

Emergency Committee

**Wednesday 11 November 2020 at 15:30
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor Crompton (Chair);
Councillors Ali, Millard, Moore and Shaeen.

In attendance: Councillor Padda.

Officers: David Stevens (Chief Executive), Neil Cox (Director – Prevention and Protection), Charlie Davey (Business Partner – Adults), Elaine Newsome (Service Manager – Democracy) Sue Stanhope (Interim Director – HR), Suky Suthi-Nagra (Democratic Services Manager) and Surjit Tour (Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer)

74/20 Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

75/20 Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared at the meeting.

76/20 Additional Item of Business

There were no additional items of business to consider.



77/20

Additional Restrictions Grants Policy

It was reported that the Government, through the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), had recently announced a series of additional grants to enable local authorities to support businesses in their areas under Local Covid Alert Level Very High (LCAL 3) or national restrictions and to provide support to businesses alongside the Local Restrictions Support Grant

In accordance with the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), local authorities would receive a one-off lump sum payment amounting to £20 per head of population (ONS 2019 Mid-Year population estimates). In Sandwell, this equated to circa £6.569m. The funding was to be spent during financial year 2020/21 and financial year 2021/22 (with a review point for the scheme in January 2021). BEIS had confirmed that there would be no additional discretionary funding should we re-enter a further national lockdown or enter LCAL3 restrictions.

The ARG allowed local authorities to have discretion to determine which businesses to support and how much funding to provide. The Government was encouraging local authorities to support businesses severely impacted by the restrictions but may not qualify under other Local Restrictions Support Grant schemes. Local authorities were required to set out the scope of their discretionary grant scheme on their website and provide clear guidance to businesses on who was eligible and how they could apply.

Approval was now sought to the Additional Restrictions Grants Policy.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the Additional Restrictions Grant Policy be approved and implemented with immediate effect.

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- (2) that the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Resources and Core Services, be authorised to make such amendments to the Policy as are deemed necessary to effectively achieve the aims and objectives of the Additional Restrictions Grant.

78/20

Sandwell Equalities Commission and Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

The Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Equality presented a report to the Committee proposing the formation of a Sandwell Equalities Commission and the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan to enable the Council to tackle inequalities and discrimination across the council and the wider region.

The Commission's work would form the cornerstone of equalities and diversity standards and best practice to which the Council's services, policies, procedures and work would strive to adhere to.

The programme had eight key objectives to meet this vision as follows:

1. To promote, embed and protect the rights of Sandwell residents to fairness, dignity and respect along with encouraging community cohesion across the Borough.
2. To challenge ignorance and intolerances in relation to all protected characteristics by being a leading voice that promotes and celebrates the multi-cultural heritage of the Borough and the diverse nature of the population.
3. To understand, involve and enable our diverse communities to play an active role in civic society and put the citizens' voice at the heart of decision-making.

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4. To review and recommend changes (as necessary) to council policies, procedures, and practices to ensure the authority complies with its legal obligations and its workforce reflects the diversity of the people and communities it serves.
5. To champion and further embed equality in education (including career development) and employment for all residents of Sandwell regardless of race, disability, gender, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, age, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy, and maternity.
6. To work with partners, the business community, voluntary/faith sectors, and other stakeholders to challenge harmful prejudices, stereotypes and biases that undermine equal opportunity.
7. To engage and work regionally, with councils and other stakeholders, national bodies and Government to help ensure inequality concerns and issues in Sandwell are heard, understood, and addressed (including the encouragement and fostering of excellent relations with policy and decision-makers).
8. To monitor analyse and evaluate relevant data and benchmark information to inform and drive new initiatives to meet the Commission's strategic objectives.

The Commission would remain in place for two years and report to the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive. The key role of the Commission would be to work with internal council departments, trade unions and external organisations to help achieve all eight equality objectives.

In considering the matter, Councillor Moore moved a motion to defer consideration of the report until the next meeting of Cabinet on 18 November 2020 as it was not deemed to be a matter of emergency and would enable scrutiny members to consider the proposals in detail. However, as the motion was not seconded, it fell.

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The Chair subsequently moved the motion to approve the proposals as set out in the report, it was put to the vote and was subsequently **Agreed:-**

- (1) to the formation of the Sandwell Equalities Commission and its Terms of Reference as set out in Appendix 1;
- (2) to the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, as set out in Appendix 2, that will support the work of the Sandwell Equalities Commission;
- (3) to acknowledge the considerable work that has already been undertaken to date, that highlights the Council's commitment to advancing equalities.

Meeting ended at 15.46

This meeting was webcast live and is available to view at the link below

<https://youtu.be/fc5M0oSDFj8>