



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**

Extend the Council Tax Support Payments and Hardship Fund

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

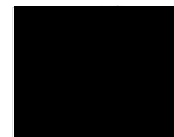
Chief Executive

Head of Resources

Signatures



Ka Ng
2021.02.11
22:51:39 Z



Date this decision was taken

12 February 2021

7. DETAILS OF THE DECISION

Decision taken

As part of its response to COVID-19, the Government has provided local authorities in England with £500m of new grant funding to support economically vulnerable people. The expectation is that most of the hardship fund will be used to provide council tax relief, alongside existing local council tax support schemes. The Government's expectation was that we would provide all recipients of working age local council tax support during the 2020/21 year with a further reduction in their annual council tax bill of £150, using our discretionary powers to reduce the liability of council tax payers outside of our formal council tax support scheme design.

The Council did not amend its existing Council Tax Support Scheme but used discretionary powers to increase the amounts paid to existing claimants by up to £150 and increasing the total amount available in the existing hardship fund. This meant that where a taxpayer's liability for 2020/21 was, following the application of council tax support, less than £150, then their liability would be reduced to nil. Where a taxpayer's liability for 2020/21 was nil, no reduction to the council tax bill will be available.

We received a grant of £826k and through a section 31 grant and we were informed that we would be funded in full for the new burdens cost for delivering the support. Once the Council has allocated a proportion of the grant to reduce the council tax bill of qualifying claimants by a further £150, we were advised to establish our own local approach to using any remaining grant to assist those in need.

Our expenditure to date is £469k and we therefore propose reposting council tax support payments for £250, increasing the existing £150 posting by £100 and providing £250 hardship payments to all new claimants during the 2020/21 year. This increase will be covered by our residual funding.

Reasons

This will provide much needed support to our vulnerable residents through the funding awarded to local authorities for this purpose.

The £826k funding cannot be carried forward into 2021/22 and any residual funding will need to be returned to the Government.

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)

Return residual funding to support our vulnerable residents during the pandemic to the Government.

Not deliver the much-needed support to the vulnerable residents in our community.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS USED TO INFORM THE DECISION

Background Papers	Location
Government paper S13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/council-tax-covid-19-hardship-fund-2020-to-2021-guidance

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

12 February 2021