </ul>

	<p>in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to delegate the authority to agree, review and amend any policies pertaining to this and future COMF allocation to the Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations jointly with the Head of Finance and S151 Officer.</li> </ul> <p>On this basis authority is sought to agree to the allocation of funds as set out in this document.</p>
<b>Alternative options</b>	<p><b>To not provide the Food and Warmth Grant</b></p> <p>Not providing funding to organisations supporting our residents where we have the option to do so could leave the district’s most vulnerable residents without a vital lifeline.</p> <p>Without funding, local organisations may need to restrict or scale back services, reducing much needed support for vulnerable residents and increasing demand on council officers.</p> <p>Due to COMF funding, the council is in the position in this financial year 2023-24 to assist this demand.</p>
<b>Climate and ecological implications</b>	<p>The focus of this grant scheme on tackling fuel poverty by providing practical advice and educational activities about budgeting, saving energy, and keeping warm, as well as signposting to government grants, will not only support wellbeing and sustainability but also reduce carbon emissions through promoting more energy-efficient homes. Given that 28.9% of carbon emissions in South Oxfordshire and 24.8% of carbon emissions in Vale of White Horse come from residential buildings, this is a really important contribution towards the district’s net zero targets.</p> <p>The potential to fund cooking and gardening clubs may also help to fund use of local green spaces and food growing, both of which will also reduce carbon emissions.</p>
<b>Legal implications</b>	<p>The previously referenced ICMD’s both delegate authority as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to delegate authority to review and amend the allocation of this spend and any future COMF allocation to the Head of Finance and Section 151 officer in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations.</li> <li>to delegate the authority to agree, review and amend any policies pertaining to this and future COMF allocation to the Deputy Chief Executive – Transformation and Operations jointly with the Head of Finance and S151 Officer.</li> </ul>
<b>Financial implications</b>	<p>The scheme will be funded by Contain Outbreak Management Funding. The Guidance from DHSC lay out the parameters for spend of COMF fund. Within these parameters the local authorities have the discretion as to the best way to allocate and distribute the funds to the most vulnerable residents.</p>

	<p>For South Oxfordshire £80,000 of COMF funding has been allocated for the grant.</p> <p>For Vale of White Horse £80,000 of COMF funding has been allocated for the grant.</p> <p>Funds to be spent in the financial year 2023-24 (by 31 March 2024).</p> <p>Expenditure will be monitored to ensure that it does not exceed the funding provided.</p> <p>If the council is unable to fully utilise COMF then it would be required to return the funds to Oxfordshire County Council and the opportunity to assist residents would be lost.</p>			
<b>Other implications</b>	n/a			
<b>Background papers considered</b>	Appendix one - VCS Food and Warmth Grant Scheme policy			
<b>Declarations/ conflict of interest?</b>	None			
<b>Consultees</b>		<b>Name</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Date</b>
	Legal <a href="mailto:legal@southandvale.gov.uk">legal@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	Patrick Arran	No comments	14/8/2023
	Finance <a href="mailto:Finance@southandvale.gov.uk">Finance@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	Richard Spraggett	No comments	16/8/2023
	HR <a href="mailto:hadminandpayroll@southandvale.gov.uk">hadminandpayroll@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	N/A	No comments	
	Climate and biodiversity <a href="mailto:climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk">climateaction@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	Jessie Fieth	We support this decision which is in line with the council's carbon emission reduction targets.	17/8/2023
	Equality and diversity <a href="mailto:equalities@southandvale.gov.uk">equalities@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	Lynne Mitchell	Comments received around communications for digitally excluded residents.	14/8/2023
	Community Enablement <a href="mailto:cheryl.reeves@southandvale.gov.uk">cheryl.reeves@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	Cheryl Reeves	No further comments	15/8/2023
	Communications <a href="mailto:communications@southandvale.gov.uk">communications@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	Gail Buckle	Keep comms in loop with decision and launch timings and we	14/8/2023

	<a href="mailto:@southandvale.gov.uk">@southandvale.gov.uk</a>		can discuss and prepare comms.	
<b>Decision maker's signature</b> To confirm the decision as set out in this notice.	Adrianna Partridge approved by email: 14/09/2023  Simon Hewings approved by email: 21/09/2023			

## IMPORTANT NOTES TO OFFICERS:

1. You need to ask your head of service (or above) to determine whether this is a key decision. The constitution specifies a key decision as a decision of Cabinet, an individual Cabinet member or an officer acting under delegated powers, which is likely to:
  - (a) incur expenditure, make savings or to receive income (except government grant) of more than £75,000; or
  - (b) award a revenue or capital grant of over £25,000; or
  - (c) agree an action that, in the view of the chief executive or the relevant head of service, would be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising more than one ward in the area of the council.
2. If this is a key decision (as defined in paragraph 1 above), immediately after it is signed off, send it to [democratic.services@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@southandvale.gov.uk) to allow the councillors' scrutiny call-in procedure to commence. You cannot implement a key decision until the scrutiny call-in procedure has been completed. You will receive a copy of the email to councillors. Check with Democratic Services after the close of the call-in period to see if the decision has been called in.
3. If this is a key decision but the Scrutiny Committee Chair(s) has waived call-in, immediately after it is signed off send it to [democratic.services@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@southandvale.gov.uk) to allow councillors to be informed that a key decision has been made and scrutiny call-in waived. You may then implement the decision without further delay.
4. If this is a non-key decision, save this decision notice to your network drive for audit purposes (Democratic Services do not need a copy). You may implement the decision immediately.