

## Rother District Council

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date:** 27 July 2020

**Title:** Discretionary Business Grants Scheme

**Report of:** Robin Vennard, Assistant Director Resources

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Dixon

**Ward(s):** ALL

**Purpose of Report:** Following the Government announcement of the closure of the business grants scheme on the 28 August, authority is required to open a second round and agree an expansion of the scheme to help spend as much of the funding as possible.

**Decision Type:** Non-Key

### Officer

**Recommendation(s):** It be **RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) the additional eligible business sectors outlined in the report be included in the Council's discretionary business grant scheme; and
- 2) the Executive Director be granted delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Finance and Regeneration to determine the amounts of grants and detailed criteria.

### Reasons for

**Recommendations:** To maximise the use of the available funding to support local businesses and charities. Any unspent funds will have to be repaid to the Government.

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## Introduction

1. Members will be aware that under the emergency decision making provisions agreed by Council in March (Minute C19/75 refers), the Council implemented a discretionary business grant scheme in accordance with guidance issued by Government. This was in addition to the previous schemes which helped small businesses and the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. The new scheme was designed to help those businesses and charities that had fixed property costs but due to circumstances were not eligible for the previous schemes.

## Proposed Scheme expansion

2. The discretionary scheme had a total fund of £1.476m and since its launch on the 5 June 2020 has helped 76 businesses and paid out some £946,000 of grants. This leaves a balance in the fund of £530,000 and it is proposed to reopen the

scheme to encourage further businesses to apply. Whilst the second round will continue to use the existing eligibility criteria, it is proposed to expand the criteria.

3. The Government guidance whilst emphasising businesses with fixed property costs as being a priority for support, does allow some flexibility to target those sectors important to the local economy. Following a review of those applications that did not meet the criteria for all three grant schemes, it is proposed that the following business sectors be targeted for support:

**Cultural and tourist venues** – this will allow support to be given local venues that have not been eligible under the existing schemes.

**Supply Chain businesses to the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors** – a number of businesses that predominately or exclusively supply the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors (e.g. commercial catering suppliers) have been adversely affected by the pandemic through the closure of their customers businesses. However, the original grant scheme did not include them and therefore it is proposed to expand the scheme to target this sector.

**Small Campsites** – the district has many small campsites and under the current schemes are not eligible for support. With the initial lockdown of the country and the continued restrictions these sites are required to operate under, they are suffering a significant loss of revenue.

**Entertainment industries** – this includes film and other entertainment based industries where the restrictions have severely curtailed their ability to operate and generate revenue.

4. It is not proposed to extend the scheme to predominately home-based businesses not included in the above sectors. The existing criteria relating to the size of business, i.e. being a small or micro business will remain in place as other Government schemes are available for medium to large businesses.

## Conclusion

5. The Government are closing all three grant schemes on the 28th August 2020 and therefore it is important to maximise the use of the available funding to support local businesses and charities. Any unspent funds at this date will have to be repaid to the Government. Members are asked to approve the second round of the discretionary scheme included the expanded criteria.

## Implications

### Financial Implications

None.

### Legal Implications

None.

## Human Resources Implications

None.

| Other Implications | Applies? | Other Implications       | Applies? |
|--------------------|----------|--------------------------|----------|
| Human Rights       | No       | Equalities and Diversity | No       |
| Crime and Disorder | No       | Consultation             | No       |
| Environmental      | No       | Access to Information    | No       |
| Sustainability     | No       | Exempt from publication  | No       |
| Risk Management    | No       |                          |          |

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| Appendices:                | None.  |
| Relevant Previous Minutes: | C19/75<br>OED06 – Executive Decision   |
| Background Papers:         | None.  |
| Reference Documents:       | None.  |