

Note of SO58 urgent decision meeting with the Chief Executive - Culture, Leisure and Economic Development Portfolio - Tuesday 22 December 2020

Purpose: David Williams, Chief Executive asked that a virtual MST meeting be used for him to consult on the urgent decision required on the following recommendation:

COVID 19 Local Restrictions Support (Open) and Additional Restrictions Grant Funds.

That the Chief Executive approve:

- (i) The Local Restrictions Support (Open) Grant scheme as attached in appendix 1.**
- (ii) The Additional Restrictions Grant Fund scheme as attached in appendix 2.**
- (iii) The award of grants is delegated to the Director of Finance together with the Director of Regeneration or their representatives in accordance with the schemes in attached at appendix 1 and 2 and following a technical multi-disciplinary team assessment.**

Reason for Urgency.

The ARGF scheme is funding from Central Government with the aim of providing assistance predominately to non-rate paying businesses that have missed out on other COVID-19 Grants (due to a variety of reasons). Portsmouth City Council has been awarded £4.3m for this scheme.

The LRSG (Open) scheme is designed to provide assistance to rate paying businesses who are still severely affected by COVID-19. Government are allocating funding based on the number of hospitality, accommodation and leisure businesses in each Local Authority geography plus a 5% top up.

In order to support local businesses by agreeing the criteria and disbursing the grants as swiftly as possible, it was necessary to use the Urgency procedure rather than through the Cabinet procedure.

Consultation

The Chief Executive consulted the following members:

The Leader
The Leader of the Opposition
The Portfolio holder
Group spokespersons

Teleconference attendance

Councillors: Gerald Vernon-Jackson (Leader), Steve Pitt (Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development), Donna Jones (Leader of the Opposition), Claire Udy (Progressive Portsmouth People Group opposition spokesperson) and Stephen Morgan (Labour opposition spokesperson).

Officers: David Williams (Chief Executive), Peter Baulf (City Solicitor), James Fitzgerald, Finance Manager, Chris Ward (Director of Finance & Resources) and Jane Di Dino (Local Democracy Officer).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Frank Jonas.

The SO58 referral and report had been circulated to all the required consultees.

Reporting Back

As stated above Standing Order 58 requires all such decisions to be reported to the relevant decision making body at its next meeting, in this case the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development's portfolio. In the meantime the Members' Information Service will be used to relay this decision to members and to make it public.

Members' Questions and Comments

Chris Ward gave an outline of the schemes and noted that the period of national restrictions was 27 days and not 28 that was stated in the report. In response to questions he clarified the following points:

The application forms for the ARGF scheme are very short but the council has some discretion over whether to require businesses to reapply every 14 days.

The council did not set any parameters regarding the exceptions grant because it did not want any businesses to be unintentionally excluded.

Councillor Pitt noted that the schemes were not intended to be income replacement schemes and that the scheme must last until the end of March 2022. It is therefore important that it be reviewed at the end of January.

DECISION

The Chief Executive approved:

- (i) The LRSG (Open) scheme as set out in appendix 1.**
- (ii) The Additional Restrictions Grant Fund scheme as set out in appendix 2**
- (iii) The award of grants is delegated to the Director of Finance together with the Director of Regeneration or their representatives in accordance with the schemes set out in appendices 1 and 2 in the report and following a technical multi-disciplinary team assessment**

Meeting duration: 09:30-09:47.