

CABINET

20 November 2020

Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held remotely on Friday 20 November 2020 at 10:00 am.

Committee Members present: Councillors D.B. Oliver (Leader), C.A. Bayliss, J.H.F. Brewerton, T.J.C. Byrne, K.P. Dixon, K.M. Field, H.L. Timpe and J. Vine-Hall.

Other Members present: Councillors J. Barnes, Mrs M.L. Barnes, R.K. Bird, G.S. Browne, G.C. Curtis, B.J. Drayson, A.E. Ganly, Mrs E.M. Kirby-Green, C.R. Maynard, P.N. Osborne and G.F. Stevens.

Advisory Officers in attendance: Chief Executive, Assistant Director Resources, Revenues and Benefits Manager and Democratic Services Manager.

Also Present: 12 members of the public via the YouTube live broadcast.

CB20/70. **MINUTES**

(1)

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2020 at a later date as a correct record of the proceedings.

CB20/71. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

(2)

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor S.M. Prochak, MBE.

CB20/72. **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

(5)

Barnes, J	Agenda Item 6 – Personal Interest as a Member of Etchingam Parish Council.
Mrs Barnes	Agenda Item 6 – Personal Interest as a Member of Etchingam Parish Council.
Bayliss	Agenda Item 6 – Personal Interest as a Member of Bexhill Chamber of Commerce and confirmed that she was not an owner of a holiday let and was not eligible under the proposed discretionary scheme for a grant.
Browne	Agenda Item 6 – Personal and Prejudicial Interest as owner of a holiday let and eligible to apply under the proposed discretionary scheme.

Dixon	Agenda Item 6 – Personal Interest as his wife was employed as the Clerk to Brede Parish Council.
Vine-Hall	Agenda Item 6 – Personal and Prejudicial Interest as owner of a number of holiday lets and eligible to apply under the proposed discretionary scheme.

CB20/73. **ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANTS (ARG) SCHEME - DISCRETIONARY SCHEME**

(6)

PART III – URGENT DECISIONS – The Chairman of Council had agreed that the following decisions were urgent in accordance with Paragraph 17 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules contained in Part 4 of the Council’s Constitution. The call-in procedure does not therefore apply to these decisions.

Consideration was given to the report of the Revenues and Benefits Manager that gave details of the national scheme aimed at businesses that were required to close as a result of the current restrictions (known as the Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSB) (Closed) Addendum) and a locally determined discretionary scheme for those businesses materially affected by the lockdown for Members’ approval. The discretionary scheme was known as the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) and as with the previous business support grants, this new scheme would be administered by local councils. The draft scheme was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Under the discretionary scheme, the Council could determine how much funding to provide and which businesses to target. The ARG was intended to help those businesses which, whilst not legally forced to close, were severely impacted by the restrictions, those outside the business rates system, which were effectively forced to close and to consider providing additional support to larger local businesses which were important to the local economy, on top of the funding provided to those businesses via the LRSB (Closed) scheme.

Officers had been in discussion with colleagues around the County to see if a degree of commonality could be achieved, however it was acknowledged that there would be differences due to each Council’s local needs and also due to the varying amounts of grant each Council would receive. It was noted that issues raised by the local chambers of commerce had also been considered in drafting the scheme.

The discretionary scheme proposed that a grant would be made where a business was closed and had no Non-Domestic rating assessment and fell within one of the following categories:

- a. Shared spaces – businesses that shared premises with other businesses.
- b. Bed & Breakfast – where the property was domestic, provided short stay accommodation for no more than six persons at any

one time within the past year; and was the sole or main residence of the proprietor(s) and the B&B use was subsidiary to the private use.

- c. Holiday accommodation including self-contained holiday lets and small campsites – this applied to domestic properties and therefore subject to council tax. Businesses where the letting was by way of home sharing would be excluded (e.g. where a bedroom was let within a domestic property).
- d. Food, Beverage, Event, hospitality and Leisure supply chain - businesses that wholly or mainly provided goods and services to businesses undertaking the provision of food, beverage, hospitality or leisure or in the management of the flow of goods and services to those businesses.
- e. Arts and Entertainment – this applied to cultural and tourist venues not eligible under the national scheme together with entertainment-based industries where the restrictions had severely curtailed operations.
- f. Market Traders - a business or person who sold goods wholly or mainly to visiting members of the public from a stall, pitch or similar, from a place or market recognised by the Council as a market.
- g. Home Based 'in person' businesses - businesses that were primarily home based may be awarded a grant, provided that the services are wholly or mainly 'in person' and which could not be provided remotely i.e. hair and beauty treatments.

It was proposed that most businesses should receive a grant of £1,334 based on the minimum amount of the national scheme. Where businesses fell into the food, beverage, event, hospitality and leisure supply chain category and had a rated business premises, the grant would follow the national awards (£2,000 over £15,000 and less than £51,000 and £3,000 £51,000 or over). For market traders and home based businesses the proposed award was £800 for the 28 day lockdown period; this lower figure was proposed as the grant was not meant to support loss of income but help meet fixed costs, which would be reduced for those businesses not operating out of business premises.

In order to ensure the scheme could be updated for local issues and national changes, it was requested that the Assistant Director Resources be granted delegated authority to make changes to the scheme in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Performance Management.

Members were keen to ensure that Parish Councils were supported and particularly those with Village Halls. It was noted that further guidance was still awaited with regards to the support that could be offered to Parish Councils as they may be covered by the National scheme. Members felt that irrespective of whether Village Halls were

owned by the Parish Council or separate organisation / Trust support should be provided. Parish Councils and their staff had gone over and above during this difficult year in terms of supporting their local communities and this would be much needed support. If Parish Councils were not supported by the national scheme, the Council could decide to support them through the discretionary scheme. There was also no reason why charities such as the Pett Level Independent Rescue Boat, a registered charity could not be supported through this scheme at some point in the future if the scheme was amended under the delegation, in light of emerging issues.

The Council would receive £2,391,940 of funding from Government towards the national scheme and £1,921,600 for the discretionary scheme. For both schemes the funding was to be used across financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22 and may therefore be needed to meet any future costs if further lockdowns happened after 2 December 2020 or that the Rother area went into tier 2 (high) or 3 (very high) restrictions.

An on-line form had been developed that would ensure the businesses were able to provide the necessary information for their application to be assessed, with a closing date of 11 December 2020. The initial assessment would be carried out by an external company who had access to financial information to establish the applicant was genuine. An officer team would then carry out any final eligibility checks and arrange for payment by BACS with requests for decision reviews to be undertaken by the Assistant Director Resources.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the Additional Restrictions Grants Scheme at Appendix A be approved; and
- 2) the Assistant Director Resources be granted delegated authority to make changes to the scheme in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Finance and Performance Management.

The Chairman of Council had already agreed that, subject to the approval of Cabinet, this decision could be taken as an urgent decision to allow the Council to implement the scheme in accordance with the Government's timescale.

(Councillors J and Mrs M.L. Barnes each declared Personal Interests in this matter as Members of Etchingam Parish Council and in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct remained in the meeting during the consideration thereof).

(Councillor Bayliss declared a Personal Interest in this matter as a Member of Bexhill Chamber of Commerce and confirmed that she was not an owner of a holiday let and was not eligible under the proposed discretionary scheme for a grant, and in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct remained in the room during the consideration thereof).

(Councillor Browne declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this matter as the owner of a holiday let and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct left the meeting during the consideration thereof).

(Councillor Dixon declared a Personal Interest as his wife was employed as the Clerk to Brede Parish Council and in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct remained in the room during the consideration thereof).

(Councillor Vine-Hall declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this matter as the owner of a number of holiday lets and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct left the meeting during the consideration thereof).

CHAIRMAN

The meeting closed at 10:25 am.