

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF CABINET on 17 MAY 2021

SUBJECT: Urgent Officer Decision in relation to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme

REPORT AUTHOR: Nigel Lynn – Chief Executive

DATE: March 2021

EXTN: 37568

PORTFOLIO AREA: Corporate Support

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In accordance with the provisions of the Officer Scheme of Delegation in the Council's Constitution, this report provides an update to Cabinet on the decisions taken by the Chief Executive to incur expenditure or take urgent action to continue the Covid-19 Hardship Fund for claimants of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTS) for 2021/22

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet is asked to:

1. note the urgent decision to continue the Covid-19 Hardship Fund for claimants of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTS) for 2020/21, which constitutes an additional discretionary discount of up to £150 per household for working age claimants; and
2. note the funding of the proposal from the balance of the funding allocated in 2020/21 (approximately £210k).

1. BACKGROUND:

- 1.1. Transparency in making this decision making has been maintained through consultation with the Leader of the Council and other Group Leaders.
- 1.2. The Council received £945,239 for Council Tax Hardship Funding in 2020/21 to support local residents during the pandemic. The grant was intended to give each working age household claiming Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) up to an additional £150 discount on their Council Tax bill.
- 1.3. The grant was paid to billing authorities in 2020/21, as the Council has to meet the full cost of the discounts awarded, including the County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner shares. It is anticipated approximately £100k of this funding will remain unallocated in 2020/21.

1.4. The Government announced a Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) grant as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement. The provisional allocation methodology was announced after the provisional settlement and the amount has been confirmed at £209k. The grant is non-ringfenced and has been included in the budget for 2021/22. The amount was clearly insufficient to fund the scheme for 2021/22

2. PROPOSAL(S):

2.1.1 West Sussex County Council has recently committed to the funding of their share of the relief. The County Council share is approximately 76%, which made the continuation of the scheme feasible. The cost of the scheme is anticipated to be around £875k assuming the same level of take up and taking account of the overall increase in Council tax for 2021/22. This leaves Arun with approximately £210k (24%) to fund the remaining discount.

2.1.1 It is proposed to fund the scheme from the balance of the grant allocated for 2021/22 plus funding set aside from other covid-19 related funding in 2020/21.

2.1.2 The scheme is targeted towards those residents in most need.

2.1.3 A copy of the decision has been appended to this report.

3. OPTIONS:

None, as the officer made the decision in line with the delegated authority given to him by the Council.

4. CONSULTATION:

Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		✓
Relevant District Ward Councillors		✓
Other groups/persons (please specify) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader of the Council • Group Leaders 	✓	

5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)

	YES	NO
Financial	✓	
Legal	✓	
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		✓
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		✓

Sustainability	✓	
Asset Management/Property/Land	✓	
Technology		✓
Other (please explain)		✓
<p>6. IMPLICATIONS:</p> <p>Financial Implications The Section 151 has been consulted on the decision. The decision by West Sussex County Council to fund the county council share of the relief makes the proposal affordable, whilst ensuring that targeted support is provided for those local residents in most need.</p> <p>Legal Implications The Interim Monitoring Officer has been consulted on the decision. The decision taken by the officer has followed the provisions of the Council's Constitution and any direction or law issued by Central Government</p>		
<p>7.0 REASON FOR THE DECISION:</p> <p>To meet the requirements of the Council's Constitution.</p>		
<p>8. EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE DECISION: 17 May 2021 – as this is a noting report</p>		
<p>9. BACKGROUND PAPERS: Council's Constitution - Constitution</p>		