

Crawley Borough Council

Consideration Report for Delegated Decision by the Leader

Not before 6 January 2022

Additional Restrictions Discretionary Business Grant (ARG) – Omicron Top-Up

Report of the Head of Corporate Finance (FIN/556)

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To seek approval to extend the Additional Restrictions Grant scheme to allocate a top up of £150,287.10 as a result of the Omicron variant.
- 1.2. Revised guidance was issued by The Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) on 30th December 2021, copy attached. For distribution of further discretionary grants. The allocation of £150,287.10 was announced on 7th January 2022.
- 1.3. The West Sussex wide scheme has been updated to take into account the new guidance.
- 1.4. In allocating the third top-up payment: businesses severely impacted by the rise of the Omicron variant, see paragraph 28 of the [guidance](#). These lists are not directive nor exhaustive, and Local Authorities should continue to issue grants at their discretion, based on local economic needs.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That the Leader:
 - A) Approve the revised ARG guidance (attached as Appendix A) to take into account the priority areas as a result on the Omicron variant.
 - B) Give delegated authority to the Head of Economy and Planning and the Head of Corporate Finance to make grants within these guidelines.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1. BEIS have allocated £150,287.10 to be allocated to worthy businesses as discretionary grants. These guidelines seek to provide guidance to staff and stakeholders on how this ARG top-up is allocated and factors that are considered when making the award.

4. Background

- 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. Billing authorities are responsible for designing the discretionary grants scheme. There is one in place, this has been amended to take into account the value of the top-up and the recommended businesses to support.
- 4.3. Crawley Borough Council has agreed these guidelines with all other West Sussex Local Authorities. The guidelines are in line with 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 businesses during the pandemic.

6. Urgency of Decision

- 6.1. Due to the urgent nature of this decision the Special Urgency 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 publish the consideration report 5 clear days before the decision is taken. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission has agreed the use of this provision. In addition, due to the urgent nature of this decision the Chief Executive has Protected the decision 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 BEIS in respect of the COVID19 Additional Relief Grant top up is £150,287.10. This is a cash limited fund and any relief incurred over and above this must be funded by the Council.

8. Background Papers

- [“Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant: Guidance for Local Authorities”](#) (issued by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy)
- [“Additional Restrictions Grant: Guidance for Local Authorities”](#) (issued by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy)

Report author and contact officer:

Karen Hayes (Head of Corporate Finance)
karen.hayes@crawley.gov.uk