

The **Public Sector Equality Duty** (Section 149 of the Equality Act) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people carrying out their activities.

The Equality Duty supports good decision making – it encourages public bodies to be more efficient and effective by understanding how different people will be affected by their activities, so that their policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people's needs. The Council's Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) includes an assessment of the community safety impact assessment to comply with Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act and will enable the Council to better understand the potential impact of proposals and consider mitigating action.

Name or Brief Description of Proposal	Discretionary Business Support Grant Funding
Brief Service Profile (including number of customers)	
<p>Economic Development team is with-in the Place Directorate and with-in a service area with planning, building control and strategic skills.</p> <p>The team works closely with local businesses and inward investors. During the COVID-19 pandemic the focus of the team has been to support local businesses, especially smaller businesses with grants and advice.</p> <p>2,761 hereditaments were eligible for the original grant schemes, with 3,745 businesses making on-line submissions to date. The original schemes were targeted at businesses of a certain size and in certain sectors, those likely to be most impacted. The difference between eligible businesses under the original schemes and the number of submission potentially describes the demand position.</p>	
Summary of Impact and Issues	
<p>The COVID-19 pandemic has placed great pressure on the economy with some sectors having been 'locked down' to ensure social distancing.</p> <p>Coronavirus has had both social and economic impacts. The impact on output in the UK economy in April 2020 has been dramatic.</p> <p>The economy has experienced a significant shock since the start of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic; GDP has fallen dramatically, with record broad-based falls in output for production, services and construction.</p> <p>April 2020 has experienced sharper falls than March as the negative impacts of social distancing and "lockdown" have led to a significant fall in consumer demand and business and factory closures, as well as supply chain disruptions.</p>	

GDP fell by 20.4% in the month, the largest fall since monthly records began in 1997.

The Government has provided a series of measures to help businesses including grants for local businesses. Local authorities will be responsible for delivering grants to eligible businesses. Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides all local authorities with the vires to make these payments.

In March the council was given £40.738m of government funding to allocate to 2,761 local businesses through two main grant schemes.

Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund was announced in May 2020, aimed at small businesses outside the scope of the main grant schemes and businesses suffering financial hardship as a result of the C-19 economic 'lock-down'.

A fixed budget by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy provides an initial 'fixed minimum allocation' of £2.186M on for the scheme.

The council has an element of discretion in awarding grants, however government has asked that certain businesses are prioritised. If the new scheme is oversubscribed, with a limited budget some non-prioritised businesses may not receive grant support. Initial modelling suggests that up-to 350 grant awards might be made under the Discretionary Fund, however an option also exists to reduce the grant values to ensure more businesses receive support.

The council will be transparent and open in the process of determining grants and will seek to be as equitable in delivering the scheme to businesses suffering financial hardship.

Potential Positive Impacts

At 29 May, through the original schemes £33.545m has reached the bank accounts of local businesses through 2,555 grants. A further £0.575m will be reached a further 41 businesses by 2 June and so £34.12m in grants will have been awarded to 2,596 local businesses – 94% of the estimated total number of eligible businesses.

The Discretionary Fund is aimed at small and micro businesses who were not eligible for the original schemes and so a further £2.186 million will be provided to small businesses in Southampton. Some of these businesses may be suffering financial hardship and funding through the scheme may support the recovery, continuing employment and commercial activity.

Responsible Service Manager	Paul Barton
Date	12 June 2020
Approved by Senior Manager	Kate Martin

Date	12 June 2020
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Potential Impact

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions & Mitigating Actions
Age	None	N/A
Disability	None	N/A
Gender Reassignment	None	N/A
Marriage and Civil Partnership	None	N/A
Pregnancy and Maternity	None	N/A
Race	None	N/A
Religion or Belief	None	N/A
Sex	None	N/A
Sexual Orientation	None	N/A
Community Safety	None	N/A
Poverty	Supporting businesses has the potential to sustain employment and alleviate out-of-work poverty and unemployment.	N/A
Health & Wellbeing	Support the wellbeing of local employers and indirectly employees.	N/A
Other Significant Impacts	Support for business owners to build resilience and to potentially enable continuing commercial viability and sustain employment.	N/A