

**Finance & Parking Policy Development Advisory Group**  
**7 MARCH 2022**

Present: Councillors: Tony Hogben (Chairman), Matthew Allen, Tony Bevis, Martin Boffey, Paul Clarke, Michael Croker, Ray Dawe, Brian Donnelly, Nigel Jupp, Richard Landeryou and Stuart Ritchie

8 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes of the meeting held on 11 January were received.

9 **£150 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT RELIEF**

The Revenue & Benefits Operations Manager briefed the Group on this scheme, which provided additional support for working-age receivers of Council Tax support, targeting the lowest income customers. The scheme had operated since 2020/21 to help those needing additional support because of the impact of Covid 19.

In 2022/23 the scheme was again being funded by WSCC and HDC (up to £120k) and would continue to target lowest income customers.

The Group were asked to consider how best to allocate an anticipated residual amount of £15k that might be left over, to offer additional support.

After discussion, the Cabinet Member agreed with the Group that this sum would be of greatest benefit if used as a hardship fund, targeted at individual cases as and when they arose.

10 **COUNCIL TAX (GOVERNMENT) £150 ENERGY BILLS REBATE TO BANDS A TO D**

The Revenue & Benefits Service Delivery Manager outlined how the government's £150 energy bill rebate introduced in February was being distributed across the district. For those paying Council Tax bands A to D (approximately 35,000 households) this was an automatic rebate, with those not paying by Direct Debit (29%) being contacted individually.

An additional discretionary £251k of government funding was available for those in bands E to H. The Group was asked to consider the options available for allocation across these bands.

The Delivery Manager agreed to look at whether it was viable to allocate some discretionary funding to those in bands A to D on Council Tax Relief.

The Cabinet Member concluded, with the agreement of the Group, that the discretionary grant would be made available to those receiving Council Tax Relief and other identified groups, including those on carers allowance,

disability allowance and, if possible, military veterans. It was also suggested that the Council look at the schemes being proposed at other local authorities in West Sussex.

11 **COVID ADDITIONAL RELIEF SCHEME (CARF) - DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF SCHEME**

The Revenue & Benefits Service Delivery Manager briefed the Group on the government's CARF scheme and the measures that had been taken by the Council to publicise the funding to eligible businesses. It was intended for businesses that had not benefited from previous Covid-related relief schemes, ie those that were not in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. The Group noted the criteria for eligibility and the limited guidance on how to deliver it.

Members were advised of the steps taken by the Council to promote the scheme and the small take-up from eligible businesses. It was noted that take-up had been slow on a national level as well.

The Cabinet Member sought the view of the Group on how the Council should attract applicants so that the £3.13m funding could be allocated fairly and efficiently, or be returned to Government.

There was consensus that automatic inclusion of all businesses was inappropriate, and the Cabinet Member concluded that all businesses that might be eligible should be directly invited to apply by the deadline of 13 March and the deadline be extended. Officers also agreed to find out how other councils have dealt with the grant.

An update on take-up and delivery of the scheme would be brought to the next PDAG.

12 **RURAL CAR PARKS ROLL OUT**

The Parking Strategy Officer updated the Group on the carpark at Mill Lane, Storrington; the procurement process was complete and the Project Manager was finalising the programme of works this week.

The roll out would also include refurbishing Newmans Gardens car park, Steyning, and some improvements to Storrington Library car park. It was noted that Billingshurst car parks were also scheduled for improvement works.

The Group noted that during resurfacing work ducting was installed underneath to allow for future installation of electric charging points.

13 **CAR PARKS - USAGE AND INCOME**

The Parking Strategy Officer gave a presentation on car parking data for 2021/22 including Horsham town multi-storey car parks trends and urban pay-and-display income.

A year on year analysis demonstrated how parking numbers and income had almost recovered to pre-pandemic levels in February 2022. There appeared to be some changes in behaviour with regard to all-day parking and season ticket use. It was noted that a general increase in home working was likely to have a long-term impact on season ticket income. The Parking Strategy Officer confirmed that different types of season tickets could be explored with a view to addressing long-term changes in behaviour.

The Head of Finance & Performance confirmed that the recovery of parking income would continue to be monitored and reflected in the budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy when these were reviewed.

14 **FORWARD PLAN EXTRACT FOR THE FINANCE & PARKING PORTFOLIO**

The Forward Plan extract was noted.

*The meeting closed at 7.05 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm*

CHAIRMAN