

Rother District Council

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 28 June 2021

Title: Additional Restrictions Grant - Discretionary Business Restart Grant Scheme

Report of: Chris Watchman, Revenues and Benefits Manager

Cabinet Member: Councillor Dixon

Ward(s): ALL

Purpose of Report: To agree further grant assistance for hospitality businesses that are public houses, restaurants and cafes following the delay announced by Government in lifting all COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

Decision Type: Non-Key

Officer

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

- 1) Additional Restrictions Grant - Discretionary Business Restart Grant Scheme be expanded to provide additional support to hospitality businesses that are public houses, restaurants and cafes;
- 2) Chief Executive be granted delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Finance and Performance Management and Economic Development and Regeneration to finalise the amounts of grants and detailed criteria; and
- 3) Chief Executive be granted delegated authority in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Finance and Performance Management and Economic Development and Regeneration to amend the criteria to award similar grants to any other businesses who have been severely impacted by the extension of restrictions as detailed in the report.

Reasons for

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

Approval from the Chairman of Council will be sought prior to the meeting to enable this decision to be taken as an urgent decision to allow the Council to implement the scheme as soon as possible.

1. Members will be aware that the Government announced that there would be a delay to the lifting of all COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. This will, in particular, impact businesses that are public houses, restaurants and cafes,

where due to the continuation of social distancing restrictions, they are unable to operate at capacity. This is seen as a particularly vulnerable area of the economy dominated by small businesses/sole traders, many of which will have substantial fixed property costs. This may include business rates, should the Government not extend to current business rate holiday beyond 30 June 2021.

2. It is proposed that these businesses receive an additional grant from the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) discretionary funds the Council holds, to cover the extra four-week period. The amount of grant will be based on a proportion of the latest national business restart grant that they have received. Based on initial calculations, in excess of 170 local businesses will benefit from this extra help. It is not proposed that a further application from the businesses will be necessary and therefore payment can be made swiftly.
3. In taking this action, the Council is likely to spend all the original £2.75m of funding by the deadline which would enable the Council to qualify for the additional top up funding the Government announced earlier this year. It is anticipated that of the £425m announced, the extra funding for Rother would be in the region of £700,000 and would enable the ARG discretionary grant scheme to continue to support businesses.
4. Members are asked to approve the extension of the scheme as detailed in the report. It is also proposed to delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holders for Finance and Performance Management and Economic Development and Regeneration to finalise the amounts of grants and detailed criteria. It is also sensible to have a further delegation to amend the criteria to enable the swift award of grant to other business sectors that Officers and Members become aware of that have been severely curtailed due to the continued COVID restrictions and have fixed/additional business costs. Any decisions made under the delegations will be published as normal.

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

Chief Executive:	Malcolm Johnston
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Appendices:	None

Relevant Previous Minutes:	None
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	None