

To: Cabinet
Date: 14 April 2021
Report of: Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive)
Title of Report: Decisions taken under Parts 9.3(b) of the Constitution

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	Cabinet is asked to note the decisions taken by the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) using the urgency powers delegated in Part 9.3(b) of the Constitution.
Recommendation:	Cabinet is recommended to:
1.	Note the decisions taken as set out in the report.

Appendices	
None	

Introduction and background

1. This report updates Cabinet on decisions taken by the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) using the urgency powers delegated in Part 9.3(b) of the Council's Constitution.
2. Where urgency powers are used the Constitution requires the Head of Paid Service to report, in writing, as soon as practicable to the body which would otherwise have been required to give the necessary authority to act.

9.3 Role of Head of Paid Service

...

(b) The Head of Paid Service is authorised to take any urgent action necessary to protect the Council's interests and assets where time is of the essence and it is impracticable to secure authority to act where such authority would otherwise be required.

The Head of Paid Service, in so acting, will be guided by budget and the policy framework, will consult the other Statutory Officers before acting and will report, in writing, as soon as practicable to the body which would otherwise have been required to give the necessary authority to act.

Decisions taken using urgency powers

3. The following decision has been taken using urgency powers for which Cabinet would otherwise have been required to give the necessary authority to act. Cabinet is asked to note the decision.
4. This report does not include decisions taken using urgency or emergency powers that have previously been reported to Cabinet.

ITEM 1	Agreement of the Oxford City Council Coronavirus Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) Scheme
Decision:	<p>To agree expenditure of up to 2.65m from the total £4.403M (including recently allocated £1.354M) discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) allocated to Oxford City by central Government, in line with the published scheme guidance for local authorities (Additional Restrictions Grant - Guidance for Local Authorities December 2020).</p> <p>ARG is the discretionary element of a package of grant funding provided to the Council, by central Government, to support businesses adversely affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The other element of the funding is the Local Restriction Grant (LRG), which is a defined grant scheme, focus on businesses with a rateable value, which meets certain other criteria. The ARG grant is provided to help local authorities support affected businesses that cannot access LRG.</p> <p>The Leader and Lead Member for Economic Development, as well as the Lead Member for Finance & Property have been consulted. The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee was also consulted as required but the constitution and agreed to waive the right to call in.</p> <p>Proposal 1 – Allocate up to £1.8M for ARG Short-term fund</p> <p>Central Government’s stated focus for part of the ARG is for it to mirror the Local Restrictions Grant through a discretionary grant model to support businesses that have had to close due to the pandemic, but who sit outside of the business rating system, and those severely impacted in terms of losses and ongoing costs. Mirroring LRG, means providing payments tiered at £500, £1,000, £1,500 and £2,000 per 28 day period, based on property/fixed costs and number of employees.</p> <p>If we assume 6 months of restrictions then it is estimated this would equate to £1.8m. For the purposes of naming different elements of the funding allocation, this will be called. “ARG Short-term Fund”. The actual amount of remaining ARG following this round of grant allocation will depend on the amount of applications and length of time</p>

restrictions are in place, but this is felt to be a sufficient estimate to allow for us to plan utilisation of the remaining allocation to support other businesses in need.

Proposal 2 – Allocate up to £600K for Home and Mobile workers grant

There is also an urgent need to support for home based and mobile businesses. To this end, and given the above analysis, it is proposed to allocated a further £600,000 of ARG to support this group.

This will include a one off grant of up to circa £500 each for directly affected home, or mobile-based businesses for the 12 months (22 March 2020 – 21 March 2021). This could support around 2,000 self-employed people based in Oxford City. The grant would be to cover costs associated with licences to continue trading and fixed business costs.

The definition of home-based and mobile businesses will include:

- Self-employed – registered with HMRC as Sole Traders and Partnerships.
- Limited company directors – 1-2 person companies where the directors pay themselves through company dividends.
- Freelance workers in the creative and cultural sectors
- Personal and well-being service providers
- Private Hire and Taxi drivers

Proposal 3 – Allocate up to £250K for a City Restart Fund

There is an urgent need to support businesses in the city to reopen as lockdown restrictions ease. There is an urgent need to progress given the uncertainty on when restrictions will ease and in what way. Therefore we need to support businesses to work up schemes so that they are ready to be implemented when needed.

To this end. it is proposed to allocated up to £250,000 of ARG to support support businesses. Schemes within this fund will include:

- Funding to Experience Oxfordshire to support visitor economy businesses
- Officer resource to undertake direct business support and engaging with businesses and key stakeholders to work up schemes
- Support business in delivering outdoor seating to

	<p>enable businesses to reopen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support businesses to develop Click & Collect / Delivery services ○ Comms campaign to promote local businesses across Oxford City Council's area <p>Proposals for the expenditure of the remaining £1.753M will be approved through the Council's normal decision making processes and Scheme of Delegation.</p>
Date decision made:	20 January 2021
Decision taker	Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) in consultation with the Lead Member for Economic Development and the Lead Member for Finance & Asset Management.
Was the decision taken under emergency or urgency rules?	<p>Constitution 9.3(b):</p> <p><i>The Head of Paid Service is authorised to take any urgent action necessary to protect the Council's interests and assets where time is of the essence and it is impracticable to secure authority to act where such authority would otherwise be required.</i></p> <p><i>The Head of Paid Service, in so acting, will be guided by budget and the policy framework, will consult the other Statutory Officers before acting and will report, in writing, as soon as practicable to the body which would otherwise have been required to give the necessary authority to act.</i></p>
Is this a Key Decision?	Key
Alternative options considered:	<p>The grant scheme must be delivered to serve the interests of local business and workers in line with Government guidance.</p> <p>The ARG Short-term Fund is in line with government guidance and designed to support non-RV businesses in the sectors that have had to close, for example B&Bs who pay council tax not business rates, and those businesses in the supply chain of closed businesses, for example food suppliers whose primary customer base is restaurants. It was also considered that there were mobile or homeworking businesses that would still be excluded and this was then incorporated into the proposal as the additional funding to support home based and mobile businesses.</p> <p>Further options that were considered and may be</p>

	<p>implemented later if funding is available include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hardship / Survival Fund – support for businesses and organisations key for Oxford City’s recovery phase, focused sectors to be agreed with Oxford City Council Members. ○ Resilient Business Model Fund – support for projects and businesses in the recovery phase that are resilient and in line with Oxford City’s core values of environmental sustainability and inclusive employment. ○ Business support – mentoring and coaching support for early stage businesses. <p>These have not been ruled out but are targeted at restrictions easing and the scope will depend on the money available after the ARG Short term fund</p>
Wards significantly affected	None

Financial issues

5. The financial issues arising from the decisions are set out in the published decisions notices and any supporting documents. There are no other financial issues arising directly from this report.

Legal issues

6. The urgency and emergency powers of the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) are set out in Part 9.3 of the Constitution.

Report author	Andrew Brown
Job title	Committee and Member Services Manager
Service area or department	Law and Governance
Telephone	01865 252230
e-mail	abrown2@oxford.gov.uk

Background Papers: None

This page is intentionally left blank