

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Decision Made: 04 February 2022

**Covid Assistance Relief Fund Policy**

**Issue for Decision**

To implement the Covid Assistance Relief Fund Policy introduced as part of the Covid Assistance Relief Scheme.

The pandemic has impacted on most businesses to some degree whether through reduced trade, staff shortages or increased operating costs to maintain a covid secure workplace. It's therefore recommended that a scheme should be introduced to provide additional support.

In order to provide support as quickly as possible and minimise the burden on local businesses, a scheme of direct awards is favoured, with any application process and means testing held to be time consuming for businesses and operationally difficult to administer within the timeframe for awards, 2021/22.

**Decision Made**

**RESOLVED:** That the Covid Assistance Relief Scheme and associated policy, be approved.

**Reasons for Decision**

On the 25 March the Government announced a new Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund of £1.5m. The fund is available to support businesses affected by the pandemic but that are ineligible for existing support linked to business rates.

The funding has been allocated to authorities based upon the estimates rateable value in each local authority rating list which falls within the scope of the scheme.

The funding allocation for authorities was confirmed on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2021 when the scheme guidance was also issued. Maidstone Borough Council is to receive £3,897,583.

It is for each authority to design the discretionary relief scheme in their area, however in developing the scheme LA's must:

- Not award relief to ratepayers who for the same period of the relief (2021/22) been eligible for the Extended Retail Discount (covering

retail, hospitality and leisure) the Nursery Discount or the Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme;

- Not award relief for a period when a property is unoccupied;
- Direct support towards ratepayers who have been adversely affected by the pandemic and have been unable to adequately adapt to that impact; and
- Not award relief to themselves or certain precepting authorities;

It is for each authority to determine the categories of business that fall within their scheme and level of relief for individual ratepayers, subject to the overall grant allocation received. The scheme is to operate for 2021/22 only with all awards made prior to the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

### **Alternatives considered and why rejected**

An alternative option would be to do nothing. The council has the discretion to implement a scheme and could decide to take no action, with the funds returned to government and no additional support provided to local businesses.

### **Background Papers**

None.