

(9xv) **Ms M Smith**

To the Leader of the Council

“Will you agree that any monies left over from the individual Ward COVID 19 budgets should continue to be spent locally, decided by Local Members, to aid the economic recovery?”

Information on this fund is also provided in response to question 7 from Cllr Sagers. I note from that response that just under 20% of the fund was awarded in the first quarter and we started the fund after the quarter began. We may need all of it for the purpose intended this financial year. Feedback from community bodies highlights their concern about potential increases in food poverty and insecurity.

Members can review how to target any funding remaining in the covid ward budgets when we review the humanitarian service as it evolves through to September this year. It is not yet known if the Government will provide financial support to the Council beyond that date or what the need in our communities will be beyond then.

I am engaging with Area Chairs, local third sector representatives and community groups themselves this month and next. Cllr Henderson is involved in this too and we will be happy to hear Member views on humanitarian assistance locally including the use of ward discretionary funds not yet allocated.

We will of course have to balance those views with the Council’s overall budget position which is reported to this meeting of the Council. We still have a significant budget gap to reduce.