

MINUTES OF URGENT DECISIONS MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 24TH JANUARY, 2022, 12.30 - 12.40 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Peray Ahmet, Leader of the Council.

In attendance: Andy Briggs, Assistant Director for Customer Services; Jon Warlow, Director of Finance; Peter O'Brien, Assistant Director for Regeneration and Economic Development; Raymond Prince, Assistant Head of Legal Services; and Fiona Rae, Acting Committees Manager.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. AMENDMENTS TO S47 DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY IN RESPECT OF THE COVID ADDITIONAL RELIEF FUND

The Leader considered the report which noted that, on 25 March 2021, the Government announced a new COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) of £1.5 billion. The fund would be available to support those businesses affected by the pandemic but that were ineligible for existing support linked to business rates. On 15 December 2021, the Government issued guidance on how the fund would be allocated and administered. Haringey's maximum allocation of this CARF would be £3,869,472.

It was also noted that the £1.5 billion had been allocated to local authorities based upon the estimated rateable value in each local authority rating list which fell within the scope of the fund, weighted for the Gross Value Added (GVA) impacts of COVID-19 per sector.

The Government was not changing the legislation relating to the business rates reliefs available to properties. Instead, the Government would reimburse local authorities where relief was granted using discretionary relief powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

It would be for individual billing authorities to adopt a local scheme and determine in each individual case whether, having regard to the guidance and their own local scheme, to grant relief under section 47. The relief was available to reduce chargeable amounts in respect of 2021/22.

The Leader RESOLVED

1. To approve the Covid Additional Relief Fund (CARF) Discretionary Rate Relief scheme set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
2. To delegate authority to the Director of Housing, Regeneration, and Planning, after consultation with the Cabinet Member for House Building, Place-Making, and Development to amend the levels of relief awarded, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, to review the levels of the award of relief once take-up levels of the relief are known so as to maximise the distribution of the Covid Additional Relief Fund (CARF) funding without overspending the Government's funding for this scheme.
3. To agree that awards of this additional discretionary rate relief are subject to the availability of Government funding for Covid Additional Relief Fund (CARF) and that the scheme is available for the financial year 2021/22 only.

Reasons for decision

The Government has provided funding to support a discretionary rate relief scheme under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act to award rate relief to businesses as set out in COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF): Local Authority Guidance issued on 15th December and subsequently.

Cabinet approval is required to create a Discretionary Discount Scheme using the Council's powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 as amended.

Alternative options considered

The alternative option considered was not to develop discretionary scheme, which would result in c.£3.8m of hardship funding not being made available to Haringey Businesses in need of support.

The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny agreed that the decision was urgent and could not reasonably be deferred for the following reasons:

COVID-19 continues to have significant impact on local businesses and the local economy. There is a need to publish the agreed scheme and open applications to eligible businesses as soon as possible. The Council need to act quickly to respond to the impact of Covid on business in Haringey. It is vital to enable access to the rate relief as soon as possible to ensure eligible local businesses can obtain this relief to support them.

The complexity of the guidance, and the need to develop, model and implement a scheme to allow applications to be made assessed before the end of March meant that it was not practical to delay until the next Cabinet meeting on the 8th of February.

A decision is needed in order to go live with scheme as soon as possible so reliefs can be made before the end of the Financial year. Given the above, and the need to ensure the reach, communication and application to this provision, it is not practicable

to comply with the 28-day notice requirement in Part Four, Section D, Rule 13 of the constitution or the 5-day notice period requirement for key decisions. This is set out in Part Four, Section D, Rule 16, of the Constitution.

Please be advised that the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny has further agreed that the call-in procedure shall not apply to this urgent decision. This is because the decision is urgent and any delay in implementation caused by the call-in procedure would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interests as there is a need to publish the agreed scheme and open applications to eligible businesses as soon as possible to allow them access to this funding, the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee has agreed that the decision is both reasonable in all circumstances, and that it should be treated as a matter of urgency. This is in accordance with Part 4, Section H, and Paragraph 18 (a) and (b) of the Council Constitution.

LEADER: Cllr Peray Ahmet

Signed by Leader

Date ...25 January 2022.....