



WELWYN HATFIELD

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

1. **SERVICE AREA**

Resources

2. **CASE REFERENCE**

3. **DECISION
TITLE**

Set up of business support grant scheme using Additional
Restrictions Grant

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

Ka Ng

Richard Baker

Job titles

Chief Executive

Head of Resources

Signatures

Date this decision was taken

23 November 2020

7. DETAILS OF THE DECISION

Decision taken

To set up a discretionary business support scheme using the recently announced Additional Restrictions Grant from the Government.

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's discretionary grant scheme will focus on businesses which have not received support through both the business rates relief schemes and initial mandatory grant schemes specific to the pandemic (these were the Expanded Retail and Nursery Discount and the Small Business Grant Fund and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund).

All categories of business will be able to apply if they meet the essential criteria but the scheme will give priority the following business sectors: Manufacturing, Wholesale, Retail, Hotels, Catering, Recreation, Leisure, Events and Hospitality (or those in the direct supply chain to these businesses). This will be followed by giving priority for Charities, Transport, Storage, Construction, businesses with no rates assessment such as those occupying shared offices.

Essential criteria for the scheme will be:

- That the business has not received support through both the 100% rates reduction through covid support measures and the mandatory grant schemes
- Have seen a reduction of income associated with the pandemic
- Have ongoing business overheads
- Be based in / operating in the borough

Homeworkers and virtual offices will be included if they can demonstrate they meet the essential criteria.

Taxi drivers will be considered but must be licenced by and registered with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.

Market Traders will be considered if they are operating / trading in the borough.

Where businesses have been supported by the Closed grant scheme which is currently running, this will be part of the grant award considerations and a reduced award will be payable.

Grant awards are likely to be between £500 and £25,000, but due to uncertainty on the demand on support, the final decision on these values will be determined as more data becomes available. Initial award levels have been agreed, and funding may be made in two tranches, some released during the application window as applications are assessed, and further payments after the scheme has closed and all applications have been assessed. This is to prevent over subscription to the scheme and that funds remain available to further support business in 2021.

The application window will run for just over 1 month, until 31 December 2020.

Reasons

The funding that has been made available by the government (£2,460,860) is for business support arising from the pandemic, but is not ringfenced to direct grant support. On this basis, a small proportion of the award will be set aside for wider economic development activities. It is recognised that the fastest and simplest way to provide support is through the direct award of financial grants to businesses.

The initial intention is to award a reasonable proportion of the funding through direct grant, to help businesses through this difficult period and prevent business failure.

Further tranches of funding will be considered in future depending on the climate and restrictions for the area.

Whilst the initial amount will be set aside, a decision is not being made at this stage on its use, as it may be determined at a later stage to use it towards further grant funding.

The essential criteria for the scheme includes an exclusion that businesses have not received both the 100% retail relief for business rates arising from national pandemic support schemes and the initial mandatory grant schemes. The rationale for this is that many of these businesses will have received the rates relief, the initial grant funding, and will be eligible for the more recent Closed scheme funding. On this basis the funding will be targeted towards those that have had less support, such as those without business rates liabilities and those in the supply chain for closed businesses.

Delegated authority was provided to the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services). Since this delegation, the post holder for the Corporate Director (Resources, Environment and Cultural Services) has been appointed as the Chief Executive, and the Head of Resources as the Section 151 Officer. On this basis the decision is being made by the Chief Executive and Head of Resources.

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 – there is insufficient information available to confirm how much interest there will be in the scheme. Not applying some 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. However, based on knowledge of previous schemes, this scheme has been designed with fewer restrictions than the previous discretionary grant scheme.

Allocate greater / all funding towards business support / economic development schemes rather than a grant scheme – This would not provide the immediate and direct support required by businesses and would risk criticism should local businesses fail during this period in favour of wider and longer term business support measures. A small element will be retained for these functions and will be reassessed at a later date.

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	https://democracy.welhat.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=151&MId=1097&Ver=4

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

10. DETAILS OF ANY OFFICER(S) CONSULTED

Client Services Support Manager

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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