



# 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="Richard Baker"/>
Job titles	<input type="text" value="Chief Executive"/>	<input type="text" value="Head of Resources"/>
Signatures	<input type="text" value="[Redacted Signature] Ka Ng&lt;br/&gt;2021.01.17&lt;br/&gt;18:12:40 Z"/>	<input type="text" value="[Redacted Signature]"/>
Date this decision was taken	<input type="text" value="18 January 2021"/>	

## 7. DETAILS OF THE DECISION

### Decision taken

In December 2020, the council ran a discretionary business support grant scheme funded from the Additional Restrictions Grant that was allocated to the council by the Government.

Since the scheme closed, we have been contacted by a number of businesses to explain they had missed the application window.

In addition to this, the council has been investigating how a single support application could be utilised for all business support grant schemes, to simplify the process from a business perspective. This will allow businesses to apply once, under which the council can continually assess against new schemes and funding windows of existing schemes.

The discretionary grant scheme was set up to target those businesses which had not received funding under certain other schemes, and it is recommended that the scheme be reopened as part of the publication of a single form.

Businesses applying, which had not applied during December will be assessed under the same criteria to provide a lump payment to support for the period businesses had not received funding. Those that applied during December will not be assessed again.

The team will then be setting up a rolling scheme, to support businesses through periods of different tier systems and national lockdowns, similar to the government approach to the mandatory schemes. This will mean those businesses that applied during December, and under the reopened scheme, would then be reassessed for further payments after 15 February. Details of these schemes are currently being considered and will be returned for decision closer to the time.

It is proposed that no end date is put on the application at this time, that funds will be closely monitored, which will allow businesses to continue to apply if they missed the December window or have not seen messages on the scheme. A decision will be considered at a later date to close the scheme, and a message will be added to the site to warn businesses the scheme will be coming to an end.

### Reasons

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

It was agreed that further tranches of funding would be considered in future depending on the climate and restrictions for the area. This decision seeks to extend that period and create a single application form for ongoing assessment.

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	<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>
Decision to open scheme and scheme criteria – November 2020	<a href="#">Record of Officer Delegated Decision (welhat.gov.uk)</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

## 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

19 January 2021