

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Report to the Executive Member for Policy and Resources for Decision 06 July 2020

<b>Portfolio:</b>	Policy and Resources
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Local Authority Discretionary Grant Awards</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
<b>Corporate Priorities:</b>	Maintain and Extend Prosperity A dynamic, prudent and progressive Council

#### **Purpose:**

To approve the award of grants under the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund Scheme for Fareham Borough Council.

#### **Executive summary:**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020, the Executive Member for Policy and Resources approved a local scheme for the award of grants to businesses, as part of a wider support package announced by Government for businesses struggling with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The local scheme allows for grants of up to £5,000 to be awarded under delegated authority by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, and grants above this amount and up to £10,000 to be awarded by the Executive Member for Policy and Resources.

The applications for grants under the scheme have been assessed, and are summarised below:-

	<b>No.</b>	<b>Value</b>
Grant paid, value up to £5,000	41	£137,500
Grants proposed, value between £7,500 - £10,000	60	£572,500
Grants proposed, subject to satisfactory evidence being received	12	£77,500
Grants proposed to market traders	22	£55,000
<b>TOTAL GRANTS PAID</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>£842,500</b>
<b>FUNDING ALLOCATED</b>		£1,019,000
<b>Balance available</b>		<b>£176,500</b>

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that:-

- (a) the Executive Member for Policy and Resources notes the grants of up to £5,000, paid under delegated authority to 41 businesses, totalling £137,500, as set out in Appendices A;
- (b) the Executive Member for Policy and Resources agrees the schedule of grants exceeding £5,000, totalling £572,500, as set out in Appendix B;
- (c) the Executive Member for Policy and Resources agrees the schedule of grants proposed which are subject to satisfactory evidence or explanations being received, totalling £77,500, as set out in Appendix C;
- (d) the regular traders at the Portchester and/or Fareham markets, as listed in Appendix D, are paid a total grant of £2,500 each in instalments; and.
- (e) the balance of funding to be used to award grants of up to £5,000, using the existing scheme details, until the funds are fully utilised.

**Reason:**

To enable the Council to pay discretionary grants to businesses, in accordance with Government guidance.

**Cost of proposals:**

The value of grants is £842,500 and is fully funded through a government grant of £1,019,000. The balance of the funding will be used to pay further grants of up to £5,000.

**Risk Assessment:**

There is a risk of challenge from those applicants who have been declined a grant or have been awarded a grant below the maximum. The criteria for assessing eligibility and award have been clearly laid out in the funding Scheme and are being adhered to by officers. Where evidence has been provided in addition to the original application this has been considered before reaching a decision.

There is a risk of fraud inherent in any funding Scheme. Proportionate pre-payment checks are being built into the application approval process to reduce the risk of fraud, which will be supplemented by a number of post payment assurance checks.

**Confidential Appendices:**

Appendix A: Schedule of grants paid, up to £5,000

Appendix B: Schedule of proposed grants, exceeding £5,000

Appendix C: Schedule of proposed grants, subject to the requisite evidence or explanations being provided.

Appendix D: List of market traders proposed to receive grant payments of £2,500 by instalment

**Background papers:** File of applications and supporting evidence

**Reference papers:** Report to the Executive Member for Policy and Resources for Decision, "Discretionary Business Grant Scheme", on 02 June 2020

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Executive Member Briefing Paper

<b>Date:</b>	06 July 2020
<b>Subject:</b>	Local Authority Discretionary Grant Awards
<b>Briefing by:</b>	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Policy and Resources

#### INTRODUCTION

1. On 01 May the government extended its support package for businesses struggling due to the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown.
2. The Scheme was aimed at small and micro businesses in the borough who are incurring property related costs and who have not been eligible for other government support packages such as the Small Business and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants Fund.
3. Local authorities were tasked with creating a local scheme which met the government requirements, while recognising the priority economic needs in their area when designing their local scheme. The Executive Member for Policy and Resources agreed the Fareham scheme on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020, and the scheme opened for applications on the same day.
4. This report sets out the results of the application process and makes recommendations for grants to be paid.

#### APPLICATION PROCESS

5. A 2-week window for grant applications was opened on 2<sup>nd</sup> June, and publicity across social media and via press releases was used to encourage businesses to apply. We are grateful to local business representative groups (such as the Federation of Small Businesses, Business South), who shared the scheme amongst their members.
6. Expressions of interest had been gathered in the week preceding the application window opening and those businesses were sent the application link once the scheme was live.
7. Direct contact was made with businesses that had previously contacted the Council, in relation to the preceding business grants schemes (Small Business Grant Fund and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund) to ensure that there was a good level of awareness in the time available.

8. Direct contact was also made to 2 priority groups in the scheme: regular market traders and occupiers of shared offices, where they could be identified.
9. The application window closed on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2020, and the applications were assessed.

### SUMMARY OF APPLICATIONS

10. The table below sets out the results of the grant applications;

	No.	Value
Applications eligible for a grant	101	£710,000
Applications which may be eligible subject to satisfactory evidence being received	12	£77,500
Applications declined	99	
<b>Total number of applications received</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>£787,500</b>

11. Where applications have been declined, this was largely a result of businesses that are run from peoples' homes (making up 39% of the declined applications). Other reasons included businesses not in the Fareham borough, no evidence of fixed property costs or revenue losses due to COVID-19 and a range of other specific reasons.
12. Under the scheme of delegation, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer (DCEO) can award grants from this scheme up to £5,000. Appendix A provides a list of all businesses that have received a grant payment, and is summarised below :-

	No. of businesses	Value
Grant of £2,500	27	£67,500
Grant of £5,000	14	£70,000
<b>Total Grants paid under delegated authority to DCEO</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>£137,500</b>

13. Businesses with higher property related costs were able to apply for a grant in excess of £5,000 up to a cap of £10,000. These grants need approval from the Executive Member for Policy and Resources. Appendix B sets out the applications which are eligible for a grant exceeding £5,000, and this is summarised below:-

	No. of businesses	Value
Grant of £7,500	11	£82,500
Grant of £10,000	49	£490,000
<b>Total Grants recommended</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>£572,500</b>

14. There are still a few (12) applications where the true nature of the eligibility has yet to be ascertained, mainly due to missing evidence yet to be supplied. It is therefore recommended that provisional approval is given to these applicants for a grant up to the value listed, subject to satisfactory evidence or explanations being obtained. Appendix C sets out these applications. The maximum value of grants that would be payable under this schedule is £77,500.
15. In addition to the above, the Executive Member for Policy and Resources is asked to consider an additional schedule of payments to regular market traders.
16. The Government guidance on the Discretionary Grant Scheme was to make regular market traders who trade in the borough, a priority group under the scheme. These

businesses were covered by the local scheme and action was taken to contact the regular market traders from the Fareham and Portchester markets to encourage them to apply. However, only 3 applications were received, and these were considered not eligible, mostly on the basis that their fixed property costs were either at a domestic property or outside of the borough.

17. It is therefore proposed to provide additional support to this group of businesses as an exception to the approved scheme on the following basis:
- All 22 identified regular market traders in the borough to receive a grant at the minimum level of £2,500.
  - The grants to be paid instalments in line to reflect the nature of pitch fees being incurred.
18. The total cost of this proposal is £55,000 and it would meet one of the priority criteria set in the local scheme to support “businesses that support the vitality of the town centre”. The list of businesses which would benefit from this proposal is given in Appendix D.

## CONCLUSION

19. The Local Authority Discretionary Grant scheme has generated a good level of interest from local businesses, and if the recommended grant awards are agreed, will provide over £1m of financial support to micro/small local businesses in Fareham. The proposals are summarised below:-

	No.	Value
Grant paid, value up to £5,000	41	£137,500
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20. Assuming that the proposed grants are paid, then there will be a small balance of funding available for further grants to be awarded. Officers are conscious that the application window may have resulted in some businesses being unable to apply on time and it is therefore recommended that the balance of funding is used to support other businesses that come forward in the coming months, using the same scheme criteria as before, but limiting the maximum grant to £5,000.

### Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Elaine Hammell, Head of Finance and Audit. (Ext 4344)