



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

Job titles

Signatures

Date this decision was taken

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 at the end of December 2020, we were contacted by a number of businesses to explain they had missed the application window and we reopened the application process to cater for these businesses and other local businesses that required support during the current lockdown period. In addition to this, we simplified the application process from a business perspective through a single support application which could be utilised for all business support grant schemes. This has allowed businesses to apply once, under which the council can continually assess against new schemes and funding windows of existing schemes. The Additional Restrictions Grant discretionary scheme was set up to target those businesses which had not received funding under certain other schemes.

We have had three payment tranches with the last one replicating the Government's mandatory grant scheme and all qualifying businesses received payments to cover a 44-day period from 15 February 2021. All the mandatory business grant schemes close 31 March 2021 and will be replaced by a new business Restart Grant which support non-essential retail premises and hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care, and gym business premises with one-off grants.

It is recommended that the next phase of the council's discretionary grant scheme replicates the Government's Restart Grant scheme and from 1 April 2021 eligible businesses will receive payments based upon the following tables:

| Qualifying property overheads for eligible non-essential retail businesses (Fixed costs) | Grant Value |
|---|--------------------|
| Exactly £5,000 and under | £500 |
| Over £5,000 up to exactly £15,000 | £2,667 |
| Over £15,000 and under £51,000 | £4,000 |
| Exactly £51,000 and over | £6,000 |

| Qualifying property overheads for eligible Hospitality and Leisure properties (Fixed costs) | Grant Value |
|--|--------------------|
| Exactly £5,000 and under | £1,000 |
| Over £5,000 up to exactly £15,000 | £8,000 |
| Over £15,000 and under £51,000 | £12,000 |
| Exactly £51,000 and over | £18,000 |

Eligible businesses which have already received support through our Additional Restrictions Grant scheme will not need to reapply. Businesses applying, which had not already applied will be assessed under the same criteria to provide a lump payment to support for the period businesses had not received funding. There is no end date at the moment with the application process at this time, but funds will continue to be closely monitored, which will allow businesses to continue to apply should they not already have done so. 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 was followed with the application process reopening and the creation of 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 | https://democracy.welhat.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=151&MId=1097&Ver=4 |
| Decision to open scheme and scheme criteria – November 2020 | Record of Officer Delegated Decision (welhat.gov.uk) |

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

25 March 2021