



# WELWYN HATFIELD

## OPENNESS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES REGULATIONS 2014 RECORD OF OFFICER DECISION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

1. **SERVICE AREA**

2. **CASE REFERENCE**

3. **DECISION TITLE**

4. **AUTHORITY TO TAKE THE DECISION** **(tick)**

This decision has been taken under a specific express authorisation

This decision has been taken under a general authorisation

The effect of the decision is to:

(a) grant a permission or licence

(b) affect the rights of an individual

(c) award a contract or incur expenditure which materially affects the Council's financial position

5. **DETAILS OF THE DECISION MAKING OFFICER**

6. Name of decision making Officers	<input type="text" value="Ka Ng"/>	<input type="text" value="Rob Bridge"/>
Job titles	<input type="text" value="Corporate Director&lt;br/&gt;(Resources, Environment&lt;br/&gt;and Cultural Services)"/>	<input type="text" value="Chief Executive"/>
Signatures	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Date this decision was taken	<input type="text" value="22 May 2020"/>	

## 7. DETAILS OF THE DECISION

### Decision taken

To set up a discretionary business support scheme in line with government guidance.

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's discretionary grant scheme will focus on the four groups the Government has identified as priorities, which are:

1. Small businesses in shared offices or other flexible workspaces, which do not have their own business rates assessment. Examples could include units in industrial parks, science parks and incubators which do not have their own business rates assessment
2. Regular market traders with fixed building costs, such as rent, who do not have their own business rates assessment.
3. Charity properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief which would otherwise have been eligible for Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) or Rural Rate Relief.
4. Bed & Breakfasts which pay council tax instead of business rates and which have bed and breakfast insurance and are registered with the Council. Businesses operating solely via Airbnb will be excluded.

Grants will only be available for businesses that are not eligible for other support schemes. Businesses which have received cash grants from any central government COVID-19 related scheme are ineligible for funding. However, Businesses who have applied for the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme or the Self Employment Income Support Scheme are eligible to apply for this scheme.

Businesses that are in administration, are insolvent or where a striking-off notice has been made are not eligible for funding under this scheme. Businesses based from residential addresses are not eligible.

Exact levels of funding to be determined at a later date, once a better understanding is available on the numbers of businesses applying and of the financial impacts on businesses. The scheme will run initially until 19 June 2020.

### Reasons

The funding being provided by the government is set at £802,000. The scheme will be capped to this value. Businesses have received support from the government for one of the largest costs business face, this is employment costs and support has been provided in the form of the furlough scheme. Further support has been provided in relation to business rates relief, and a grant scheme to support businesses with other ongoing costs. This principle behind this scheme, based on the government's guidance, is to provide support businesses with high ongoing property costs (such as rent) if they have face negative impacts to their income levels.

A group of officers met to understand the potential numbers of businesses that could be eligible if restrictions were not applied to the fund including gathering some data on businesses operating from known business centres. This information suggested that over 2,000 could be eligible, which meant that funding, if equally shared, could be less than £400 per business.

In order to provide a meaningful level of support to these businesses that need support, it is recommended that the Council devise a scheme which focusses on the key businesses which the Government has asked the Council to prioritise, which are the four groups of businesses set out in the decisions taken section.

As the principal focusses on supporting businesses with fixed and high property costs, virtual offices and those working from residential addresses will be excluded. It is felt key income for these businesses and therefore the associated costs will be through the furlough and self employed support schemes.

Based on the number of businesses applying, and the financial information obtained through the application process the grant levels will be determined. High numbers may lead to an equal apportionment of funding, lower numbers may enable a more tailored approach which provides proportionate funding to property costs. This decision will be returned towards the end of the scheme.

Should this scheme not utilise all funds available, a second scheme may be brought for decision, broadening the criteria and supporting a wider pool of businesses.

The scheme will be administered within the Resources service, with support from other services such as licensing as required.

#### Alternative options considered and reasons for their rejection (if any)

Not deliver a scheme – this would not be acceptable – local businesses need support and the council would be heavily criticised for not making use of the funding available.

Deliver an unrestricted, or less restricted scheme – due to timeframes available, and governments desire to get money out to support businesses quickly, there is insufficient information available to confirm how much interest there will be in the scheme. Not applying restrictions/conditions may lead to a scheme which is inundated with applications, is resource intensive to administer, and does not provide meaningful support to businesses.

## 8. BACKGROUND PAPERS USED TO INFORM THE DECISION

Background Papers	Location
Delegation of decisions in relation to the scheme – “Covid-19 Financial Impact Update 2020/21” - Cabinet 19 May 2020	<a href="https://democracy.welhat.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=151&amp;MId=1097&amp;Ver=4">https://democracy.welhat.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=151&amp;MId=1097&amp;Ver=4</a>
Government Guidance	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-business-support-grant-funding">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-business-support-grant-funding</a>

**9. DETAILS OF ANY MEMBER(S) CONSULTED**

Councillor Tony Kingsbury (Leader)  
Councillor Duncan Bell (Executive Member for Resources)  
Councillor Bernard Sarson (Executive Member for Regeneration, Economic Development and Partnerships)

In the case of a decision made under specific express authorisation, the name of any Member who has declared a conflict of interest

n/a
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**10. DETAILS OF ANY OFFICER(S) CONSULTED**

Head of Resources  
Client Services Support Manager  
Community Partnerships Manager  
Economic Development Officer

**11. OPINION OF DECISION MAKING OFFICER AS TO CONFIDENTIAL/EXEMPT INFORMATION**

In my opinion this record and/or background papers contain confidential/exempt information and the material is therefore not to be placed on the website or disclosed to the public

**12. ACTION FOLLOWING THE DECISION**

Date of publication

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