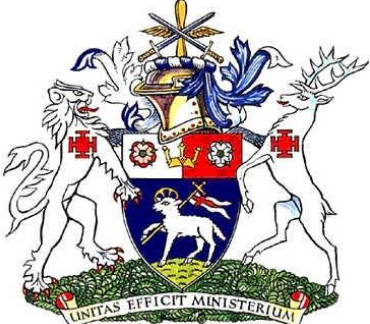


|   |   |
|---|---|
|  | <h2>ACTION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS BY OFFICER</h2>   |
| <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Title</b></p>                                    | <p><b>Discretionary Small Business Support Grant</b></p>  |
| <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Report of</b></p>                                | <p>Chief Executive</p>  |
| <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Wards</b></p>                                    | <p>All</p>  |
| <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Status</b></p>                                   | <p>Public</p>   |
| <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Enclosures</b></p>                               | <p>Appendix A – Discretionary Business Support Grant Policy<br/>Appendix B – Government Guidance</p>  |
| <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Officer Contact Details</b></p>                  | <p>Allan Clark – Head of Finance: Exchequer (Finance Service)<br/>020 8359 2824 <a href="mailto:allan.clark@barnet.gov.uk">allan.clark@barnet.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Jamie Robinson – Head of Business Employment and Skills<br/>020 8359 <a href="mailto:jamie.Robinson@Barnet.gov.uk">jamie.Robinson@Barnet.gov.uk</a></p> |

## Summary

This report proposes to implement a temporary discretionary grant scheme in response to additional funding being provided by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The total value of this scheme is £3.270m and is targeted at small businesses with liabilities they are unable to meet without support from the scheme.

The policy underpinning the decision is in Appendix A and it is written to deliver maximum benefit to the small and micro businesses operating within the Barnet area.

## **Decisions**

- 1. To approve the policy within Appendix A to this report.**
- 2. To delegate authority to the Director of Finance (S151) to review and alter the policy and administration of the scheme as necessary to meet local requirements.**
- 3. To delegate authority to either the Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Finance (S151), Head of Business, Employment and Skills or Head of Finance: Exchequer to make decisions to award grants within the terms of the policy.**
- 4. To note the grant value of £3.27m and its disbursal under the policy at Appendix A.**

## **1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED**

- 1.1 Government announced a new discretionary grants scheme for small businesses (not eligible for other Covid-19 related financial assistance) to be allocated to local authorities to disburse using local indicators to generate the best outcomes during the response to COVID-19.
- 1.2 Government have provided Barnet Council with funding totalling £65.405m for the Small Business Grants and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund. New Government guidance has confirmed that 5% of this allocation can be utilised to provide grants to a further group of businesses. If the original grant is under utilised, the Council should use these surplus funds up to a limit of 5%, which amounts to £3.270m. If the Council has fully utilised its original grant, the Government will provide an additional sum up to 5% of the original grant.
- 1.3 The Council has designed a policy to administer the scheme, attached at Appendix A. The Government guidance provided as a framework for local authorities is attached at Appendix B.

## **2. REASONS FOR DECISION**

- 2.1 Government has announced the scheme as part of the response to COVID-19. To ensure Barnet can administer the scheme and disburse monies to eligible businesses the policy requires approval and delegated authority for the Director of Finance (S151) to make alternations to the policy to allow for a nimble response to local situations. The ability to alter the policy will also allow the Council to bring its policy in line with other London Boroughs where appropriate. This decision has been taken in line with Government requirements.

## **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED**

- 3.1 No alternatives have been considered. This is the result of Government guidance and a need to ensure a swift response to support our local small and micro businesses which had no access to previous funding for COVID-19 hardship.

## **4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION**

- 4.1 A team will be established within the Economic Development team to administer these grants.
- 4.2 Communications will be issued to promote this new scheme and encourage applications.
- 4.3 A web form will be made available on Barnet's website to enable businesses to apply.
- 4.4 A dedicated email address will be created to administer applications and ensure enquiries and support is not sent to other areas supporting the response to COVID-19.

4.5 The policy will be reviewed by the Director of Finance (S151) two weeks after launch to ensure the grants are reaching those businesses most in need. Any amendments to the policy will be recorded by a Chief Officer Decision and the updated policy will be published online.

4.6 Expenditure against the grant will be monitored and the Director of Finance (S151) will receive weekly updates on levels of use and a forecast of when the grant is likely to be exhausted.

## **5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION**

### **5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance**

5.1.1 In addition to helping support businesses during the current Coronavirus pandemic, this funding helps to deliver the council's wider goals, as set out in the Corporate Plan and Growth Strategy. Specifically:

- Supporting local businesses to thrive
- Ensuring the council delivers its services in a way that supports businesses
- Delivering high quality workspace
- Building on existing strengths to create a thriving evening economy

### **5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)**

5.2.1 The total expenditure should equal 5% of the Government grant allocation for Covid 19 related business grants. This amounts to £3.270m. As such there is not an expectation that there will be a revenue pressure arising from the disbursement of the funding. The Government guidance has also confirmed that it will fund delivery costs and New Burdens costs.

5.2.2 If the Council has fully utilised its business grant allocation, the Government will top up this funding by 5% to meet the costs of the discretionary grants policy. As such, any unexpected pressures will need to be contained within existing resources.

5.2.3 The disbursement of funding is not anticipated to materially impact on the current MTFs and strategic financial direction of the Council. The disbursement of the funding will support the local economy and ensure the local taxation base remains stable into recovery from COVID-19. As such it represents value for money on both a tactical and strategic level.

5.2.4 Staffing requirements to administer the grant will be obtained from the staff redeployment pool.

5.2.5 IT will provide a webform and email address to facilitate the delivery of the grant scheme.

5.2.6 There are no expected implications arising for Property or Sustainability.

### **5.3 Social Value**

5.3.1 The decisions taken within this report will provide financial support, in line with

Government requirements, to local businesses in financial hardship and unable to obtain support from other schemes. These businesses provide employment opportunities to Barnet residents and may grow to be able to offer apprenticeships and local offers to increase social value in the borough.

## 5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

5.4.1 The Council has the power under s.1 Localism Act 2011 to make certain decisions. This includes the power to award grants subject to existing rules and restrictions. For example, the grants policy must not contravene state aid rules. The Government guidance provides detail of how small business grants can be provided within the de minimus thresholds to avoid such contravention. The grant has been provided to the Council in accordance with s.31 of the Local Government Act 2003. The Government has provided guidance which should be taken into account in setting the discretionary business grants policy, however local authorities should take account of local circumstances and collaborative with other authorities in determining its own policy.

5.4.2 The Urgency Committee on 27 April 2020 agreed to: “Delegate authority to Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of the Policy & Resources Committee any decisions within the remit of that committee that need to be taken in response to the Coronavirus pandemic or other related matters, or in response to directions given by HM Government, London Strategic Coordination Group and London Local Authority Gold. In the event of the Chairman’s absence, the Committee Vice-Chairman shall be consulted. Any and all such decisions shall be reported back to Committee for post-decision scrutiny.” The funding has been received from the Government in relation to the Coronavirus pandemic and this delegated powers report details the policy required to support local implementation. Consultation with the Chairman of the Policy & Resources Committee has taken place and this decision will be reported to that Committee for post-decision scrutiny.

## 5.5 Risk Management

5.5.1 No risks have been identified in this report.

## 5.6 Equalities and Diversity

5.6.1 The Equality Act 2010, section 149, outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires Public Bodies **to have due regard** to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not

The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day to day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the

delivery of services.

As this grant is being provided to support businesses it is not believed that this decision will negatively impact any protected group. The aim of the policy is to support a wider group of small businesses within the Barnet area. It is anticipated that this will provide equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people with different protected characteristics. Small businesses are run by individuals from a variety of ethnic groups and ages and often provide essential services and employment opportunities for the local community. For this reason, it is likely that this policy will have a positive impact from an equality perspective.

## **5.7 Corporate Parenting**

5.7.1 In line with Children and Social Work Act 2017, the council has a duty to consider Corporate Parenting Principles in decision-making across the council. The outcomes and priorities in the refreshed Corporate Plan, Barnet 2024, reflect the council's commitment to the Corporate Parenting duty to ensure the most vulnerable are protected and the needs of children are considered in everything that the council does.

5.7.2 It is not believed that the decisions within this report will negatively impact on our most vulnerable or the needs of children.

## **5.8 Consultation and Engagement**

5.8.1 The need to move quickly with these measures in response to the outbreak has meant there is no time to consult on these matters.

5.8.2 The Council has however engaged with the West London Alliance and Federation for Small Business on the design of its scheme.

## **5.9 Insight**

5.9.1 Not Applicable

## **6 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

6.1 Government guidance on the creation of this policy is contained within Appendix B

## **7. DECISION TAKER'S STATEMENT**

7.1 *I have the required powers to make the decision documented in this report. I am responsible for the report's content and am satisfied that all relevant advice has been sought in the preparation of this report and that it is compliant with the decision-making framework of the organisation which includes Constitution, Scheme of Delegation, Budget and Policy Framework and Legal issues including Equalities obligations. The decision is compliant with the principles of decision making in Article 10 of the constitution.*

**Signed:**

**Chief Officer: John Hooton, Chief Executive**

**Dated:**

**29 May 2020**