

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Executive Decision Record

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Executive Lead Member for Children's Services and Deputy Leader
<b>Date:</b>	21 October 2015
<b>Title:</b>	Local Welfare Assistance
<b>Reference:</b>	6960
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Children's Services

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#### 1. The decision:

- a) That the contents of the original report, providing an overview of the development of Local Welfare Assistance (LWA) for Hampshire to date and the associated risks and issues, were noted by the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services.
- b) That £200,000 is approved to be paid to SCRATCH as a grant over 2 years (2015/16 and 2016/17) to support the development of FareShare, as detailed within Appendix C of the original report.
- c) That the following key objectives for LWA are explored subject to available resources and funding over the next 2-4 years;
  - The provision of furniture and white goods for low income families and those vulnerable groups entering into 'resettlement' arrangements in particular.
  - The provision of fuel poverty payments to align with support from existing projects and programmes of activity such as 'Hitting the Cold Spots'
  - The provision of better information and advice to support residents to avoid high risk coping strategies such as pay day loans
  - The facilitation of networking for local services and support providers, working with District and Borough departments and local charities and voluntary sector providers
  - The development of provision such as financial advice (budgeting and debt management) and affordable banking

## **2. Reason(s) for the decision:**

- 2.1. Part of the Governments Welfare reforms in April 2013 saw the abolition of two aspects of the Social Fund (Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans). These had previously been administered by the Department for Work and Pensions and constituted a cash based loans and awards process.
- 2.2. The system was abolished due to the inefficiency of the discretionary process and the misuse of a remotely processed application for support. Demand had outstripped resources, mainly due to repeat applications and the 'sticking plaster' approach to resolving crisis that created a dependency on cash outcomes and didn't address the reasons for people's crisis.
- 2.3. A reduced proportion of the money that had been used to deliver these functions was transferred to Local Authorities as of April 2013 to provide LWA under local discretion and determination. The money was not ring fenced, came with no statutory duty and there was no expectation from Ministers that Local Authorities would be expected to replicate or replace the previous systems of support.
- 2.4. The withdrawal of new funds for LWA, as of December 2014, led to underspent funds being identified to be spent over 3-5 years. The aim is to use the experience of delivering LWA for 2 years with partners to look at providing a sustainable and robust offer to local residents facing times of financial hardship and / or crisis.
- 2.5. Since the decision was taken to remove funding for Local Authorities to deliver LWA, a grant funded pilot has been launched to maintain the provision of publicly available phone based information, advice and guidance for people in crisis. This is being delivered by the CAB in Basingstoke and is due for review prior to establishing arrangements for April 2016-17. The current grant provided has been £55,000 for a year, April 2015 – March 2016.
- 2.6. Through maintaining strong links with local partners an opportunity to develop a FareShare model across Hampshire has been identified. By utilising £200,000 of the LWA budget as a grant over two years LWA could develop a self-sustaining model (through income generation) of support from third sector partners to address the impacts of food poverty, the need for furniture and white goods and fuel poverty.
- 2.7. SCRATCH, Southampton City and Region action to combat hardship, are the only current providers of the FareShare scheme within the South East region. Therefore they have the facilities, expertise, commercial contacts and volunteers to ensure that the central distribution is cost effective and efficient from the beginning. *It is estimated that to obtain and fit out a central facility for distribution of food waste on this scale would in itself cost circa £100-150,000.*
- 2.8. SCRATCH also form part of the existing Hampshire Furniture Reuse Network under LWA and have strong links with the partners identified to ensure fast, safe, equitable and fair County wide distribution of support.
- 2.9. The FareShare model for Hampshire will go beyond the provision of food as per the national scheme and will link local organisations and charities with free and affordable furniture and white goods and will enable LWA to deliver

fuel poverty solutions in conjunction with Hampshire's 'Hitting the Cold Spots' initiative.

- 2.10. This approach to providing support for residents in all three main areas of identified hardship requires these specific partners to engage with the project. However, this model would not exclude other Community Food Partners becoming part of the scheme at a later date.
- 2.11. Additional funding spent to date has been used for recruitment of a lead for Vulnerable Families and Local Welfare (£40,000) and one off grant funding to pilot a local Faith Based Organisation supporting Vulnerable families in Eastleigh and the surrounding areas (£15,000).
- 2.12. It is proposed that the next steps for LWA are to continue to identify opportunities to utilise this funding to address critical needs for Hampshire residents through, where possible, sustainable projects and programmes of activity.

**3. Other options considered and rejected:**

- 3.1. There were no alternative options discussed for FareShare, given the alternatives would be too costly.
- 3.2. There continues to be consideration relating to future opportunities to use the LWA budget to support vulnerable families and individuals in crisis or facing financial hardship.

**4. Conflicts of interest:**

- 4.1. Conflicts of interest declared by the decision-maker: None
- 4.2. Conflicts of interest declared by other Executive Members consulted: None

**5. Dispensation granted by the Conduct Advisory Panel: none.**

**6. Reason(s) for the matter being dealt with if urgent: not applicable.**

**7. Statement from the Decision Maker:**

Approved by:

Date:

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21 October 2015

**Executive Lead Member for Children's Services  
Councillor Keith Mans**