

Agenda

Emergency Committee

Tuesday 12 January 2021 at 5.00pm

The meeting will be conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams in accordance with The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020

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[Emergency Committee - 12 January 2021](#)

This agenda gives notice of items to be considered in private as required by Regulations 5 (4) and (5) of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

- 1. Apologies**
To receive any apologies for absence.
- 2. Declarations of Interest**
To receive any declarations of interest from members relating to any item on the agenda, in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Conduct and/or S106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- 3. Minutes**
To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2020 as a correct record.
- 4. Additional Items of Business**
To determine whether there are any additional items of business arising which should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.



Public Item

5. Additional Restrictions Grant

To approve amendments to the Additional Restrictions Grant Policy.

David Stevens
Chief Executive
Sandwell Council House
Freeth Street
Oldbury
West Midlands

Distribution:

Councillor Crompton (Chair);
Councillor Ali (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Millard, Moore and Shaeen.

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk

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Emergency Committee

**Tuesday 24 November 2020 at 16:30
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

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

Officers: David Stevens (Chief Executive), Lesley Hagger (Executive Director of Children's Services), Surjit Tour (Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer), Sue Knowles – Head of ICT and Revenue and Benefits, Elaine Newsome (Service Manager – Democracy) and Trisha Newton (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

79/20 **Apologies for Absence**

No apologies were received.

80/20 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared at the meeting.

81/20 **Additional Item of Business**

There were no additional items of business to consider.



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82/20 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

83/20 **Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) Scheme**

It was reported that the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) was announced on 22 October 2020. The grant scheme was effective from 1 August 2020 and enabled local authorities to support businesses in the hospitality, hotel, bed and breakfast and leisure industries that were still open but severely impacted by Tier 2 and Tier 3 restrictions.

The guidance suggested grant payments were made to eligible businesses as follows:-

- Rateable Value up to £15,000 - £934 per 28-day period
- Rateable Value £15,001 to £50,999 - £1,400 per 28-day period
- Rateable Value £51,000 and over - £2,100 per 28-day period

Local authorities had the freedom to determine the precise eligibility criteria for these grants, however, the funding should be targeted at hospitality, hotel, bed and breakfast and leisure businesses.

On 31 October 2020, a further grant scheme was announced called the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). This was a discretionary scheme aimed to support businesses whose trade had been affected by restrictions but were not eligible for the other grants. Sandwell's Additional Restrictions Grant discretionary scheme was approved by Emergency Committee on 11 November 2020. It would predominantly support:-

- businesses which had been required to close by the restrictions but were not on the rating list; such as businesses which leased part of the accommodation from another business and market traders;

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- businesses which had not been legally forced to close but had been severely impacted by the restrictions put in place; for example businesses which supplied the retail, hospitality and leisure industries;
- businesses which were important to the local economy.

As discretionary support grants would be provided through the Additional Restrictions Grant scheme, approval was sought to provide support through the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) scheme to those businesses in the hospitality, hotel, bed and breakfast and leisure industries only and makes payments in accordance with the guidance provided by BEIS.

During the period April to September 2020, the Council distributed over 5,000 grants to businesses providing over £57 million support. A further package of grants schemes was announced in October 2020 to support businesses through the on-going restrictions and national lockdown.

Agreed:-

- (1) that Sandwell operate the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) in accordance with the guidance provided by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and use the funding provided to only support businesses in the hospitality, hotel, bed and breakfast and leisure industries that are still open but severely impacted by Tier 2 and Tier 3 restrictions;
- (2) that Sandwell make grant payments in accordance with the amounts suggested in the guidance provided by Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

84/20

Covid Winter Grant Scheme

It was reported that councils would be given new funding to ensure vulnerable households did not go hungry or without essential items over the winter period.

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The Covid Winter Grant Scheme would enable local authorities to provide support to families with children, and other vulnerable households and individuals from early December 2020 covering the period until the end of March 2021. The funding allocation to Sandwell was £1,404,606.44.

Preparations for the policy framework and allocation mechanism for this funding had started, however, the official guidance would not be made available until 26 November 2020. Consideration was now given to activities to date and options for allocation, but the final detail could not be determined without full understanding of the national guidance and its implications. It was therefore recommended that the Emergency Committee authorised the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Deputy Leader of the Council, relevant Scrutiny Chair(s)/Vice Chair(s) and relevant Director(s), to amend the Covid-19 Winter Grant Scheme and process as necessary to give effect to any Government guidance that was issued in relation to the Scheme and its application and operation.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that the holiday activities and food programme was separate and a further report would follow on this scheme.

Agreed:-

- (1) that the Covid-19 Winter Grant Scheme be approved;
- (2) that the Chief Executive be authorised, in consultation with the Deputy Leader of the Council, relevant Scrutiny Chair(s)/Vice Chair(s) and relevant Director(s), to amend the Covid-19 Winter Grant Scheme and process as necessary to give effect to any Government guidance that is issued in relation to the Scheme and its application and operation.

Meeting ended at 16.48

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

[Emergency Committee 24 11 2020](#)

Report to Emergency Committee

12 January 2021

Subject:	Additional Restrictions Grant
Director:	Chief Executive- David Stevens
Contact Officer:	Tammy Stokes

1 Recommendations







- 1.1 That approval be given to the amendments to the Additional Restrictions Grant Policy as set out in Appendix A.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The proposed amendments to the policy will ensure those businesses not eligible for the prescribed grant schemes which have been severely impacted by the national lockdown can receive a similar additional one-off support grant payment.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people
	People live well and age well
	Strong resilient communities
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods
	A strong and inclusive economy
	A connected and accessible Sandwell

3.1 Providing this crucial support will help our businesses survive the pandemic and will therefore help to ensure we have a strong and inclusive economy.

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 On 11 November 2020 the Emergency Committee approved the council’s Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) policy 2020/21. The policy aims to provide support to those businesses affected by Covid-19 local restrictions who are not entitled to support through the prescribed Local Restrictions Support Grant schemes.

4.2 At the beginning of January 2021, following the commencement of a national lockdown, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) announced an additional business support grant scheme. The new scheme will provide businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure industries with one-off grants of £4,000, £6,000 or £9,000 dependent on the rateable value of the business.



This one-off grant will be paid in addition to the Local Restrictions Support Grant payments. At the time of writing this report detailed guidance on the new grant scheme had not been received.

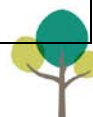
- 4.3 At the same time BEIS announced that further top-up funding would be made available for the ARG. The additional funding is intended to provide extra support for businesses through the lockdown period. At the time of writing this report the amount of top-up funding has not been confirmed but BEIS advise that it will be an amount per head population.
- 4.4 This report seeks Emergency Committee’s approval for amendments to the ARG policy to ensure businesses impacted by the national lockdown that are not eligible for the prescribed one-off support grants can receive similar support through the council’s ARG policy.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Do nothing – the Council could decide not to amend the ARG policy but this would disadvantage local businesses and the local economy in this time of need.

6 Implications

Resources:	<p>The top-up funding for ARG is a one-off payment and once the funding is exhausted no further funding will be provided in relation to discretionary business grants.</p> <p>Due diligence will be undertaken to ensure as far as practically possible grants are not claimed fraudulently.</p>
Legal and Governance:	<p>BEIS requires councils to publish their ARG scheme on its web-site. Any update to the policy will be communicated via the council's website.</p>
Risk:	<p>The application and assessment process helps to eliminate fraud by questioning, verification checks and evidence requirements.</p>
Equality:	<p>An equality impact assessment is not required.</p>
Health and Wellbeing:	<p>There are no direct implications on health and wellbeing arising from the decisions being sought.</p>



Social Value	Helping businesses to survive these difficult times will have a positive impact on the economy and labour market.
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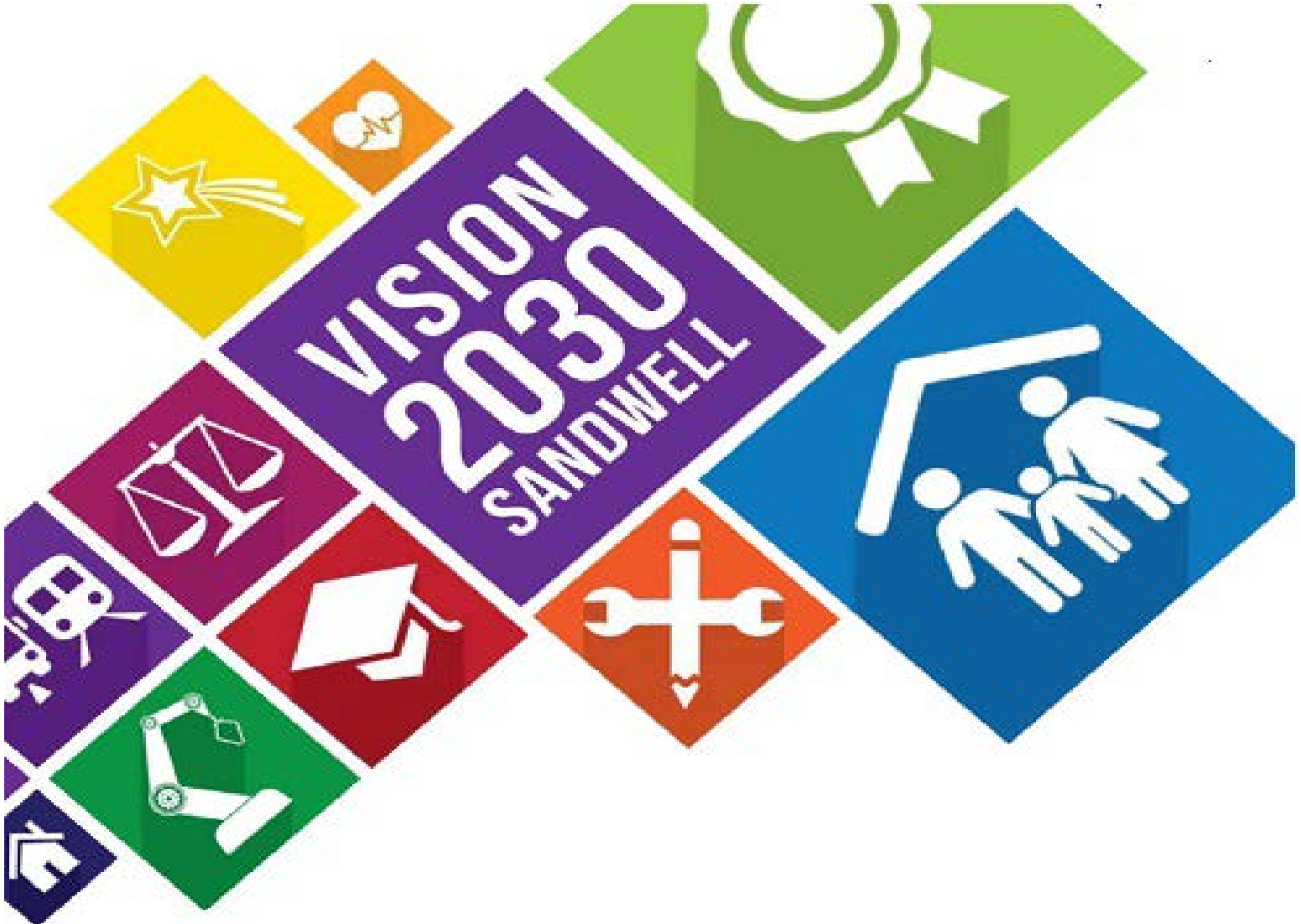
7. Appendices

ARG Policy January 2021

8. Background Papers

None





Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Business Rates

**Additional Restrictions
Grants Policy**

2020/21

Meeting Ambitions 9 and 10

Ambition 9



Sandwell has become a location of choice for industries of the future where the local economy and high performing companies continue to grow.

Ambition 10



Sandwell now has a national reputation for getting things done, where all local partners are focused on what really matters in people's lives and communities.

1. INTRODUCTION

The current Coronavirus pandemic in the UK has resulted in many businesses suffering financial hardship.

On 9 September 2020 the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) announced that it was providing local authorities with additional grant funding to support businesses that are required to close due to Local Covid Alert Level (LCAL) 3 restrictions imposed on either specific areas or multiple areas. This grant scheme is called the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed).

On 9 October 2020 BEIS announced the Local Restriction Support Grant (Sector) scheme to provide support to businesses from 1 November 2020 that have been required to close on a national basis since 23 March 2020 due to restrictions being put in place to manage coronavirus. Businesses eligible for support under this scheme are: -

- Nightclubs, dance halls, and discotheques
- Sexual entertainment venues and hostess bars

On 22 October 2020 BEIS announced a Local Restriction Support Grant (Open) scheme to support businesses who were not legally required to close but were severely impacted by LCAL2 and LCAL3 restrictions.

At the end of October 2020 BEIS extended the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) to incorporate national lockdown restrictions. The extended scheme is known as the Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) Addendum. At the same time a discretionary scheme entitled Additional

Restrictions Grant (ARG) was introduced to support businesses affected by either LCAL3 restrictions or national lockdowns.

The ARG is a discretionary scheme to mainly support those businesses affected by the pandemic who are not eligible to obtain support from the other grant schemes. The ARG funding will be used to make discretionary grants direct to eligible businesses and to undertake wider business support activities.

One-off funding for the ARG will be triggered at the point in which a local authority either moves into LCAL3 restrictions or into a national lockdown.

As a nation lockdown came into effect on 5 November 2020 funding for the ARG has been triggered. The one-off funding amount is based on £20 per head population and can be used in 2020-21 and 2021-22 financial years to provide discretionary support to businesses. The funding allocated to Sandwell is £6.569 million

In December 2020 a new LCAL 4 was introduced and in January 2021 a third nation lockdown commenced. BEIS confirmed additional top-up funding would be provided for the ARG so that extra help could be given to businesses during the lockdown.

When the funding has been exhausted no further awards through this policy will be considered.

This policy outlines Sandwell’s application of the ARG.

2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Businesses that are in administration, insolvent or where a striking-off notice has been made, are not eligible for funding under the ARG scheme.

Businesses must have been trading immediately before national, LCAL 3 or LCAL 4 restrictions to be eligible to receive grant support.

In Sandwell the ARG discretionary scheme will be available to support local businesses which:

- have been required to close by the restrictions but are not on the rating list; such as businesses which lease part of the accommodation from another business and market traders
- have not been legally forced to close but have been severely impacted by the restrictions put in place; for example businesses which supply the retail, hospitality and leisure industries
- Businesses which are important to the local economy

Sandwell will consider the following factors when determining eligibility and the amount of grant payable:

- The circumstances of the businesses
- The impact the pandemic has had on that business
- The social value the business brings to the borough
- The importance of the business to the local economy

Sandwell will also consider utilising this funding to provide additional support to larger local businesses which are important to the local economy and to undertake wider business support activities.

Businesses will be subject to State Aid rules; applicants will be required to complete appropriate disclosures and where these limits are exceeded will not qualify for a discretionary grant under this scheme.

3. AMOUNTS PAYABLE

Awards made through this scheme to cover periods where LCAL restrictions apply will mainly be grant payments made in 28-day cycles. The grant values will be determined using the information supplied during the application process and are likely to be similar to awards under the Local Restrictions Support Grants:

	LRSG (Open) £ per 28 days*	LRSG (Closed) £ per 28 days*
Band 1	934	1,334
Band 2	1,400	2,000
Band 3	2,100	3,000

* During periods of national lockdown, the council may change the payment frequency and amount to allow a single payment to be made covering the entire period of the lockdown.

A business' eligibility to an ARG will be reviewed at the end of each 28-day cycle.

In circumstances where funding is provided for more wider business support activities it may be appropriate to award a one-off lump sum payment to a business.

As this is a cash limited scheme the number of applications received may affect the amount and period of award.

Payment will be made directly to the business' bank account via an electronic transfer (BACS).

When grants have been awarded up to the level of funding received by Sandwell no further grant applications will be successful.

Amounts payable during periods of National Lockdown

In January 2021 the Government announced one-off support grants of £4,000, £6000 and £9,000 to businesses (dependent upon their rateable value) to provide additional help during the lockdown which commenced on 05 January 2021. The grants only support business ratepayers in the retail, hospitality and Leisure industries.

Businesses eligible for support through this ARG policy during the lockdown period will also receive a one-off payment to provide additional support. Amounts payable will be as follows:

	One-off Payment Amount
Band 1	£2,000
Band 2	£3,000
Band 3	£6,000

4. THE APPLICATION PROCESS

An online application form will be made available on www.sandwell.gov.uk

Businesses will be asked to provide evidence to support their application and the online facility will enable them to upload documents.

The application form will gather all the information required to satisfy the eligibility criteria set by the BEIS and locally to determine the amount of grant payable.

This scheme will remain open for applications in accordance with the guidance provided by BEIS.

5. PUBLICITY

To maximise take-up the council will publicise the scheme using a variety of media, including the council’s website and social media. We will work with all interested parties to achieve this.

A copy of this policy statement will be made available for inspection and will be posted on the Sandwell Council website www.sandwell.gov.uk.

6. DECISION MAKING PROCESS

In all cases, applicants will be notified of the decision in writing.

The scheme does not allow for any formal right of appeal and therefore once a decision is made it cannot be challenged.

7. OVERPAYMENT AND FRAUD

The council will seek to recover grants found to be overpaid.

The council is committed to identifying and subsequently investigating suspected fraudulent claims made under this scheme. Businesses who falsely declare their circumstances will have committed a criminal offence, which may lead to criminal proceedings being instigated.