

## **EXECUTIVE DECISION BY DELEGATED AUTHORITY**

**DATE:** 11 JANUARY 2022

**TITLE OF REPORT:** IMPLEMENTATION OF ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT (ROUND 5 OMICRON FUNDING)

**Report of:** Head of Corporate Services

**Cabinet member:** James Radley – Finance, Assets and Deputy Leader

### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1** To agree the policy and implementation of the Additional Restrictions Grant funding (Round 5 Omicron funding).

### **2 OFFICER RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1** To agree the administration and payment of Additional Restrictions Grant Omicron to local business who are not eligible for the mandatory Hospitality Grant at a rate of £500 for those businesses without third-party fixed costs and £1000 for those who can provide evidence of third-party fixed costs e.g., rent subject to businesses making a valid application and subject to fraud, assurance and governance checks.

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1** The Government has provided approximately £250,000 of discretionary funding for us to pay businesses adversely affected by the Omicron variant. This is in addition to the mandatory grant for hospitality businesses which pay business rates.
- 3.2** Officers are seeking authorisation to introduce a fourth phase of the discretionary business grants scheme (Additional Restrictions Grant). The grant is to help businesses who can demonstrate they have been adversely affected by the Omicron variant and is not available to businesses in receipt of the mandatory hospitality grant.
- 3.3** To be eligible for a grant a business must submit a new application form and provide evidence of bank statements, trading and other statutory information required by Central Government. Detailed fraud and assurance checking must be carried out by officers before a grant can be awarded. Evidence obtained from previous grant schemes cannot be used for this purpose.
- 3.4** Hart District Council will be administering the Additional Restrictions Grant internally and in order to help all affected businesses  
The Additional Restrictions Grant has been set up to assist all businesses that have been adversely impacted by the Omicron variant and therefore amounts payable will be £500 for businesses without third-party fixed term costs such as rent and £1000 for businesses with third-party fixed term costs.

**3.5** All monies must be paid to businesses by the 31<sup>st</sup> of March and therefore businesses must have submitted applications by the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2022. Applications are made by a web form on the Grants and Funding section of the Hart District Council website.

**3.6** Any queries from businesses regarding the ARG should be emailed to [businessgrants@hart.gov.uk](mailto:businessgrants@hart.gov.uk)  
Any queries from Members regarding the ARG should be emailed to [membersbgenquiries@hart.gov.uk](mailto:membersbgenquiries@hart.gov.uk)

## **4 CONSIDERATIONS**

**4.1** The scheme is funded by Central Government, the scheme requires 3 FTE of officer time between now and the 14<sup>th</sup> of April. An application for these costs will be made from new burdens funding; however, as in previous rounds; the shortage of staff in these areas makes it very difficult to recruit additional officers and this work is therefore completed in addition to all requirements of the Service Plan. The Head of Service is grateful to all staff who give additional personal time to the delivery of this scheme to ensure funding reaches local businesses.

**4.2** There are no direct impacts on Climate Change or Equalities considerations from this scheme.

## **5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1** The Finance Officer has been appraised of the proposal and has confirmed that the funding is contained within the receipts from Central Government.

## **6 MANAGEMENT OF RISK**

**6.1** The key risk is the risk of resourcing which is being mitigated wherever possible through increased hours and overtime payments. The Council is under significant pressure from the Secretary of State to ensure these grant payments are made promptly and accurately. The risk of fraud and error is mitigated by a significant number of assurance checks required on every applicant and grant payment.

## **7 CONCLUSIONS**

**7.1** Officers seek approval of this final discretionary grant scheme to compensate businesses adversely affected by the measures introduced in response to the Omicron variant.

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS:** None