

## RECORD OF OFFICER DECISION

### APPROVAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EMERGENCY FOOD PARCEL SERVICE FOR VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS IN RESPONSE TO THE CORONA VIRUS

#### Decisions made:

- 1.To provide an emergency food parcel service to provide food for at least three days for vulnerable households unable to source food themselves.
- 2.To establish a gross budget for this service of £30,000 subject to ongoing review of demand. This sum will be reduced by the contributions by those able to pay and the local welfare provision payments.
- 3.To agree that the charges of the food parcels will be £20 for standard food parcel for one person, £ 30 for two people and up to £25 for a food parcel that caters for special dietary requirements for one person.
- 4.To agree that charging for emergency food parcels will be implemented in week commencing 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

**Made by;** Simon Hendey, Director of Housing and Commercial Development

#### Background

1. By power given to me pursuant to paragraph 1 of Part 3 Section D2 of Wiltshire Council's Constitution Scheme of Delegation to Officers (as last updated in February 2016) adopted by the Council at its meeting on 9th November 2010 or any subsequent successor constitution, I am authorised to make the above decision.

#### Reason for decision

2. The widespread effects of the Covid-19 virus mean that there are a number of vulnerable households who need to self isolate and have not been able to source food or other supplied from either friends and family or the voluntary and community sector.
3. The Council is receiving lists from MHCLG of vulnerable individuals (households) who have self identified as vulnerable and is contacting them to determine whether they have food and support they require. In addition, we will receive a list of all those Wiltshire residents whom are shielding, and vulnerable households will contact the Council's wellbeing hub if they require food or support. If the vulnerable household does not have food or ability to source food via delivery from shops or supermarkets or voluntary sector the Council is offering to provide an emergency three-day food parcel for the household while a more sustainable solution is put in place. The Council's offer is emergency assistance and is not intended to replace the food delivery service offered by shops, supermarkets and the voluntary and community sector.

4. It is proposed that the Council provides a basic three-day emergency food parcel at a cost of £20 which will cater for a person for at least three days and a three day food parcel costing £25 for individuals who have special dietary requirements such as gluten free, dairy free etc reflecting the additional costs of such products. There will be no choice in the contents of the parcels reflecting the fact that they are emergency provisions. The charges reflect the costs of the food purchased and does not include the Council's costs in terms of staff time in procurement, packing and delivery and all associated overheads.
5. To date circa 300 food parcels have been delivered to vulnerable households. Some of the food in those parcels has been provided by food deliveries from MHCLG. However, the Council has been sourcing the majority of food from wholesalers and supermarkets. The Council is sourcing a sustainable procurement source through its corporate procurement approach to control costs and supply.
6. It is recommended to establish a budget of £30,000 to cover the gross costs of emergency food parcels. This will cover the costs incurred to date in provision of food parcels and estimated costs going forward. Initially the Council did not charge for emergency food parcels due to urgency of providing food to vulnerable people. Later, processes were set up to allow the hub to take payments over the telephone or, refer to the local welfare provision fund where families were not able to pay. The cost of the initial food parcels will be in the region of £6,000 with an estimated net total of £20,000. The default going forward will be that the Council charges all those households who can afford to pay the budget will need to provide for any bad debt that is incurred. As the default payment method will be via credit or debit card, bad debt will only materialise when the vulnerable household or their friends and family are unable to pay via that means and an invoice is sent instead. This budget is based on maintaining the current level of demand of between 50-60 food parcels a day, seven days a week and will need to be revised if there is significant increase in demand.
7. If households are unable to pay for the emergency food parcel they will be helped to make a local welfare assistance application and if found to be eligible the costs of their food parcel will be met by that budget.
8. The administration of the emergency food parcel service takes place through the Council's wellbeing hub. To date when food parcels requests have been delivered there has not been a charge. Setting up charging mechanism is taking place and should be in place within week commencing 6<sup>th</sup> April.
9. I confirm that in making this decision I have considered the following in line with Wiltshire Council's Constitution: **(Please insert 'Yes' / 'No' / 'Not Applicable' and any other comments necessary to evidence the issue identified has been addressed)**

Key decision requirements	NA
Views of relevant cabinet member(s), committee chairman, area board(s)	Gold Meeting of 31.3.20 considered this policy.

Consideration of the area boards and delegated decision checklist for officers on the issue of when and how to involve local councillors and area boards in decisions about local services	NA
Implication of any council policy, initiative, strategy or procedure	This is a new service to meet the needs of vulnerable households in emergency situation
Consultation in accordance with the council's consultation strategy	Relevant heads of service and directors have been consulted
Range of options available	Given the unprecedented circumstances this is considered to be the appropriate option at this time. Others are examined below.
Staffing, financial and legal implications	Finance were fully consulted in the decision making process
Risk assessment	The risk of not providing emergency food to vulnerable households and the financial risks to the Council are mitigated by this proposal.
Involvement of statutory officers and/or directors	Yes
Regional or national guidance from other bodies	Limited regional and national advice available although similar approaches are being adopted by other LA
The council's constitution	Yes
This contract is suitable for execution under the e-signature process.	N/A

### **Conflict of Interest**

10. Not applicable.

### **Other options considered**

11. Not provide emergency food for vulnerable households who are self isolating. Although supermarkets and voluntary sector do provide shopping services it is too great a risk to rely on those offers when demand is high in the current unprecedented time. It is for that reason this approach is not recommended.

12. Not to charge for emergency food parcels. The majority of vulnerable households requiring emergency food have the means to pay but are just unable to access food. If current demand continues at an average of 50 households a day seven days a week

for the next 26 weeks that would be a cost to the Council of £180,000. This does not factor in costs of administration and delivery. So as to avoid placing the costs of the emergency food parcels on the other Council tax payers in Wiltshire this approach is not recommended.

Cost centre:

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Hendey', written in a cursive style.

Simon Hendey, Director of Housing and Development

Recommended by:

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> April 2020.