



<b>Policy, Finance and Development Committee</b>	<b>Tuesday, 28 June 2022</b>	<b>Matter for Information and Decision</b>
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**Report Title:** **COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) Policy**

**Report Author(s):** **Jon Owst (Revenues and Benefits Manager)**

<b>Purpose of Report:</b>	To provide Members with a brief of the Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund and to also consult members on the design and seek delegated approval for the Council's Policy.
<b>Report Summary:</b>	The report sets out the background of the scheme and how we plan to deliver the fund.
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	<p><b>a) That the contents of the report be noted;</b>  <b>b) That Officers be provided with feedback on the key principles for the delivery of the fund;</b>  <b>c) That authority be delegated to the Strategic Director / Section 151 Officer to approve a final policy.</b></p>
<b>Senior Leadership, Head of Service, Manager, Officer and Other Contact(s):</b>	<p>Tracy Bingham (Director - Section 151 Officer)  (0116) 257 2690  <a href="mailto:tracy.bingham@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">tracy.bingham@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Comie Campbell (Deputy Section 151 Officer)  (0116) 257 2713  <a href="mailto:comie.campbell@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">comie.campbell@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Jon Owst (Revenues &amp; Benefits Manager)  (0116) 288 2603  <a href="mailto:jon.owst@oadby-wigston.gov.uk">jon.owst@oadby-wigston.gov.uk</a></p>
<b>Corporate Objectives:</b>	Growing the Borough Economically (CO2)
<b>Vision and Values:</b>	Accountability (V1)
<b>Report Implications:-</b>	
Legal:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Financial:	The council will receive £985,000 funding for the Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund. New Burdens funding will be paid to the Council to cover the cost of administering the fund however the level of funding is yet to be confirmed.
Corporate Risk Management:	Decreasing Financial Resources / Increasing Financial Pressures (CR1) Economy / Regeneration (CR9)
Equalities and Equalities Assessment (EA):	There are no implications arising from this report.
Human Rights:	There are no implications arising from this report.
Health and Safety:	There are no implications arising from this report.

<b>Statutory Officers' Comments:-</b>	
Head of Paid Service:	The report is satisfactory.
Chief Finance Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
Monitoring Officer:	The report is satisfactory.
<b>Consultees:</b>	None.
<b>Background Papers:</b>	<a href="#">Guidance published by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)</a>
<b>Appendices:</b>	None.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 On 25 March 2022 a £1.5 billion fund was announced to support businesses affected by the pandemic that are ineligible for existing support linked to business rates.
- 1.2 Local Authorities are responsible for the delivery of this fund to eligible businesses including the design of their own local scheme.
- 1.3 The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities have confirmed that OWBC will receive £985,810 for this scheme, based on the rateable value of businesses in the borough.

## **2. Who Will Qualify**

- 2.1 OWBC are responsible for the design of our scheme but must:
  - 2.1.1 Not award to ratepayers that were eligible for Extended Retail Discount or the Nursery Discount;
  - 2.1.2 Not award for unoccupied periods; and
  - 2.1.3 Direct support towards ratepayers adversely affected by the pandemic that have been unable to adequately adapt to that impact.

## **3. Delivery Method**

- 3.1 The business rates caseload will be analysed to remove the following businesses:
  - 3.1.1 Businesses that have already received support in 2021-22;
  - 3.1.2 Businesses where OWBC or the County Council are the liable party; and
  - 3.1.3 Banks, petrol stations, energy companies and other areas where inclusion would be politically sensitive. Input is welcomed on types of business that should be excluded.
- 3.2 Eligible businesses will be contacted by letter and email and invited to opt-in to a payment from the scheme by declaring they have been unable to adequately adapt to the adverse financial impact of the pandemic, and that award of the relief will not take them over subsidy limits.
- 3.3 At the end of a 4-week application window the level of relief to be awarded will be decided

based on the number of applications received.

- 3.4 Awards will consist of a reduction in business rates for 2021-22, with any credit from that year being transferred to the current year.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 Councils will have to have made all payments to eligible businesses by 30 September 2022.
- 4.2 The delivery method proposed ensures funding of £985,810 will not be exceeded. Any unallocated funding must be returned to government following reconciliation later in the year.
- 4.3 Finally, the government has committed to providing Councils with New Burdens funding to compensate for the additional burdens in implementing the overall policy. The level of this funding is yet to be confirmed, however it is expected that the costs of delivering the scheme will be absorbed within existing budgetary provision within the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years, with the exception of software charges which are expected to be contained within the new burdens envelope.