



## **Urgent Decision by Chief Executive**

### **Purpose of the report**

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.

This report is to outline the reasons for a number of urgent decisions by the Chief Executive of South Northamptonshire Council as part of the Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Decisions Required:**

- 1.1 To authorise the Executive Director of Finance (S151 Officer) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Performance and Governance to approve the changes required to the Business Rates Retail Relief Policy for 2020-2021.
- 1.2 To authorise the Executive Director of Finance (S151 Officer) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Performance and Governance to approve the Nursery Discount Policy for 2020-2021.
- 1.3 To authorise the Executive Director of Finance (S151 Officer) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Performance and Governance to approve a process for the award of the Small Business Grant and the Grant for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in line with Government guidelines.
- 1.4 To authorise the Executive Director of Finance (S151 Officer) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Performance and Governance to agree the allocation of the hardship fund in line with Government guidelines
- 1.5 To authorise the Executive Director of Finance (S151 Officer) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Performance and Governance to take whatever financial decisions he feels are required in order to respond effectively to the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Summary**

The Council is expecting to face extremely challenging conditions as Covid-19 takes effect. South Northants Council wants to be in the best possible position to take all necessary actions to support our residents, businesses and service users during this time.

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.

In summary the following measures are being introduced:

- A 12-month business rates relief for all retail, hospitality and leisure businesses in England
- A 12-month business rates discount for childcare providers on Ofsted's Early Years Register
- Small business grant funding of £10,000 for all businesses in receipt of small business rate relief or rural rate relief
- Grant funding of up to £10,000 for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses with property with a rateable value of up to £15,000
- Grant funding of up to £25,000 for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses with a rateable value of between £15,000 and £51,000.
- Hardship Fund which will be used to provide help to Council Tax payers in the South Northants area. The funding allocation for South Northants is £283,831. The government's expectation is that billing authorities will provide all recipients of working age Council Tax Reduction for 2020-2021 with a further reduction in their bill of £150. Where a taxpayer's liability for 2020-2021 is, following the application of Council Tax Reduction, less than £150 then their liability will be reduced to nil. Local authorities should then establish their own approach to using any remaining grant to assist those in need.
- The establishment of £100,000 SNC Hardship Fund (use yet to be determined) to be funded from the earmarked risk reserve
- Delegated authority to the Executive Director of Finance (S151 officer) to take whatever financial decisions he feels are required in order to respond effectively to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Summary of decisions required and reason for urgency

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Decision required</b>	<b>Reason for urgency</b>
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 <sup>st</sup> 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 <sup>st</sup> 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 Finance to take whatever financial decision are required to respond to the Covid-19 issue	For the S151 officer in consultation with the 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.	To be able to respond swiftly and effectively when required