

EXECUTIVE DECISION

made by a Cabinet Member



REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY BY AN INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER


Executive Decision Reference Number – ESCYP02 21/22

| Decision | |
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| 1 | Title of decision: COVID Local Support Grant (CLSG) - Extension |
| 2 | Decision maker (Cabinet member name and portfolio title): Councillor Dave Downie, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Children and Young People |
| 3 | Report author and contact details: Mark Mortimer Mark.Mortimer@plymouth.gov.uk |
| 4 | <p>Decision to be taken: To approve the planned expenditure for the CLSG Extension funding of £871,567.58, plus £130,000.00 top up to allow food vouchers to the value of £15.00 per week, per child to be distributed to all targeted cohorts over the six week summer school holiday (Total face value of eVoucher codes is £90.00 per child). In order to meet this requirement, a contract will be a directly awarded to Blackhawk Incentives for the provision of 11,100 eVoucher codes at a cost of £999,000.00, less a supplier discount. Due to the urgency the award of contract will be via a negotiated procedure without prior publication relying on 32(2)(c) Public Contracts Regulations 2015 to provide extremely urgent deliverables.</p> |
| 5 | <p>Reasons for decision: The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is providing c£871,567.58 of additional CLSG funding to PCC (subject to Treasury approval), under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, to administer the CLSG and provide direct assistance to vulnerable households and families with children particularly affected by the pandemic. This will include all families who normally have access to Free School Meals (FSM) during term time and others on the periphery of benefits in hardship. PCC will deliver the scheme through food vouchers, in accordance with the previous distribution model.</p> <p>The size of the additional grant is not sufficient to provide vouchers to the value of £15.00 per week per child as per previous schemes, leaving a shortfall of £130k. PCC has therefore agreed to provide this additional funding from other Covid grant income. This will allow PCC to be consistent with previous schemes and to provide vouchers to all those previously supported.</p> <p>CLSG is effectively a further extension to the previous COVID Winter Grant Scheme (CWGS). The CLSG has been ring-fenced to cover the period 21st June 2021- 30th September 2021, allowing PCC to help deliver additional support while the effects of Covid-19 remain most challenging for those in need, particularly during the six weeks of the school summer holidays.</p> <p>A contract will be required to deliver circa 11,100 eVoucher codes during the summer holiday period. Crown Commercial Service's (CCS) have put in place a national Voucher Scheme Framework which Local Authorities can access. This includes a prospectus of possible Suppliers.</p> <p>Direct award without further competition is allowable under the Framework if it is determined that the requirements can be met by the Supplier Prospectus, and/or the deliverables set out in the Framework specification and/or Framework tender. However having reviewed these documents they do not provide sufficient detail on range of supermarkets, ease of user access, set up times etc. to enable the Council to</p> |

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| | <p>fully determine which is the most economically advantageous or practical offer. Under the Framework rules, if this cannot be determined by the information in the prospectuses and Framework documents or there are additional requirements to those in the Framework specification, it is required to run a mini competition. However, due to the late announcement by the DWP, Local Authorities were only notified of extension of the CLSG funding on 22nd June leaving insufficient time to complete a mini competition process or any other competitive Procedure. Vouchers are mainly aimed at those entitled to free school meals and it is critical that they are distributed prior to the start of the school holidays.</p> <p>Blackhawk are an approved provider on the national voucher Framework, and negotiation has taken place to ensure that the terms of contract are beneficial to the Council; previously Blackhawk offered the Council face value vouchers with no service charge. Through negotiation for this contract Blackhawk is offering vouchers at 98.72% of face value and no service charge. This offers better value for money and reflects the prices quoted on the national Framework.</p> <p>It is therefore intended that a contract is awarded by direct award to Blackhawk Incentives (Blackhawk Network Europe) via a negotiated procedure without prior publication relying on 32(2)(c) Public Contracts Regulations 2015 to provide extremely urgent deliverables.</p> <p>Blackhawk have a track record of providing a number of eVouchers schemes for PCC since October 2020. These contracts were directly awarded under on 32(2)(c) Public Contracts Regulations 2015 for the same reason of urgency due to late announcement of funding by the DWP. As Blackhawk have previously provided vouchers, Schools, EY settings and eligible families receiving the e-vouchers are already familiar with e-Vouchers from Blackhawk. To change provider now would increase the administrative burden and would require more time to set up a new system and for recipients to become familiar with the same. The city's schools remain very busy in managing the end of the school year and the response to Covid-19; introducing a new supplier and a change of voucher process at this stage would be impractical.</p> <p>Blackhawk are judged to be a suitable provider for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blackhawk can deliver the requirement in a timely manner • £0 charge for set up costs. Blackhawk are currently waiving their normal fee of £0.25p for each eVouchers they provide and are offering a discount on the face value of the vouchers. • Blackhawk are offering vouchers at 98.72% of face value • There is a good range of supermarket participation for redeeming eVouchers • Blackhawk has successfully provided e-food vouchers to eligible families for the previous December 2020, February 2021, Easter 2021 and May school holidays <p>Recipients are familiar with the Blackhawk system</p> |
| 6 | <p>Alternative options considered and rejected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vouchers to the value of £12.50 per week, per child be provided over the six week summer holiday period (total voucher value £75.00 per child). • Only target those on the FSM register and risk discriminating against those on the periphery of benefits in hardship and conflicting with the principles of the scheme • Food parcels - PCC (CATERed) does not have the capacity or capability to deliver a cost effective solution due to the practicalities that would be required to produce and distribute food parcels. • Cash payments - A cash payment for food was made to those entitled during October 2020 half term. However, as it was cash into banks, if the account it went into was already overdrawn the family did not have access to the money. Additionally, the procurement of pre-payment cards would incur service charges. <p>Access the CCS voucher framework to directly award a contract to a voucher provider</p> |
| 7 | <p>Financial implications: The CLSG extension is entirely funded by DWP. A small amount of the funding is being used to support the administration of the scheme and this will be recorded in</p> |

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| | <p>Management Information returns. We intend to spend 100% of allocated funding. 100% of the CLSG extension funding will be allocated in November and December 2021, on receipt of final CLGS Management Information (MI) returns to the DWP in June 2021.</p> <p>PCC has agreed to top up the grant (c£130k) using Covid-19 funding. This will allow PCC to be consistent with previous schemes and to provide all those we have targeted in the past with vouchers</p> | | | |
| 8 | Is the decision a Key Decision? (please contact Democratic Support for further advice) | Yes | No | Per the Constitution, a key decision is one which: |
| | | | X | in the case of capital projects and contract awards, results in a new commitment to spend and/or save in excess of £3million in total |
| | | | X | in the case of revenue projects when the decision involves entering into new commitments and/or making new savings in excess of £1million |
| | | | X | is significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the local authority. |
| | If yes, date of publication of the notice in the Forward Plan of Key Decisions | N/A | | |
| 9 | Please specify how this decision is linked to the Council's corporate plan/Plymouth Plan and/or the policy framework and/or the revenue/capital budget: | Caring for people and the communities – Reduced health inequalities - With other factors related to COVID likely to cause further hardship to our most vulnerable citizens, we will continue to support our most vulnerable children, young people and families, through the provision of support for food, utilities and related items. | | |
| 10 | Please specify any direct environmental implications of the decision (carbon impact) | The provision of vouchers will enable families to shop locally for food over the summer break at a range of different supermarkets. | | |
| Urgent decisions | | | | |
| 11 | Is the decision urgent and to be implemented immediately in the interests of the Council or the public? | Yes | X | (If yes, please contact Democratic Support (democraticsupport@plymouth.gov.uk) for advice) |
| | | No | | (If no, go to section 13a) |
| 12a | Reason for urgency: This support is needed for children at risk of going hungry. Due to the short notice of the funding there is not time to run a competitive tender process under Contract Standing Orders. The vouchers are mainly aimed at those entitled to Free School Meals and they need to be distributed in time for the start of the school summer holiday. | | | |
| 12b | Scrutiny Chair Signature: | Councillor Laing (approved via email) | Date | 5 th July 2021 |
| | Scrutiny Committee | Education and Children Overview and Scrutiny Committee | | |

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| | name: | | |
| | Print Name: | Cllr Jemima Laing | |
| Consultation | | | |
| 13a | Are any other Cabinet members' portfolios affected by the decision? | Yes | |
| | | No | X (If no go to section 14) |
| 13b | Which other Cabinet member's portfolio is affected by the decision? | | |
| 13c | Date Cabinet member consulted | | |
| 14 | Has any Cabinet member declared a conflict of interest in relation to the decision? | Yes | If yes, please discuss with the Monitoring Officer |
| | | No | X |
| 15 | Which Corporate Management Team member has been consulted? | Name | Alison Botham |
| | | Job title | Director of Children's Services |
| | | Date consulted | 2 nd July 2021 |
| Sign-off | | | |
| 16 | Sign off codes from the relevant departments consulted: | Democratic Support (mandatory) | DS15 21/22 |
| | | Finance (mandatory) | djn.21.22.43 |
| | | Legal (mandatory) | MS/01.07.21 |
| | | Human Resources (if applicable) | N/A |
| | | Corporate property (if applicable) | N/A |
| | | Procurement (if applicable) | PB/SC/005/ED/0721 |
| Appendices | | | |
| 17 | Ref. | Title of appendix | |
| | A | Briefing report for publication – 210701 – CLSG EXT Business Case V0.03 | |
| | B | Equalities Impact Assessment | |
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| Confidential/exempt information | | | |
| 18a | Do you need to include any confidential/exempt information? | Yes | If yes, prepare a second, confidential ('Part II') briefing report and indicate why it is not for |

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| | | No | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | publication by virtue of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box in 18b below. (Keep as much information as possible in the briefing report that will be in the public domain) | | | | |
| | | Exemption Paragraph Number | | | | | | |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 18b | Confidential/exempt briefing report title: | | | | | | | |
| Background Papers | | | | | | | | |
| 19 | Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are <u>unpublished</u> works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based. If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box. | | | | | | | |
| Title of background paper(s) | | Exemption Paragraph Number | | | | | | |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
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| Cabinet Member Signature | | | | | | | | |
| 20 | I agree the decision and confirm that it is not contrary to the Council's policy and budget framework, Corporate Plan or Budget. In taking this decision I have given due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not. For further details please see the EIA attached. | | | | | | | |
| Signature |  | | Date of decision | | | 5 th July 2021 | | |
| Print Name | Councillor Dave Downie, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Children and Young People | | | | | | | |