

Record of Decision taken by Chief Executive/Director

Decision title: Rules and Guidance for applications to Somerset West and Taunton Council's Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) Scheme

Chief Executive/Director making the decision: James Hassett

Author Contact Details: Gordon Dwyer
Tel: 07881 218 674
e-mail: g.dwyer@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Date of Decision: 17th December 2020

Details of decision:

The Chief Executive has approved the adoption of a Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) scheme for Somerset West & Taunton. This is a discretionary scheme which is detailed in the policy document, Appendix 1.

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 support announced by Central Government on 2 December 2020 provides funding for local authorities to grant funds to businesses to provide financial support where they have suffered financial loss as a result of the Government's Covid-19 restrictions. This guidance can be viewed at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942853/local-restrictions-support-grant-OPEN-dec2-2020-onwards-la-guidance.pdf

Government has 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 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 the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee have been provided with an overview.

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

- Appendix 1 – LRSG(O) Policy

Further Government guidance:

The Government has also issued further guidance (in the form of Frequently Asked Questions) regarding the intended operation of this scheme. These are attached as appendix 2.

Where any further subsequent guidance requires adjustments to minor elements of the scheme the Chief Executive is delegating, through this decision notice, powers to the Acting Director – Director of Development and Place 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
- 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:

Consideration was given as to whether to include non-business rated businesses within the scheme. This has been rejected on the following basis:
The Government’s calculation for the budget amount for this scheme is based on the number of business rated properties within the hospitality, accommodation and leisure industries. Therefore the scheme will provide assistance to these businesses only.

The below has been completed:	Name(s)	Date
Relevant Portfolio Holder(s) consulted	Cllr Kravis	14/12/2020
Relevant ward councillor(s) consulted	This potentially affects all wards & there is insufficient time to consult all Members	NA
The following are if appropriate / applicable: Yes/No. If yes the implications should be attached to this decision notice.		
Finance implications	The Government will provide a fixed amount of funding for this scheme. This will be based on their estimate of potential entitlement. Our	

	<p>scheme will target support only on those sectors and to the payments levels recommended by the Government.</p> <p>Funding will be provided to the Council for each 14 day period of local lockdown. The Government funding for each 14 day period will not be increased; irrespective of actual eligibility.</p> <p>In order to manage this risk we will underwrite the funding available for this scheme from the Additional Restrictions Grant allocation provided to the Council by the Government (which can be used for business support purposes).</p>	
Legal implications	No	
Links to corporate aims	Yes, helps to support the local economy	
Community Safety implications	No	
Environmental implications	No	
Equalities Impact Safeguarding Implications	A specific EIA has not been undertaken due to time constraints for launching this scheme. No disproportionate impacts are anticipated to affect any 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.

The Portfolio Holder has declared a potential conflict of interest in relation to this scheme, because, in his capacity as a business owner within SW&T, he may be eligible to receive a grant under the scheme'.

Financial Implication Summary

The Government will provide a fixed amount of funding for this scheme. This will be based on their estimate of potential entitlement; if we were to target support on those sectors and make the payments of the sums recommended by the Government.

Funding will be provided to the Council for each 14 day period of local lockdown. The Government funding for each 14 day period will not be increased; irrespective of actual eligibility.

In order to manage this risk we will underwrite the funding available for this scheme from the Additional Restrictions Grant allocation provided to the Council by the Government (which can be used for business support purposes).

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: 17/12/2020

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

Note: A copy should also be sent to the Governance Team – governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

