

Record of Decision taken by Chief Executive/Director

Decision title: Rules and Guidance for applications to Somerset West and Taunton Council's Discretionary Business Grants Fund

Chief Executive/Director making the decision: James Hassett

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Date of Decision: 22 May 2020

Details of decision:

The Chief Executive has approved the adoption of a discretionary business grants scheme for Somerset West & Taunton. The scheme is detailed in Appendix 2.

This decision has been taken in accordance with the urgent decisions provision contained in paragraph 5 of the Budget and Policy Framework of the Council's Constitution because it is not practical to convene a quorate Full Council meeting within the required timeframe. The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Wren, has been consulted and agrees that this decision is required as a matter of urgency and that it is appropriate for it to be made under the urgency provisions. A report will be made to the next available Full Council meeting to explain the reasons for the urgent decision.

The guidance issued by Central Government on 13 May 2020 provides funding for local authorities to grant funding to businesses to provide financial support where they have suffered financial loss as a result of Covid 19. This guidance can be viewed at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/885011/local-authority-discretionary-grants-fund-guidance-local-government.pdf

Government have prescribed elements of the eligibility criteria for this funding, but have also left elements of this to the discretion of individual Local Authorities. Consequently we have to develop, publish and implement our local approach to awarding this funding.

Government have also been clear that their intention is for Local Authorities to quickly (i.e. by early June) start to process applications and make payments. Consequently to meet Government expectations we have had to very quickly devise a scheme and make a decision under our emergency powers provisions. The scheme has been developed in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Members of the Scrutiny Committee have been provided with an overview.

Full details are set out in the following documents, which are attached:

- Summary
- Appendix 1 – Options
- Appendix 2 – Discretionary Grant Fund scheme

Further Government guidance:

The Government are still in the process of providing further guidance (in the form of Frequently Asked Questions) regarding the intended operation of this scheme.

Where this subsequent guidance requires adjustments to minor elements of the scheme the Chief Executive is delegating, through this decision notice, powers to the Acting Director – Internal Operations to make any minor changes required.

Reasons for proposed decision:

The scheme adopted, as detailed in the attached documents, provides an approach to awarding the discretionary grant funding that provides for:

- Our delivering on the Government expectation of a quick response & commencement of payments (we aim to commence payments from 2 June 2020)
- Ensuring the total monies awarded remain within the limited funding available
- Reasonable safeguards to ensure we target assistance to the categories specified by Government & to avoid fraudulent claims
- Is manageable from an administrative perspective
- Helps to manage the expectations of businesses & avoid unnecessary claims

Alternative options considered and rejected:

These are set out in Appendix 1

| The below has been completed: | Name(s) | Date |
|---|--|-----------|
| Relevant Portfolio Holder(s) consulted | Cllr Kravis | 21 May 20 |
| Relevant ward councillor(s) consulted | This potentially affects all wards & there is insufficient time to consult all Members | |
| The following are if appropriate / applicable: Yes/No. If yes the implications should be attached to this decision notice. | | |
| Finance implications | No, as the proposed scheme allows us to keep the cost within the funding provided | |
| Legal implications | No | |
| Links to corporate aims | Yes, helps to support the local economy | |
| Community Safety implications | No | |
| Environmental implications | No | |
| Equalities Impact | A specific EIA has not been undertaken due to time constraints for launching this scheme. No | |

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Safeguarding Implications | disproportionate impacts are anticipated to affect any of the protected groups. Help will be available within this scheme to charities, which will help them deliver their mission, and will therefore be of benefit to people within some of the protected groups. There are NO safeguarding implications | |
| Risk management | The proposed scheme contains appropriate measures to help prevent fraud | |
| Partnership implications | None | |

Any conflicts of interest declared by Leader or Portfolio Holders consulted on the proposed decision. If Yes provide confirmation from Chief Executive to grant dispensation for the Leader's / Portfolio Holder's views to be considered.

Financial Implication Summary

The funding for this scheme (£2.1m) is provided by Central Government. Our scheme has been designed in a way that presents us from spending more than the allocated funding.

Central Government will be providing funding under the New Burdens funding arrangements to cover the administration costs.

Decision Maker

I am aware of the details of this decision(s), considered the reasons, options, representations and consultation responses and give my approval / agreement to its implementation.

Signed:



Name: James Hassett

Date: 26th May 2020

Note – This decision record is for decisions taken by Chief Executive/Director. The decision(s) can be implemented in accordance with the approved delegations.