

PORTFOLIO HOLDER/OFFICER DECISION RECORD

Portfolio Holder/Officer: Chief Executive	Service: CMT
CMT Officer: Paul Medd, Chief Executive	<p>Delegated Power Being Exercised: Chief Executive Urgency Powers: Table 4, Functions delegated to officers: Chief Executive, Paragraph 6, Page F16 of the Constitution</p> <p>In cases of urgency to have a general power, after consultation with the member holding the appropriate portfolio in Cabinet, or the Chairman of the relevant committee as the case may be, to deal with any matter not delegated to any other officer by statute or other legislation on which the Chief Executive considers to require a decision before the next meeting of the appropriate body within the Council.</p>
<p>Subject of Decision: Payment of Business Grants</p> <p>Government guidance states that the purpose of the Additional Restrictions Grant allocation is to pay discretionary grants to local businesses but there is also discretion for local authorities to use the money received from Government to provide wider business support, which may include the costs associated with the provision of advice and guidance and skills training. The Government has stated that councils have until 31 March 2022 to spend the funds they have been allocated.</p> <p>Fenland District Council established its first discretionary grant scheme using its Additional Restrictions Grant allocation in November 2020. This is explained in the Officer Decision Notice dated 17 November 2020.</p> <p>Fenland District Council established a further discretionary grant scheme, known as the Supplementary Winter Lockdown Grant, in January 2021. This is explained in the Officer Decision Notice dated 26 January 2021.</p> <p>A further scheme was established for the self-employed in March 2021, together with a scheme for those experiencing extreme hardship. Details of these decisions are set out in decision notices published on the Council's website in March 2021.</p> <p>Subsequently, another scheme was announced which supported those businesses which previously benefitted from 100% business rates relief due to application of the Expanded Retail Discount but now had a net business rates liability in excess of £1,000 as a result of the Government adjusting the value of the expanded retail discount from 100% to 75% with effect from 1 July 2021. Details of this scheme are set out in the decision notice dated 16 September 2021.</p> <p>In December 2021, it became apparent that the Omicron variant presented challenges for a range of local businesses, particularly those operating in the hospitality, leisure and accommodation sectors. In response the Government announced that local authorities would receive funding so that they could pay grants to affected businesses. The funding provided consisted of an allocation to set-up a new scheme known as the Omicron Leisure and Hospitality Grant and an additional allocation of Additional Restrictions Grant money to top-up funds received previously.</p> <p>Officers and Members have discussed the most appropriate way to distribute the Additional Restrictions Grant funding received recognising that the Council's full allocation needs to be spent by 31 March 2022.</p> <p>The agreed approach is as follows:</p>	

- I. Transfer £200,000 to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) as the Council's agreed match-funding in respect of the CPCA's 'Start and Grow' project which was successful in securing funds as part of the Government's Community Resilience Fund Scheme. The allocation of this match-funding was referred to as part of the earlier decision notice dated 16 September 2021.
- II. Close the current scheme supporting businesses in receipt of the Expanded Retail Discount on 21 January 2022.
- III. Introduce a new scheme specifically targeted at those businesses who cannot receive the Omicron Leisure and Hospitality Grant but have nevertheless determined, by way of a self-assessment, that they have experienced an average weekly reduction in turnover of 25% or more in the four-week period between 13 December 2021 and 9 January 2022 compared to a relevant trading period prior to Government announcements relating to Omicron. Officers shall retain the discretion to request supporting information evidencing the level of lost turnover from any business where there is uncertainty as to the impact of Omicron on the business' trading activity.

Businesses deemed to be eligible shall receive an initial grant of £1,000. In the event that surplus funds are available after grants of £1,000 have been paid those businesses registered for business rates shall receive a further top-up of up to £1,667 (i.e. the maximum grant available would be £2,667 in total) and any eligible businesses not registered for business rates shall receive a distribution of the remaining balance after the top-up has been paid to those businesses registered for rates.

Applications for the scheme set out at (iii) above shall close on 28 February 2022 therefore ensuring the Council can distribute the remaining Additional Restrictions Grant ahead of the deadline of 31 March 2022.

Decision Taken:

Having consulted with the Leader of the Council and Finance Portfolio Holder to delegate to the S151 Officer the ability to:

- Administer the Grants Schemes in accordance with Government Guidance; and the local key principles; and
- Recover the costs associated with the above in accordance with S31 of the Local Government Act 2003.

As announced and required by Government in October 2020 and howsoever amended until such time as they are discontinued when this delegation shall also cease subject to any appropriate transition arrangements having been concluded and all costs appropriately recovered.

Reason for the Decisions:

To ensure businesses receive the grant monies from Government to support them during the Covid 19 crisis.

As there is currently on regular system in place for the administration of the Grant Scheme this would fall for determination by Full Council. The next Council meeting is not until 24 February 2022, without taking this urgent decision the awarding of the grants will be unacceptably delayed and businesses will suffer as a result potentially becoming insolvent leading to the loss of local jobs.

There is no financial impact on the Council as the Government is reimbursing the Council via a Section 31 grant.

Alternative Options Considered (if appropriate):

No alternatives available as waiting to agree the new schemes at the next scheduled meeting of

Full Council will result in a delay to implementation and therefore the availability of funding to qualifying businesses.

Background/Reports/Information considered and attached:
Government Announcements

Portfolio Holder/Officer's Signature

Date: 17/01/2022

Paul Medd, Chief Executive
Councillor Chris Boden, Leader and Portfolio
Holder

Please forward to Democratic Services upon completion

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**Date copy passed to
Democratic Services 20/01/2022**

**Implementation Date: 28/01/2022
(if not called-in)
(Allow 5 clear working days after publication
of decision)**

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