

South Northamptonshire Council

Council

13 May 2020

Notification of Decisions Taken by the Chief Executive Under Urgency Powers

Report of Chief Executive

This report is public

Purpose of report

To inform the Council of two decisions taken under urgency powers by the Chief Executive in relation to Covid-19 financial support to businesses and residents (Appendix 1) and planning procedures and delegated authority (Appendix 2).

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To note the decision taken under urgency powers by the Chief Executive in relation to Covid-19 financial support to businesses and residents (Appendix 1).
- 1.2 To note the decision taken under urgency powers by the Chief Executive in relation to planning procedures and delegated authority (Appendix 2).

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The Officer Scheme of Delegation states that the Chief Executive may take an urgent decision in relation to a Council function (in consultation with the relevant member) if it is in the best interests of the Council and/or residents.
- 2.2 As part of the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Chief Executive has taken two urgent decisions, which are being notified to Council as required by the Constitution.

3.0 Report Details

Urgent Decision – Covid-19 Financial Support to Businesses and Residents

- 3.1 In response to Covid-19, the Government has set out a package of temporary and targeted measures to provide additional support to businesses and to Council Tax payers.

3.2 A summary of the urgent decisions taken by the Chief Executive in relation to financial support are set out below and detailed in Appendix 1:

Subject	Decision required	Reason for urgency
Extended Business Rates Retail Relief for 2020-2021	To grant authorisation to S151 officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to agree changes to the Retail Relief policy for 2020-2021	The Government has introduced a package of support for local businesses. The Authority must react to these changes before 1 st April 20 direct debits are taken and it was not possible to prepare a report for Cabinet in timescales
Nursery Discount Policy for 2020-2021	To grant authorisation to the S151 officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to agree the Nursery Discount policy for 2020-2021	New discount introduced from 1 st April 20 by Government in response to Covid-19 and it has not been possible to prepare a Cabinet report in timescales
Small Business Rates grant and retail, leisure and hospitality grant	To grant authorisation to the S151 officer in consultation with the portfolio holder to agree a process for award and payment of grants	New grant to support businesses in response to Covid-19. Council would like to respond as soon as possible
Hardship Fund to support CT payers	For the S151 officer in consultation with the portfolio holder to approve the process to make payments to Council tax accounts of up to £150 from hardship fund in line with Government guidelines and to decide on allocation of the remaining funding	New funding to support Council Tax payers in response to Covid-19 crisis. Council would like to respond as soon as possible to the funding to support Council tax payers impacted by Covid-19
SNC Hardship Fund	For the S151 officer in consultation with the portfolio holder to transfer £100,000 from the Risk earmarked reserve to an SNC hardship fund earmarked reserve and determine the uses of this fund.	To allocate specific internal funds to complement government funding available and allow the Council to respond effectively to the issue
General delegation to the Executive Director of	For the S151 officer in consultation with the	To be able to respond swiftly and effectively

Finance to take whatever financial decision are required to respond to the Covid-19 issue	portfolio holder to be given the widest delegation to allow him the flexibility to take whatever decisions are required to deal most effectively with the pandemic.	when required
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Urgent Decision – Planning Procedures and Delegated Authority

- 3.3 As a planning authority it is important that South Northamptonshire Council continues to provide the best service possible prioritising decision-making to ensure the planning system continues to function and planning applications are processed within statutory timescales.
- 3.4 The Coronavirus Act 2020 and accompanying regulations enable ‘virtual’ committee meetings, including Planning Committee meetings.
- 3.5 A summary of the urgent decisions taken by the Chief Executive in relation to planning procedures and delegated authority are set out below and detailed in Appendix 2:

Subject	Decision required	Reason for urgency
Inquorate planning committee or lack of officer capacity to support.	If it was not possible to hold a quorate planning committee or there was a lack of officer capacity to support, then whilst the inability to hold a Planning Committee Meeting was the position, arrangements are put in place to delegate decisions to the Assistant Director of Planning and Economy.	No Full Council meeting is scheduled for amendments to planning procedures or delegations to be determined. The Planning Committee next meets on 23 April 2020 and arrangements need to be put in place to allow it to meet. This will be a virtual meeting.
Member site visits.	Member site visits are suspended until further notice, and that the planning committee rules and procedures are amended to reflect this.	Currently quoracy or officer support for the planning committee is not an issue, but it is felt prudent to put measures in place now so that we are in a position to determine planning application if such a need arises.
Delegation to the Assistant Director of Planning and Economy to determine planning applications if the planning committee is not content that it has sufficient information to	If the planning committee is not content that it has sufficient information to determine a planning application in front of it, then that application should be delegated to the Assistant Director of	It is important that we put all necessary measures in place to protect members, officers and the public

determine a planning application in front of it.	Planning and Economy for his determination.	from risks arising from the Coronavirus pandemic – hence the need for virtual meetings and the suspension of site visits.
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4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 In line with the constitution this report is informing Full Council of two decisions that were taken by the Chief Executive under urgency powers.

5.0 Consultation

Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Performance and Governance, Planning Committee Chairman.

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Not to note the report. This is not recommended as the urgent action has been taken and it is a constitutional requirement for it to be reported to Council.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report as it is reporting urgent action already taken.

Comments checked by:
 Martin Henry, Executive Director Finance and S151 Officer, 0300 003 0206,
martin.henry@southnorthants.gov.uk

Legal Implications

- 7.2 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report as it is reporting urgent action already taken.

Comments checked by:
 Andrew Hunkin, Executive Director Resources and Monitoring Officer, 0300 003 0202, andrew.hunkin@southnorthants.gov.uk

8.0 Decision Information

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

N/A

Lead Councillor

N/A

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	Urgent Decision – Covid-19 Financial Support to Businesses and Residents
2	Urgent Decision - Planning Procedures and Delegated Authority
Background Papers	
None	
Report Author	Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager
Contact Information	01295 221534 democracy@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk