



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**

Changes to 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**

Name of decision making Officers

Ka Ng

Richard Baker

Job titles

Chief Executive

Head of Resources

Signatures

Date this decision was taken

17 May 2021

6. DETAILS OF THE DECISION

Decision taken

That the current business support scheme, funded by the Additional Restrictions Grant, be closed for applications on 31 May 2021.

That wet pubs are paid £5k each to support with reopening of businesses.

That any remaining balances associated with this grant, be apportioned and paid to businesses that have submitted eligible applications under then scheme, using the same priorities as those previously agreed at the start of the scheme. Payments will be made by the end of June 2021.

Reasons

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 lockdown periods. 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 four payment tranches with the last one replicating the Government's mandatory Restart Grant scheme and all qualifying businesses received payments from April 2021.

It is recommended that the current phase of the council's discretionary grant scheme closes on 31 May 2021. It is then recommended that additional support is provided to all eligible businesses that applied under this scheme as follows:

- £5,000 payment to wet led pubs to help support these businesses reopen. This relates to pubs where under normal circumstances (without local or national restrictions) would have been open to the general public, allow drinking without requiring food to be consumed and permit drinks to be purchased at a bar.

Priority will be given to the following business sectors. Grant awards will be apportioned factoring in these priority groups to utilise the remaining funds available:

- 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.

Consideration will also be given to:

- Homeworkers and virtual offices.
- Taxi drivers licenced by and registered with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.

Market Traders if they are operating / trading in the borough

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.

We have so far paid £1.357m through our Additional Restrictions discretionary grant scheme of our existing £3.554m allocation. By utilising the remaining funds by 30 June 2021 the council will qualify for £952k additional funding to provide further support to our local economy. It is proposed that a separate decision will be made on the use of the additional funding that will be made available to the council.

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.

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. Funds will continue to be closely monitored, which will allow businesses to continue to apply should they not already have done so.

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.

Not awarding all funds by the end of June 2021 and not qualifying for additional funding to support the local business community. This would not be recommended as would mean less support would be available to the local economy.

7. 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)

8. DETAILS OF ANY MEMBER(S) CONSULTED

Councillor Tony Kingsbury (Leader).

Other Cabinet members are yet to be appointed for the new civic year.

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

9. DETAILS OF ANY OFFICER(S) CONSULTED

Client Services Support Manager

10. 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

11. ACTION FOLLOWING THE DECISION

Date of publication

17 May 2021