

Joint Report of the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive

LATEST COVID-19 SUPPORT SCHEMES FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES1. Purpose of report

To consider a method by which to consider applications made under the discretionary elements of the Government's latest COVID-19 support packages to local businesses. As the next Finance and Resources Committee, following 6 January 2022, is scheduled for 10 February 2022 and to avoid delay, this report is being submitted as an Urgent Item.

2. Details

On 15 December 2021, the Government announced the final COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF). The fund will be available to support those businesses affected by the pandemic but that are ineligible for existing support linked to business rates. On 21 December 2021, the Government announced a further £1 billion of business support packages for those businesses in the hospitality and leisure sectors. In addition, the Government is providing a further £100 million of Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) funding. Full scheme guidance and details of the individual allocations were not available at the time of writing. Further details are provided in the appendix.

In order to support businesses in Broxtowe, it is critical that these schemes are profiled and the administration and governance arrangements are implemented quickly to provide much needed assistance. The statutory element of each scheme will be established and proceed at the earliest opportunity once guidance has been received from the Government.

It is essential that robust and transparent governance arrangements are in place to respond to the discretionary elements of the schemes. In order to allow for prompt decision making, it is proposed to make a delegation to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader and the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee, to establish a suitable policy for the discretionary schemes and to make prompt awards, supported by the Heads of Service for Revenues and Finance. Further update reports will be provided to the appropriate Committee in due course.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that the establishment of an appropriate policy and decision making framework for the discretionary elements of the above schemes be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader and the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee.

Background papers

Nil

APPENDIX**COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF)**

On 15 December 2021, the Government announced the final COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF). The fund will be available to support those businesses affected by the pandemic but that are ineligible for existing support linked to business rates.

CARF falls under the current Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. Section 47 reliefs require appropriate approval through elected members. It is for individual billing authorities to adopt a local scheme and determine in each individual case whether, having regard to the appropriate guidance and their own local scheme, to grant relief under section 47. The relief is available to reduce chargeable amounts in respect of 2021/22. The Scheme will be fully funded by the Government up to a maximum amount of £1,269,980 for reliefs awarded prior to 31 March 2022.

When developing the scheme, local authorities must:

- Not award relief to ratepayers who for the same period of the relief either are or would have been eligible for the Extended Retail Discount (covering Retail, Hospitality and Leisure) or the Nursery Discount.
- Not award relief to a hereditament for a period when it is unoccupied
- Direct their support towards ratepayers who have been adversely affected by the pandemic and have been unable to adequately adapt to that impact.

COVID Support Packages for Hospitality and Leisure Sectors and Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG)

On 21 December 2021, the Government announced a further £1 billion of business support packages for those businesses in the hospitality and leisure sectors. The scheme is expected to be a statutory scheme administered by the Council and the award of grant will depend on the Rateable Value of the respective business premises. Guidance will be provided to local authorities to allow them to make appropriate decisions on individual cases.

In addition to this, the Government has announced a further £100 million of Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) funding to be made available to local authorities. As of 23 December 2021, the details of the individual allocations have not been provided to Councils. The Council has previously administered an ARG scheme during 2020 and early 2021. It is likely, however, that a change of scheme will be necessary to allow the money to be focused on those businesses that need assistance under the current circumstances.

In order to support businesses in Broxtowe, it is critical that these schemes are profiled and the administration and governance arrangements are implemented quickly to provide the much needed assistance.