

**A MEETING OF THE POLICY AND ORGANISATION BOARD
WAS HELD ON 10 JUNE 2020**

The Mayor

Councillors Ms Ballard, Bateman, Burgess, Chegwyn, Mrs Cully, Foster-Reed, Herridge, Hook, Mrs Hook, Hylands, Jessop, Murphy, Philpott, Mrs Prickett and Raffaelli

PART II

5. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2020-21

This item was considered at the Council meeting prior to this meeting taking place.

6. ANY OTHER ITEMS

The Board was advised that there were two reports for considerations.

Both reports are late due to circumstances resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Government rules have been introduced regarding discretionary payments that have required emergency implementation by the Council
- A support package for the Gosport Ferry Company due to the pandemic has only recently been agreed by Gosport Borough Council with Portsmouth City Council and Hampshire County Council, which requires an urgent decision regarding hardship relief

The papers could have been dealt with by using the urgency powers of the Chief Executive, but as a meeting of Members was imminent it was decided that this was preferable to the decisions being taken by Officers.

REDUCTION/REMISSION OF BUSINESS RATES ON THE GROUNDS OF HARDSHIP

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Local Taxation requesting that consideration be given to an application for hardship relief from non-domestic rates under Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act submitted by Gosport Ferry Ltd, Landing Stage, The Hard.

In answer to a Member's question the Board was advised that the £30,000 was being funded by central government funds.

The Council had made it clear to the ferry company that there were to be no dividend payments to the shareholders.

Members noted that the staff had taken a 20% pay cut in these difficult times.

Members welcomed a joint approach to the support being provided to the ferry company to keep the essential services.

Members recognised that the ferry was a crucial service to the residents of Gosport, and welcomed the support being offered to the ferry. It was recognised that the ferry company needed to acknowledge the support provided moving forward.

Members expressed disappointment that the ferry had not been afforded the same support in the crisis that other methods of transports such as buses had.

RESOLVED: That the Policy at Appendix A of the report be approved and that delegation be given to the Head of Finance and the Head of taxation for the immediate implementation of the policy.

DISCRETIONARY GRANT PAYMENTS

Councillor Jessop left the room and took no part in the discussion and voting thereon.

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Finance requesting that consideration be given to approving the Discretionary Rate Grant Policy.

The Board was advised that the Group Leaders had considered the proposal prior to the meeting and had the Leader of the Liberal Democrats had proposed that an amendment be made to page 3 of the policy as follows.

- have a business premises based in the Borough. This includes a B&B based in part of the applicant's main residence. The criteria to qualify for this is: the owner must live there, and accommodation and breakfast (with appropriate Food Safety qualification) be provided for six or fewer guests. These B&Bs will be assessed on the percentage of their overheads which relate to the B&B aspect).

Other businesses which are operated solely from domestic premises are also eligible for this scheme.

Councillor Chegwyn advised that he occasionally worked from home but would not apply for any grant.

He welcomed the inclusion of the amendment as there were many people that worked from home that missed out on being eligible for other grants and welcome all those in the community as much as possible.

Members welcomed the support for the extended community and the Chairman of the Board advised that there was pressure being put on the Government to ensure that any remaining funds in the small business grant fund to support the wider community. This was welcomed by Members

In answer to a Member's question the Board was advised that childminders would be considered eligible for the policy.

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Councillor Murphy also advised that he occasionally worked from home and would not be claiming the funding.

He reiterated the importance of supporting as many people as possible.

In answer to a Member's question the Board were advised the those had not applied for small business grants were continuing to be encouraged to do so and that there had not yet been an answer from the Government about the retention of any surplus funds, but that there was pressure to the MP to push for this. Additionally a cut-off date for applications had not been confirmed. The Board was advised that they would be advised of any change to this.

The Borough Treasurer advised that thought there was no guidance on timing of decisions, the Government had advised that if it was possible to prove that there was an oversubscription of the fund by businesses in need then the underspend would be considered for retention by the Government. It was important therefore that the records of businesses requiring support was detailed.

The Board unanimously agreed that the amended recommendation be agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the Board approves the Policy at Appendix A including the amendment at page 3 and delegates immediate implementation of the Policy to the Head of Finance and Head of Taxation.

CHAIRMAN

Concluded at 20:50