



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	Council – 26 January 2022
Report Number	Agenda Item No. 7
Subject	Emergency / Urgency Delegations Decisions
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Michele Mead, Leader of the Council Email: michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Elizabeth Griffiths – Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer Tel: 01993 861188 Email: elizabeth.griffiths@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To note decisions taken under the emergency and urgency delegation arrangements approved by Council on 13 May 2020.
Appendices	None
Recommendation	That the report be noted.
Corporate priorities	N/A
Key Decision	N/A
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	None

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. At its meeting on 13 May 2020, the Council approved Emergency and Urgency delegations to the Chief Executive to enable decisions to be taken which were either an emergency, or where there was urgency such that the matter could not reasonably await the next meeting of whichever body would otherwise take that decision.
- 1.2. The report on the matter included the statement that: *“Any decision under the above provisions shall be recorded and published, and reported to Council, Cabinet or the appropriate Committee or Sub-Committee, such report to include the reasons that the powers needed to be used”*.

2. WINTER COVID-19 UPLIFT PAYMENTS

- 2.1. The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) increased the level of funding allocated to homelessness services through the Homelessness Prevention Grant 2021/22 to ensure that local authorities had the resources needed to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.
- 2.2. The funding allocated to West Oxfordshire District Council for 2021/22 was initially £253,329, with an additional £100,000 Temporary Accommodation Uplift of £100,000. The proposed spending of the Homelessness Prevention Grant 2021/22 and Uplift was approved by Cabinet on 24 March 2021.
- 2.3. However, a further payment of £53,117 was made alongside this original grant in the form of a Winter 2021 Covid19, ring fenced to provide rent arrears financial support for vulnerable, low income households who are renting in the private sector.
- 2.4. The DLUHC set out its expectations on how this fund was to be spent in a letter to Chief Executives dated 23 October 2021.
- 2.5. In November, officers contacted the Leader, Cabinet Member, Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer advising them of the uplift. Following discussions, the Chief Executive advised that this could be dealt with under delegated powers and the expenditure of the Winter 2021 Covid19 Rent Arrears Financial Support payment, was approved by the Chief Executive as recommended.

3. ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT POLICY

- 3.1. Approval of an Additional Restrictions Grant Policy (ARG) was taken by the Chief Executive, in liaison with the Leader, on 21 December 2021, following submission of a report from the Head of Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit.
- 3.2. The Council was awarded further grant funding in a third tranche of ARG which would continue to support businesses affected by the pandemic and make top up grant payments to previous recipients.
- 3.3. The briefing report provided details on eligibility, exclusions, the application process and grant allocations. There was also further information on the Business Growth Support Grant, appeals and fraud matters.

4. REASONS FOR USE OF URGENCY POWERS

- 4.1. The use of urgency powers was necessary to enable officers to provide financial support for any households requiring assistance from 23 October 2021 and to deliver services without delay.
- 4.2. In relation to the ARG, officers were requesting to go live with the first grant prior to Christmas, with the Business Support Grant process going live from 10th January 2022.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. The proposals were aimed at addressing the expectations set out by the DLUHC in the letters to Chief Executive on 21 December 2020 & 23 October 2021.
- 5.2. The Winter Covid19 Uplift was ring fenced to provide financial support to renters in the private sector therefore were not open to any other use.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. This report has no legal implications.

7. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS

- 7.1. None required as this report is for noting.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1. None