

Council: 28th July 2021

FINANCIAL MATTERS RELATING TO COVID-19 – DISTRIBUTION OF FURTHER CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ‘ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT SCHEME’ – NOTING OF URGENT ACTION

Executive member: Mike Starkie, Mayor (Portfolio Holder for Finance).
Lead Officer: Steven Brown, Director of Financial Resources.
Report Author: Clinton Boyce, Solicitor.

SUMMARY

This report updates Council on a decision made by the Chief Executive, in accordance with chapters 7 and 19 of the Constitution (matters outside budget/urgent business), relating to financial matters as a result of Covid-19.

RECOMMENDATION: That the urgent action taken by the Chief Executive as attached to this report be noted.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Council will recall receiving a report on the 15th December 2020 advising them of central Government funding which was being received to assist the Council in dealing with the Covid-19 outbreak and to support local businesses affected by lock downs and restrictions.
- 1.2. That report noted that the Government had made payments to the Council in mid-November of two amounts one of which was a payment of £1,363,660 under the Additional Restrictions Grant Scheme (ARG).
- 1.3. Chapter 20 of the Constitution which dealt with Covid-19 issues and virtual meetings allowed grants to be received into budget without Council approval. A further ARG sum of £605,673 was received from Government during the third national lockdown in January 2021 and received into budget in accordance with that chapter 20 and applied in accordance with the criteria reported in December 2020.

- 1.4. Chapter 20 expired on the 7th May 2021 with the expiry of the virtual meetings secondary legislation meaning that receipt of external funds dealing with Covid-19 issues now needs to be dealt with in accordance with the remainder of the Constitution.
- 1.5 A further ARG grant is due to be received in the sum £444,277 in July 2021. It is intended to launch the new scheme from the 12 July 2021. Given the importance of continuing to promptly support local businesses the Chief Executive, with the agreement of the Mayor and Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to use the urgent action procedure set out in the Constitution to receive and approve spend of the grant. Chapter 7 allows the Chief Executive to make a decision contrary to approved budget if the decision is a matter of urgency provided a quorate meeting of Council is not practical and the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agrees. Further, chapter 19 allows urgent action to be taken by the Chief Executive where it is impractical to convene a meeting of the Executive or a Committee provided that relevant officers and members are consulted. The Section 151 Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Solicitor, the Elected Mayor and the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were consulted and agreed with the proposed action.
- 1.6 With such agreement the Chief Executive made the decision to receive the section 31 grant for the total amount of £444,277 (with the consequential increase to the Council's budget) and to distribute it in accordance with advice from Government and the policy attached to the urgent action decision.
- 1.7 The urgent action taken by the Chief Executive on the 1st July 2021 is attached to this report. Council is asked to note the action taken.

2. STATUTORY OFFICER COMMENTS

- 2.1. Monitoring Officer/Legal Comments: No legal issues arise from the report.
- 2.2 Section 151 Officer's comments: The financial implications are contained in the report and officer urgent decision record appended.
- 2.3 EIA Comments: Not applicable.

2.4 Policy Framework: Not applicable.

2.5 Other Consultee comments, if any: None.

3. RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Contained within the report. The grants are being administered by Revenues and Benefits staff.

4. HOW WILL THE PROPOSALS BE PROJECT MANAGED AND HOW ARE THE RISKS GOING TO BE MANAGED?

The proposals will be managed by Director of Financial Resources.

5. WHAT MEASURABLE OUTCOMES OR OUTPUTS WILL ARISE FROM THIS REPORT?

Contained within the body of the report and supporting businesses continuing to be affected by lockdown and Covid-19 restrictions/precautions.

Appendices:

Appendix A: Officer decision record; and
Appendix B: ARG Policy.

Background information:

As Appendices and section 31 grant determination.