

# Cheltenham Borough Council

## Cabinet – 17 March 2026

### Housing Payments - Crisis and Resilience Fund Policy

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**Accountable member:**

Councillor Peter Jeffries, Cabinet Member Finance and Assets

**Accountable officer:**

Jayne Gilpin, Head of Revenues and Benefits

**Ward(s) affected:**

All

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**Key Decision:** Yes

**Executive summary:**

The council has powers to award Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to provide additional financial assistance towards housing costs where claimants are in receipt of Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit. Funding is received from the Government. Discretionary Housing Payments will end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 and will be replaced by the Housing Payment strand in the Crisis and Resilience Fund. Approval is being sought to replace the existing Discretionary Housing Payments policy with a new Housing Payment – Crisis and Resilience Fund Policy.

**Recommendations: That Cabinet:**

- 1. approves the Housing Payments - Crisis and Resilience Fund Policy in Appendix 4**
- 2. delegates decisions relating to the award of Crisis and Resilience Fund Housing Payments, in line with the policy and DWP guidance, to the Head of Revenues and Benefits and designated officers within the Benefits team, with the final decision in the event of dispute being taken by the Section 151 Officer.**

- 3. authorises the Section 151 Officer to apply to Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for an accounting direction if it appears that the annual allocation will be exceeded in any financial year.**
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## **1. Implications**

### **1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications**

The Crisis and Resilience Fund Housing Payments Scheme enables local authorities to provide financial assistance towards housing costs through the General Fund. Government provides grant funding each year and has confirmed Cheltenham will receive £106,443 in each of the years 2026/27 and 2027/28. The Council has the option to add this amount by up to a maximum of two-and-a-half times the grant allocation. Where due to demand Councils need to add to the funding, an application can be made to MHCLG for a specific accounting direction which would allow any payments made to its own tenants to be paid from the Housing Revenues Account (HRA) rather than from the General fund. It is recommended that the level of payments continue to be monitored and the S151 Officer is authorised to apply for such a direction if it appears probable that the annual allocation will be exceeded in any financial year.

The Government also provides funding each year to cover administration costs

**Signed off by:** Jon Whitlock, Head of Finance [jon.whitlock@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto:jon.whitlock@cheltenham.gov.uk)

### **1.2 Legal implications**

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is providing funding to Authorities under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, to administer The Fund. Authorities have discretion on exactly how this funding is used within the scope set out in the Crisis and Resilience Fund: Guidance for local authorities in England (1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029) guidance issued by the Department for Work and Pensions and updated in January 2026 (“the Guidance”).

**Signed off by:** Alison McKane, Deputy Monitoring Officer  
[alison.mckane@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto:alison.mckane@cheltenham.gov.uk)

### **1.3 Environmental and climate change implications**

There are no environmental and climate change implications associated with this report. The Climate Impact Assessment Tool has been completed to demonstrate the social benefits. This is attached as appendix 3.

**Signed off by:** Maizy McCann, Climate Officer [maizy.mccann@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto:maizy.mccann@cheltenham.gov.uk)

## **1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities**

This report contributes to the following Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Quality homes, safe and strong communities
- Taking Care of your money

## **1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications**

There are no implications directly from arising from this report. An equality impact assessment is in Appendix 2

## **1.6 Performance management – monitoring and review**

The number and category of housing payments are monitored on a monthly basis and reported to the Department for Work and Pensions periodically. The effectiveness of the policy will be kept under constant review and the policy will be updated as required.

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## **2 Background**

2.1 The Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) scheme has operated since 2001 to provide additional help with housing costs for recipients of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit where the award includes an element for housing costs. The Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001. provides the broad discretion and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) provides formal guidance which sets out how schemes should be administered.

2.2 From April 2026 the Crisis and Resilience Fund replaces the Household Support Fund and DHPs will be replaced by the Housing Payment strand of the Crisis and Resilience Fund. The Housing Payment will very closely replicate the current DHP guidelines and will transition in a phased approach over 3 years.

2.3 Housing payments will replicate the current DHP arrangements in 2026/27 and 2027/28 and funding will be at the same level as 2025/26, which for Cheltenham is £106,443.00. Responsibility for making Housing Payments will continue to be with the authority tier. In a two-tier area this means it will remain with, and funding will be provided to, the District Council.

2.4 Gloucestershire County Council will receive the remainder of the Crisis and Resilience Fund and be responsible for providing appropriate financial support to residents from that scheme.

2.5 Housing payments will be fully integrated into the Crisis and Resilience fund from

year 3, 2028/29, and funding will be provided to Unitary or County Councils.

2.6 The phased approach allows time for authorities to plan effectively and adapt systems and processes, ensuring that crucial housing support can continue to be delivered without disruption to those in need to sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness.

2.7 As Discretionary Housing Payments will end approval is being sought to replace the existing policy with a new Crisis and Resilience Fund Housing Payments Policy.

### **3 Crisis and Resilience Fund Housing Payments**

3.1 Housing Payments will replicate DHPs and will continue to be administered in line with the Guidance and the policy in appendix 4.

3.2 Payments can be made only to those residents

- who are entitled to Housing Benefit (HB); or
- Universal Credit (UC) housing; and
- have a rental liability; and
- require further financial assistance with housing costs

3.3 Like DHPs, Housing Payments are discretionary and there is no statutory right to a payment. The policy in appendix 4 supports the decision-making process, ensuring that fair and consistent decisions are made when considering applications and that financial support towards housing costs goes to those most in need of financial assistance.

3.4 To avoid confusion, the website and online applications will continue to include the wording formerly used, i.e. Discretionary Housing Payments.

### **4 Reasons for recommendations**

4.1 The Housing Payments - Crisis and Resilience Fund policy in appendix 3 is required so that financial support can continue to be paid to eligible residents.

4.2 Some minor changes have been made to the policy to update wording where appropriate and to clarify that Armed Forces Compensation Payments will be disregarded as income in applications.

### **5 Alternative options considered**

5.1 None. The Council is expected to administer the new Crisis and Resilience Fund

Housing Payments which replicate Discretionary Housing Payments and the policy sets out the basis for making consistent and fair awards.

## **6 Consultation and feedback**

6.1 No consultation has been undertaken. The policy is being updated due to Discretionary Housing Payments being replaced by the Housing Payment strand of the Crisis and Resilience Fund.

## **7 Key risks**

7.1 The risks are in appendix 1

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### **Report author:**

Jayne Gilpin, Head of Revenues and Benefits [jayne.gilpin@cheltenham.gov.uk](mailto:jayne.gilpin@cheltenham.gov.uk)

### **Appendices:**

- i. Risk Assessment
- ii. Equality Impact Assessment – Screening
- iii. Climate Change Assessment
- iv. Draft scheme conditions for 2026/27

### **Background information:**

1. The Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2001/1167/contents/made>
2. (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/crisis-and-resilience-fund-guidance-for-local-authorities-in-england-1-april-2026-to-31-march-2029>)

**Appendix 1: Risk Assessment**

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
	If the Housing Payment - Crisis and Resilience Fund policy, to replace the discretionary Housing Payment policy is not approved Cheltenham residents who would be eligible to apply will not receive the financial assistance towards their housing costs	Jayne Gilpin	3	1	3	Accept	Monthly monitoring of awards made	Jayne Gilpin	Ongoing
	If Housing Payment awards are made in excess of the DWP funding the Council will be required to fund the excess	Jayne Gilpin	2	3	6	Avoid	Ongoing monitoring of the DHP budget throughout the year as part of internal controls. Authorise the S151 officer to apply for an Accounting Direction	Jayne Gilpin	09/02/2026

## Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment (Screening)

### 1. Identify the policy, project, function or service change

#### a. Person responsible for this Equality Impact Assessment

Officer responsible: Jayne Gilpin	Service Area: Revenues and Benefits
Title: Head of Revenues and Benefits	Date of assessment: 09/02/2026
Signature: Jayne Gilpin	

#### b. Is this a policy, function, strategy, service change or project?

Policy

If other, please specify:

#### c. Name of the policy, function, strategy, service change or project

Housing Payments - Crisis and Resilience Fund Housing Payments

Is this new or existing?

Is changing

**Please specify reason for change or development of policy, function, strategy, service change or project**

**The existing policy is Discretionary Housing Payments. This scheme is being replaced by the Housing Payment strand in the Crisis and Resilience Fund from April 2026 and the new policy needs to be implemented to reflect the change**

#### d. What are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes and who is likely to benefit from it?

Aims:	The Housing Payments - Crisis and Resilience Fund policy will replace the Discretionary Housing Payments from April 2026. The policy is broadly the same to reflect the name change
Objectives:	The Housing Payments - Crisis and Resilience Fund Policy will set out the basis for considering and awarding Housing Payments
Outcomes:	Crisis and Resilience Fund Housing Payments will provide financial support towards housing costs as detailed in the policy but will seek to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alleviate poverty</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prevent homelessness</li> <li>• supporting people to secure sustainable and affordable accommodation</li> <li>• supporting people who out of necessity are temporarily occupying accommodation which is unaffordable from their benefits, such as foster carers between fostering placements</li> <li>• helping applicants through personal crisis and challenging life events</li> </ul>
Benefits:	As above

e. What are the expected impacts?	
Are there any aspects, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could have an impact on the lives of people, including employees and customers.	<b>Yes</b>
Do you expect the impacts to be positive or negative?	<b>Positive</b>
Please provide an explanation for your answer:	
The policy ensures that eligibility criteria is applied fairly and consistently so that the most vulnerable residents including those with Protected Characteristics receive support	

**If your answer to question e identified potential positive or negative impacts, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment.**

f. Identify next steps as appropriate	
Stage Two required	<b>Yes</b>
Owner of Stage Two assessment	<b>Jayne Gilpin</b>
Completion date for Stage Two assessment	<b>18/02/2026</b>

**Please move on to Stage 2 if required ([intranet link](#)).**