

Crawley Borough Council

Consideration Report for Delegated Decision by the Leader

Not before 6 January 2022

Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF)

Report of the Head of Corporate Finance (FIN/555)

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To seek approval for the Council's COVID19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) Discretionary Relief to local business ratepayer guidelines.
- 1.2. The Council has been given £5,303,160 to grant COVID19 additional relief fund (CARF) discretionary relief to business ratepayers within Crawley. The guidelines seek to provide guidance to staff and stakeholders on how this CARF Discretionary Relief is to be made and what factors are considered when making an award.
- 1.3. At its meeting on 24 November 2021 the Cabinet considered the Budget Strategy 2022/23 - 2026/27 (report FIN/537) and in doing so delegated authority to the Leader of the Council in consultation with the Chief Executive and the Head of Corporate Finance to approve a discretionary business rates scheme to distribute the share to Crawley Borough Council.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That the Leader:
 - a) Approve the Council's Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund Discretionary Relief Guidelines.
 - b) Give delegated authority to designated senior officers to make relief awards within these guidelines.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation

- 3.1. The Council has been given £5,303,160 to grant COVID19 additional relief fund (CARF) discretionary relief to business ratepayers within Crawley. These guidelines seek to provide guidance to staff and stakeholders on how this CARF Discretionary Relief is to be made and what factors are considered when making an award.

4. Background and Issue to be Resolved

- 4.1. On 15 December 2021 the Government announced that it would provide Local Authorities with additional funding to help businesses pay their business rates to offset the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

- 4.2. [Government guidance](#) for the scheme was issued on the 15 December 2021. The Government Guidance introduced a rates relief scheme to replace the legal right to appeal to the Valuation Office Agency on Material Change of Circumstances grounds due to COVID19.
- 4.3. Billing authorities will be responsible for designing the discretionary relief schemes that are to operate in their areas. However, in developing and implementing their schemes local authorities based on the Government guidelines
- 4.4. Crawley Borough Council has agreed these guidelines (attached as an appendix to this report) with Arun District Council, Chichester District Council and Mid Sussex District Council. The guidelines are in line with the guidelines issued by the Government.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. The options considered in this report are the only ones available to the Council as the Council seeks to become more transparent in the use of its discretionary financial assistance to local business during the current COVID19 outbreak. These guidelines have been agreed by Arun District Council, Chichester District Council, Crawley Borough Council and Mid Sussex District Council.

6. Urgency of Decision

- 6.1. Due to the urgent nature of this decision the Special Urgency Procedure Rule has been used for this decision as it has been impracticable to publish a Forthcoming Decision Notice for the 28 clear days period and provide 5 clear days notice of the decision. The Chair of the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission as agreed the use of this provision. In addition, due to the urgent nature of this decision the Chief Executive has Protected from Call-In, so that the Council can start supporting our businesses as soon as possible

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. The government grant allocated by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in respect of the COVID19 Additional Relief Fund is £5,303,160. This is a cash limited fund and any relief incurred over and above this must be funded by the Council. There is currently no additional funding identified within the Council to support Discretionary Relief, which means that expenditure will need to be contained within the cash limited.

8. Background Papers

- [COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund \(CARF\)](#): Local Authority Guidance (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC))
- [Budget Strategy 2022/23 – 20236/27 – FIN/537](#) (Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 22.11.21 & Cabinet on 24.11.21)

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