

Officer Decision Record – Executive Decision

If Key Decision: Decision Ref. No.

B...000 /21.....

If not a Key Decision write n/a above

OFFICER DECISION RECORD ⁱ

Officer Key Decisions are subject to the Council's Call-In Procedure (Annex 9 of the Council's Constitution <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/freedom-of-information-and-council-data/open-data-statistics-about-hertfordshire/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/who-we-are-and-what-we-do.aspx>)

Subject: Awarding a contract for the supply of supermarket vouchers.

Type of Decision: Executive.

Key Decision (Executive Functions only): Yes.

Executive Member/Committee Chairman: Councillor Terry Douris.

Portfolio (Executive Functions only): Education, Libraries & Life Long Learning.

Officer Contact: Simon Newland (Operations Director, Education, Children's Services).

Tel: 01992 555 738.

April 2020

1. Decision

To directly award a contract to Edenred, via the Crown Commercial Service's framework, for the supply of supermarket vouchers.

2. Reasons for the decision

Reasons for taking this decision include:

- Awarding this contract is critical for the delivery of the Covid Local Support Grant which is funded by the Department of Work Pensions (with Hertfordshire County Council receiving £586,713.00).
 - o That the Covid Local Support Grant was announced on the 14th April 2021 with a start date of the 17th April 2021, providing little time to prepare in advance.
 - o That the short-notice announcement of the Covid Local Support Grant coincided with the completion of the Covid Winter Support Grant, which finished distribution of £3,358,399.80 of support on 16th April and completed reporting thereof on 5th May. This further reduced time and capacity for the Covid Local Support Grant's launch.
 - o That around 62% of the Covid Local Support Grant in Hertfordshire can only be delivered by issuing vouchers, as the only secure means of sending support to vulnerable households at scale in such a short period of time.
- That pre-existing contracts with Edenred cannot be legally varied to accommodate throughput from the Covid Local Support Grant, as advised by HCC's legal team and Strategic Procurement Group.
 - o That issuing a direct award via the Crown Commercial Service's voucher provider framework would provide a secure means of issuing a contract to Edenred.
- That Edenred provides a good value and effective service for issuing vouchers to Hertfordshire's residents:
 - o Edenred do not charge any administrative fees on top of the core voucher cost, unlike other voucher providers that Hertfordshire County Council has utilised.
 - o Schools, a critical partner in Covid Local Support Grant delivery, are familiar with the Edenred system as it has been used for term-time and holiday time Free School Meal food vouchers.
 - o Edenred provide direct customer service to voucher recipients, unlike other providers that Hertfordshire County Council has utilised.

- Edenred's voucher ordering system enables has resulted in higher levels of voucher redemption amongst vulnerable households (88% of Free School Meal vouchers being redeemed for Easter with Edenred, as opposed to 78% for February half-term with an alternative provider). This is due to Edenred's superior voucher ordering system and ability to trace each voucher's status in real-time, enabling support in using vouchers to be targeted to families most in need.
- Edenred's voucher ordering system would also enable frontline services to order vouchers themselves and to do so instantaneously, therefore enabling them to respond much quicker to service user needs.

3. **Alternative options considered and rejected**

The following alternative options have been considered and rejected:

- a. That Hertfordshire County Council continues to utilise the Family Fund Trust for Covid Local Support Grant voucher delivery.

Rejected on the following grounds:

- A less efficient voucher ordering system, resulting in a higher proportion of unredeemed vouchers.
- Adaptations to Family Fund Trust's ordering system would be required, taking extra time.
- A more expensive supplier than Edenred, with a £1.25 (excl. VAT) administration fee required per voucher ordered.
- The Family Fund Trust do not provide direct customer service support, requiring significant administrative resource from Hertfordshire County Council and a extended time to answer queries.

- b. That Hertfordshire County Council varies its pre-existing contract with Edenred for Covid Local Support Grant voucher delivery.

Rejected on the following grounds:

- This would potentially be illegal as it would be a material change to the contract that would not be open to market competition.
- This option carried the significant risk of a legal challenge from another voucher supplier.

- c. That Hertfordshire County Council changes its Covid Local Support Grant approach, instead doing a re-run of Free School Meal vouchers in May half-term through it's pre-existing Edenred contract.

Rejected on the following grounds:

- This would double fund the cohort eligible for Free School Meals, given the £45 vouchers that were awarded for the Easter holidays.
- This would prevent the deliver of support to groups who are in greater need than those solely eligible for Free School Meals (e.g. Care

Leavers, families supported by safeguarding, households approaching Citizens' Advice Bureaus for emergency support).

4. **Consultation** (see *Summary of Requirements below*)

Was any Councillor consulted? **Yes/No** (*delete as applicable*)

If yes:

- (a) Comments of Executive Member/Committee Chairman (*delete as applicable*)

- (b) Comments of other consultees

5. **Any conflict of interest declared by a councillor who has been consulted in relation to the decision**

(If a Councillor declares a conflict of interest DO NOT PROCEED without seeking advice from Democratic Services or Legal Services).

6. **[Following consultation with the Executive Member/Committee Chairman,] I am proceeding with the proposed decision.** (*delete words in square brackets if no requirement to consult the Executive Member/Committee Chairman*)

Signed:

Title:

Date:

Copies of record to:

- All consultees
- hard & electronic copy (if required to be made available for public inspection) to Democratic Services Manager - Room 213 County Hall.ⁱⁱ

Summary of Requirements to Inform/Consult Councillors

Significance of Proposed Action	Controversial	Relevant Councillor(s) to be Consulted
Technical/Professional/ Routine	No	No need to inform or consult councillors
Technical/Professional/ Routine	Yes	Executive Functions: Consult relevant Lead Executive Member and, where appropriate, Local Councillor Non-Executive Functions: Relevant Committee Chairman and, where appropriate, Local Councillor
Local	No	Executive Functions: Inform Lead Executive Member and Local Councillor Non-Executive Functions: Inform Local Councillor
Local	Yes	Executive Functions: Consult Lead Executive Member and Local Councillor Non-Executive Functions: Consult Local Councillor
General or County-wide	No	Executive Functions: Consult relevant Lead Executive Member (s) Non-Executive Functions: Consult relevant Committee Chairman
General or County-wide	Yes	Executive Functions: Consult relevant Lead Executive Member (s) and the Leader of the Council Non-Executive Functions: Consult relevant Committee Chairman/Leaders all Political Groups

