

Report to Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.



Date of Meeting	21 st June 2017
Portfolio	Neighbourhoods
Report Author	Helen Bellis
Public/Private Document	Public

Discretionary Crisis Fund and Local Welfare Provision Year End Report 2016/17

Executive Summary

1. The report outlines the performance of the Council's Discretionary Crisis Fund throughout 2016/17. It reports on applications received, those that were successful and those that were refused, which wards submitted reports and the type of awards made. The report also highlights the work and successes of the local welfare provision community projects.

Recommendation

2. For Members to note the information presented in the report.

Reason for Recommendation

3. It was been agreed by Members of the Communities, Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee that a year-end and 6 monthly report would be presented.

Key Points for Consideration

Background

- 4.1 The Discretionary Crisis Fund (DCF) provides white goods and basic furniture in support of those setting up home when resettling from temporary accommodation; for example when fleeing domestic abuse or leaving temporary homelessness accommodation. The Fund also provides a mechanism to make small crisis awards for those who find themselves in financial difficulty; for example, to provide emergency household fuel, or for an emergency clothes allowance.
- 4.2 The local welfare provision budget also grant funds contributions to a number of Food Banks within the borough (see paragraphs 3.19 to 3.23) and also grant funds a number

of small community based projects (see Paragraph 4.17 – 4.18 and Appendix 1 of this report).

Applications to the DCF

- 4.3 The DCF received 1,402 applications throughout 2016/17; 61% of these were made via the telephone, with the remainder being submitted online. 66% of applications were successful and 30% were refused. 58 of the applications were withdrawn or cancelled by applicants, or were pending a decision at the time of this report.
- 4.4 The table below shows the applications received, those that were successful and the number refused; the table compares with data from 2015/16.

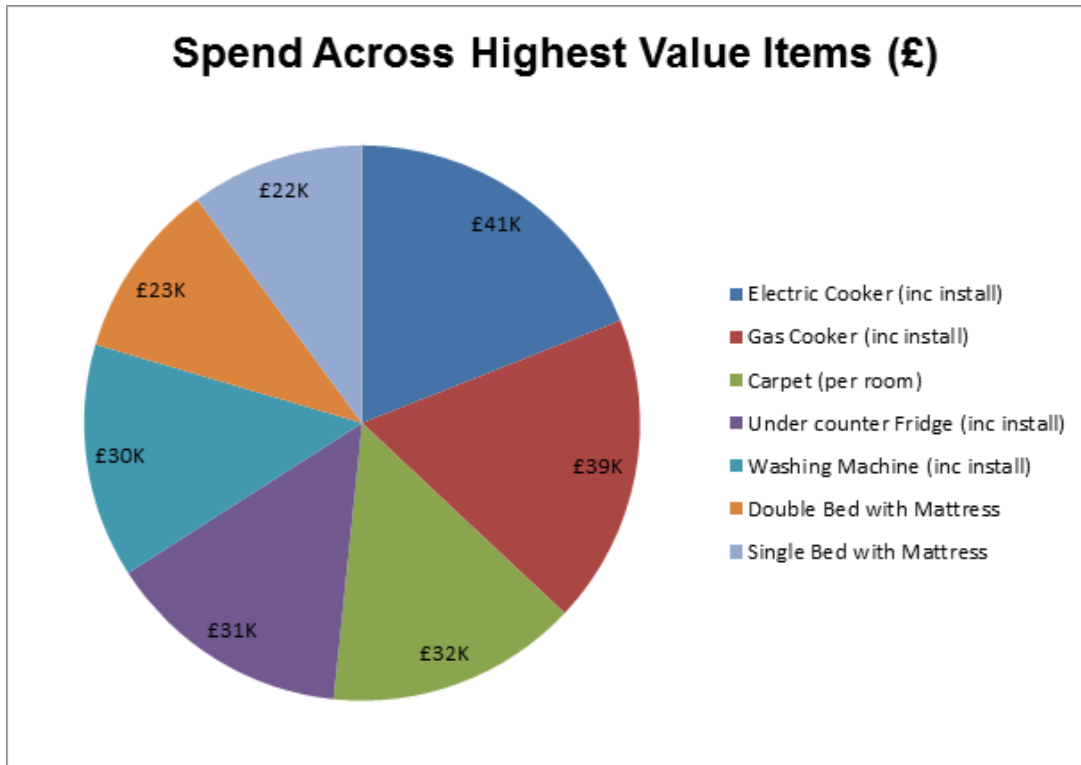
Table 1 - Applications received, successful and refused for 2015/16 to 2016/17

Quarter / Year		Received	Successful applications		Refused applications	
Q1	2016/17	361	214	(59%)	138	(38%)
	2015/16	572	243	(42%)	283	(49%)
Q2	2016/17	339	229	(68%)	103	(30%)
	2015/16	509	275	(54%)	227	(45%)
Q3	2016/17	320	219	(68%)	92	(29%)
	2015/16	407	248	(61%)	140	(34%)
Q4	2016/17	382	263	(69%)	86	(23%)
	2015/16	453	250	(55%)	161	(36%)
Full year	2016/17	1,402	925	(66%)	419	(30%)
	2015/16	1,941	1,016	(52%)	811	(42%)

- 4.5 The 3 main reasons in 2016/17, for applications to the DCF being refused were:
- when an applicant has not met with criteria as set out in the DCF policy (64%)
 - when an applicant has submitted an application for a resettlement award but is not being supported by one of the verifying partners who supports applicants to resettle and assists in making an application to the DCF (13%)
 - when an applicant does not have a live benefit claim and therefore cannot be means tested to ensure they do not have the means to address their own needs (10%)
- 4.6 5,256 individual items were awarded over the 2016/17, with single bed frames, single mattresses, bedding items, fridges, crockery and cutlery being the most requested items for support when resettling.

4.7 The following chart shows the spend on some of the highest value items provided by the scheme.

Chart 1 – Spend on highest value items



Unredeemed awards

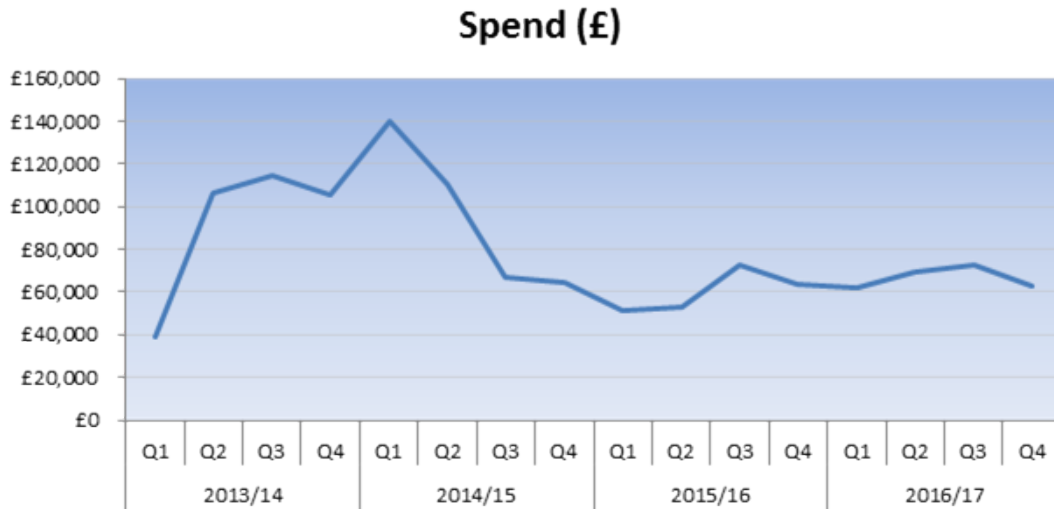
4.8 There are a number of occasions when awards have been made and applicants do not redeem the award. Over the year, 72 awards with a total value of £18,344 were not redeemed by applicants. Cancelled awards are usually due to the item no longer being needed, or on delivery it is found that the applicant already has the item.

An Emergency Energy award expires if it has not been used within a month of allocation, as it is no longer considered to be an emergency need.

4.9 The total fund spend on awards made to residents in 2016/17 was £267,593; this is a £26,690 increase from 2015/16 (£240,903).

4.10 The graph below shows spend on awards throughout the life of the scheme. It highlights a peak mentioned in last year's report (likely due to fraud which was addressed accordingly), and shows how the spend has levelled since Quarter 3 2014/15, showing fairly consistent figures.

Graph 1 - Spend on awards made to residents from 2013/14 to 2016/17



4.11 The following table shows the fund spend across the quarters and compares with spend for the previous year. The last two columns show the percentage of spend broken down in to resettlement and emergency awards (these are predominantly emergency household energy awards).

Table 2 - Fund spend across the quarters and compares with spend for the previous two years.

Quarter / Year		Spend	Average % of spend	
			Resettlement	Emergency Awards
Q1	2016/17	62,302	95%	5%
	2015/16	51,429	93%	7%
Q2	2016/17	69,334	96%	4%
	2015/16	53,186	92%	8%
Q3	2016/17	72,975	96%	4%
	2015/16	72,869	95%	5%
Q4	2016/17	62,982	93%	7%
	2015/16	63,419	94%	6%
Full year	2016/17	267,593	96%	4%
	2015/16	240,903	92%	8%

Ward Information

4.12 The following table shows the applications submitted to the DCF over 2016/17 and the successful and refused applications by ward areas.

Table 3 – Applications received, successful and refused by Ward area

Ward	Received	Successful	Refused	Withdrawn, Cancelled, Incomplete
Central Rochdale	221	148 (67%)	61 (28%)	12 (5%)
Kingsway	125	85 (68%)	35 (28%)	5 (4%)
Milkstone and Deeplish	116	75 (65%)	36 (31%)	5 (4%)
Balderstone and Kirkholt	115	80 (70%)	35 (30%)	0 (0%)
Smallbridge and Firgrove	107	68 (64%)	34 (32%)	5 (5%)
North Heywood	90	58 (64%)	29 (32%)	3 (3%)
Spotland and Falinge	87	53 (61%)	33 (38%)	1 (1%)
Hopwood Hall	75	50 (67%)	18 (24%)	7 (9%)
West Heywood	73	46 (63%)	21 (29%)	6 (8%)
West Middleton	71	46 (65%)	22 (31%)	3 (4%)
East Middleton	60	46 (77%)	9 (15%)	5 (8%)
North Middleton	56	43 (77%)	12 (21%)	1 (2%)
Castleton	51	30 (59%)	20 (39%)	1 (2%)
Bamford	36	20 (56%)	13 (36%)	3 (8%)
South Middleton	35	27 (77%)	6 (17%)	2 (6%)
Healey	32	23 (72%)	8 (25%)	1 (3%)
Wardle and West Littleborough	23	18 (78%)	4 (17%)	1 (4%)
Littleborough Lakeside	14	10 (71%)	4 (29%)	0 (0%)
Milnrow and Newhey	14	10 (71%)	4 (29%)	0 (0%)
Norden	1	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
Total	1402	936 (67%)	405 (29%)	61 (4%)

Please note: the data in the above table differs slightly from Table 1; this is due to the data being drawn from a 'live' system at a different time.

4.13 The above data shows most applications were received from the Central Rochdale ward, with the least being received from Norden. Wardle and West Littleborough had most successful applications.

4.14 It is worth noting, if a Ward area has a higher number of applications made by verifying partners (applications for resettlement), the quality and quantity of information included in the application is likely to result in a successful application. Therefore, the percentage of successful applications for a Ward area may depend on the type of application being made to the scheme.

Equality and Diversity

4.15 The DCF invites applicants to complete an Equality and Diversity Section within the application; although this is not a mandatory section of the application. From the information gathered from 1,364 applicants, the data shows that the fund is mainly accessed by applicants aged between 22 and 35 years old (47%). The fund continues to have a fairly equal split across male and female applicants applying to the DCF; 54% female and 46% male.

- 4.16 Of the 1,364 applicants who have completed the diversity section of the application, 820 (60%) were single and 524 (38%) were lone parents; again this is comparable to information collected throughout the life of the scheme. 82.5% of those who completed the section were White British.

The Innovation Fund 2016/17

- 4.17 In 2016/17 the Innovation Fund grant funded a number of small community projects from the local welfare provision budget. Grant funding was awarded to the following organisations:

The Bond Board: 'Quids in' financial workshops

The Bond Board delivered financial education workshops private-rented sector tenants; these included completing financial-health checks, raising debt awareness and managing existing debt. They also provided advice on welfare reforms.

Petrus: Petrus Volunteering#

The funding enabled Petrus to increase its capacity to deliver and support volunteering opportunities by extending the fixed term contracted Volunteer Development Manager post for another year. The focus was on engaging users into meaningful activities, developing capacity for self-support and enabling residents who wanted to make the move towards becoming job ready.

Citizens Advice Bureau: Complex welfare benefits and debt advice and support for people with life changing or long term health conditions

The nature of the assistance was dependent on need, but focussed solely around welfare, benefits, housing, money advice, employment, debt advice and budgeting skills.

The Bond Board: Financial Re-engagement Worker in the Private Rented Sector

The project focussed its resources on adults facing chronic exclusion who have no/limited current engagement with services, those who were unable or unsuitable to engage in financial group work and who had multiple needs including: debt, benefit problems, food and fuel poverty, poor health, homelessness, substance misuse and lack of employability skills. The project built on the achievements of the Welfare Progression Coach model funded by the Innovation Fund previously.

The British Legion - Rochdale Veterans Breakfast Hub

The Breakfast Club is managed by local veterans for local veterans. The Breakfast Club promoted the services available in this one stop shop for the Armed Forces family.

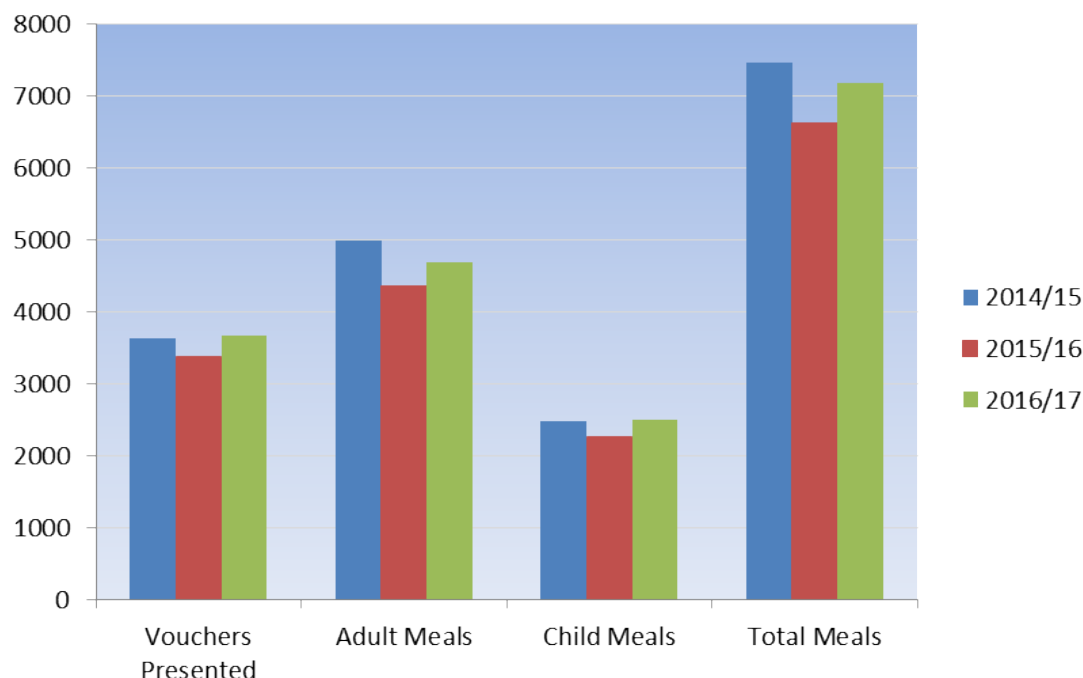
Once again, the Innovation Fund projects have been a great success and of real benefit to some of the borough's most vulnerable residents. Appendix 1 gives more details. The Innovation Fund 2017/18 will continue to support the above projects for a further 12 months.

Rochdale Food Bank

- 4.18 3,670 vouchers were presented to Rochdale Food Bank throughout 2016/17. The emergency food packages provided meals for a total of 7,180 residents; 4,683 adults and 2,497 children. 2015/16 saw a decrease in people accessing the food bank, but this

year the figures return to a similar level to 2014/15.

Table 4 – Meals provided by Rochdale Food Bank



4.19 Benefit delays, Benefit changes and low income were the main reasons residents gave when accessing the food bank. This is comparable to the data collected throughout last year.

Heywood Food Bank

4.20 Throughout 2016/17 Heywood Food Bank provided meals for a total of 16,052 people; 10,204 adults and 5,848 children.

4.21 Low income was the main reason residents gave when accessing the food bank; 1,615 stated this as the reason for their need to access emergency food.

Middleton Food Bank

4.22 Middleton food bank is not currently in a position to receive funding.

Alternatives Considered

4.23 No alternatives have been considered.

Costs and Budget Summary

5.1 The DCF put £100,000 forward as a saving for the 2016/17 financial year.

5.2 The carry forward for 2016/17 was £787,000, which was added to the £300,000 committed by Cabinet members; a total budget of £1,087,000.

- 5.3 The total cost of providing local welfare provision for 2016/17 was £484,173; this includes the awards made to residents, grant funding to the community projects, funding contributions to the food banks, contract costs for the provision of the DCF and internal administration.
- 5.4 The DCF secured a small amount of Welfare Reform funding from the Department of Work and Pensions and an amount from Public Health; although this has been used as substitute funding and the reserve carried forward is £621,373.
- 5.5 A budget pressure of £220,000 is built in to the current assumptions for 2018/19 to enable the scheme to continue with its current level provision.
- 5.6 A report is due at Cabinet in September 2017 to recommend further funding contributions to continue the current provision levels throughout 2018/19 and fund the scheme from 2019 onwards; otherwise the provision will cease.

Risk and Policy Implications

- 6.1 No risks are associated with this report.
- 6.2 There are no personnel implications arising from this report.

Consultation

7. Not applicable.

Background Papers	Place of Inspection
--------------------------	----------------------------

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 8. DCF policy | www.rochdale.gov.uk/crisisfund |
|---------------|--|

For Further Information Contact:	Helen Bellis helen.bellis@rochdale.gov.uk 01706 92 4460
---	---