

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

POLICY & RESOURCES URGENCY SUB-COMMITTEE

2.00pm 13 NOVEMBER 2020

VIRTUAL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Mac Cafferty, Platts and Bell

PART ONE

8 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

(a) Declarations of Substitutes

8.1 There were none.

(b) Declarations of Interest

8.2 There were none

(c) Exclusion of Press and Public

8.3 The Committee considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any of the items listed on the agenda.

8.4 **RESOLVED:** There were no part two items in the agenda.

9 NEW NATIONAL LOCKDOWN: BUSINESS GRANTS

9.1 The Urgency Sub-Committee considered the report of the Acting Chief Finance Officer and the Executive Director Economy, Environment and Culture regarding the issues of Local Restrictions Support Grants (LRSGs) to all eligible businesses. The report was introduced by the Assistant Director - City Development & Regeneration and the Acting Chief Finance Officer.

9.2 Councillor Platts asked when officers would report back, and was advised that a report would come to either the Policy & Resources Recovery Sub-Committee or to Policy & Resources Committee in January 2021.

- 9.3 Councillor Platts referred to paragraph 3.6 and asked if a list could be provided of the businesses who would be contacted. Officers said that a list would be provided after the meeting.
- 9.4 Councillor Platts referred to paragraph 3.7 and asked how the business community would be involved with the allocation of the Local Restriction Support Grants, and noted that the last round was heavily oversubscribed and so some businesses may have to wait for the second round and asked how that would be justified. Officers advised that the business community had been previously consulted on the questions asked of businesses, but for this bidding process the questions asked would be less detailed, and groups such as Community Works and Network Partnership were being consulted on the questions. The intention was that this time the process to assess whether businesses met the criteria would be more straight forward. There was a finite amount of money available and it was possible that it could be over-subscribed, and the Council needed to ensure that businesses who were most effected received a grant. The funding from the Government would be all that was provided until the end of the next financial year and so would hold some money would be held back for a further round of grants if there were another lockdown.
- 9.5 Councillor Platts asked if any lessons had been learnt from the earlier allocation of grants. Officers advised that with regard to discretionary grants the assessment process was quite detailed and that would be simplified.
- 9.6 Councillor Platts referred to paragraph 3.11 and asked how the Council would treat businesses who had a separate landlord who paid the business rates such as pubs, and whether the allocation of grants would include online businesses or those who worked from shared business spaces. Officers said that discretionary grants were available for those who would not be able to receive the LRSG, which could be businesses who were not responsible for paying business rates. Those working from shared business spaces were being targeted for the Additional Restrictions Grants (ARG), and online businesses could apply but the LRSG would be paid to those who had a loss of income but also had high fixed outgoings which they may need help with.
- 9.7 Councillor Bell said that he agreed with the principle of retaining 50% of the funding in case it would be needed in the future, and with the allocation of the ARG funding. He asked how any the grant not spent this financial year would be defined in the budget papers. Officers confirmed that any money not spent would be listed in the budget papers as money 'Carried Forward'.
- 9.8 Councillor Bell referred to the legal implications and noted that the De Minimis would end at the end of this year, and as the funding was for a two-year period there may potentially be new legislation which could affect this. Officers confirmed that the Covid-19 Temporary Framework would apply if the payment were made under the existing scheme and would therefore expect that to be in place providing the payments were made before the 31 March.
- 9.9 Councillor Platts said that some businesses weren't aware that they could apply for grants and asked what more could be done to to ensure that people were aware of the funding available. Councillor Mac Cafferty agreed that it was important that everyone was aware of the possible grants and suggested that it would be beneficial if the key

documents were translated to ensure that no one was excluded due to language issues. He suggested that it would be useful if a template could be provided outlining the funding available and how to apply for it, and councillors could then use that to contact businesses in their wards. Councillors Bell and Platts agreed that their groups would do all they could to ensure the information was available to those who may wish to apply.

9.10 Councillor Platts asked if the retention of 50% of the funding could be reviewed when the update report was considered early next year. Councillor Mac Cafferty said that it was prudent at the moment to retain some money, but that would be kept under constant review.

9.11 Councillor Mac Cafferty said that Christmas was very important for businesses and did not feel that the grants provided would be sufficient to stop some businesses failing and suggested that there be cross-party lobbying of ministers to increase the funding.

9.12 RESOLVED: That the Policy & Resources Urgency Sub-Committee

- (i) Noted the steps being taken to issue new Local Restrictions Support Grants, where those grants are specified by government eligibility criteria;
- (ii) Agreed to delegate authority to the Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture, in consultation with the Acting Chief Finance Officer, to determine criteria and agree processes for issuing Additional Restrictions Grants which takes account of the need to issue the grants as quickly as possible while targeting key local sectors that are affected by the new lockdown;
- (iii) Agreed to delegate authority to the Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture, in consultation with the Acting Chief Finance Officer, to make grant awards from the Additional Restrictions Grant fund.

10 LONDON ROAD CAR PARK - URGENT BARRIER REPLACEMENT

10.1 The Policy & Resources Urgency Sub-Committee considered the report of the Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture which sought approval for capital expenditure on the replacement of vehicle safety barriers at London Road Car Park.

10.2 RESOLVED: The Policy & Resources Urgency Sub-Committee approved capital expenditure of £0.177m funded from unsupported borrowing to replace 75% of the vehicle safety car park barriers in London Road Car Park.

11 PART TWO PROCEEDINGS

11.1 There were no Part Two Items.

The meeting concluded at 2.45pm

Signed

Chair

