

Notice of KEY Executive Decision (Special Urgency)

Subject Heading:	Community Halls Covid Support
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Damian White, Leader of the Council
SLT Lead:	Jane West, Chief Operating Officer
Report Author and contact details:	Jane West, Chief Operating Officer 01708 431994 jane.west@havering.gov.uk
Policy context:	This report is in response to the Covid-19 pandemic
Financial summary:	This report sets out how the Council plans to financially support Community Halls that are leased from the Council which have been adversely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.
Reason decision is Key	(a) Expenditure or saving (including anticipated income) of £500,000 or more (b) Significant effect on two or more Wards
Date notice given of intended decision:	This is a decision pursuant to para 11 of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, made under “special urgency” with the consent of the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

Key Executive Decision

Relevant OSC:	Overview and Scrutiny Board
Is it an urgent decision?	Yes
Is this decision exempt from being called-in?	A decision on this report under the “Special Urgency” provision is required to allow the Council to plan and undertake effective strategies for working and service delivery during the current Covid-19 outbreak.

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering	[X]
Places making Havering	[X]
Opportunities making Havering	[X]
Connections making Havering	[X]

Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. The Covid-19 pandemic has hit the community organisations that run local community halls very hard. Where the Council is the landlord, it has continued to charge them rent during 2020/21 but recognises that their ability to generate income through lettings and events has been very limited due to the variety of Covid-19 restrictions. At the beginning of 2020/21, all the Council's commercial lessees were offered the opportunity to move from quarterly in advance rent payments to monthly in arrears. However, with lockdowns continuing for longer than initially anticipated, the financial position will have been getting tougher for the community organisations running community halls. The Council recognises that this mitigation does not go far enough for all community organisations.
2. The Council is of the view that vibrant community halls will be crucial to the mental, physical and emotional health of the communities they serve as we emerge from the pandemic. It is therefore important for the Council to consider what support can be provided to those organisations hardest hit and least able financially to weather the current storm.
3. Developing a system that is fair and equitable is very difficult. Not all community halls have been impacted in the same way. Some have been recipients of business grants from government, distributed by the Council, but others have not qualified. Sources of income, liabilities and costs will also vary.
4. With this in mind, it is proposed that two approaches will be deployed, both of which can be applied to community halls where the Council is the lessor:-
 - Where the Council is the landlord, that it revises the payment terms further so that the rent for community halls can be repaid over a longer period, reflecting the predicted recovery of activity as the current lockdown eases and their cashflow returns. Individual repayment plans will be offered to these community halls that aim to make payments affordable in the short term but which will ensure that all rent and arrears are repaid by 31 March 2023.
 - Separately, from a community engagement point of view, it is proposed that where a community association leases a community hall from the Council, they will be invited to submit an application by a given deadline should they believe they are eligible for a rescue package. Once the deadline has passed, all applications will be considered and grants will be allocated based on the severity of the financial challenge faced by each organisation. The resulting package of financial support should not exceed £10,000 per centre and there should not be more than one package per centre. The total rescue programme will be capped at £100,000.

Key Executive Decision

Recommendations

That where the Council is the landlord:-

1. that officers be authorised to agree repayment plans with community halls through to 31 March 2023 by which time all rents and arrears should be repaid.
2. that officers be authorised to allocate grants of up to £10,000 for community halls in need of a rescue package, within an overall cap of £100,000.

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

Part 3 of the Constitution – Responsibility for Functions. 2.1: Functions of the Cabinet.

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

This decision is required under “Special Urgency” to allow the Council to plan and undertake effective strategies for working and service delivery during the current Covid 19 outbreak. A decision on this report under the “Special Urgency” provision is required to allow the Council to plan and undertake effective strategies for working and service delivery during the current Covid 19 outbreak.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

The Council could decide not to provide support for the community halls it leases out. This option was rejected due to the importance of vibrant community halls in supporting the mental, physical and emotional health of the communities they serve as we emerge from the pandemic.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

None

Key Executive Decision

NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER

Name: Jane West

Designation: Chief Operating Officer

Signature:

Date:

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The proposals in this report fall within the scope of the Council's general power of competence as set out in Chapter 1 of the Localism Act 2011. The financial impact on the Council are set out in the document attached to this report but as detailed below, these are not expected to be costly to the Council.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The longer repayment period for rent for community halls will delay cashflow but given low interest rates, this will not be costly.

The rescue packages could cost up to £100,000 which will be funded from the Control Outbreak Management Fund funded by central government.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)

There are no HR implications from this report.

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to:

- (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, and sexual orientation.

Key Executive Decision

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants. Equality and Health considerations will be paramount in all these spending decisions in the spending of these grants.

The population of Havering has the highest proportion of older people, compared to all London Boroughs. Whilst the majority of fatalities and greatest vulnerabilities are within this group, the Council needs to be cognisant of this in, all it's designed approaches.

Havering also has one of the fastest growing non-white ethnic communities, against national indicators, which also needs to be considered, when evaluating potential adverse impacts on different community groups.

Any barriers to accessing health services, in particular digitally excluded groups and groups which experience spoken or written language barriers must be considered, to enable fair and inclusive service provision.

There will be a need to consider these factors, as part of dynamic risk assessments against the design of the delivery solutions and community engagement.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The coronavirus pandemic represents an unprecedented threat to the health of people worldwide. Within the UK, councils are working to support the approach devised by national government, consistent with the best available evidence, to protect the wider community, but particularly those who are most vulnerable to severe disease and the worst outcomes including death and prolonged if not permanent disability.

Community halls provide space and venue for important activities including social and educational which impact on the mental, physical health and well being of residents therefore supporting vibrant community halls will be crucial to the mental, physical and emotional health of the communities they serve as we emerge from the pandemic.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Key Executive Decision

Part C – Record of decision

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Decision

Proposal agreed

Delete as applicable

Proposal NOT agreed because

Details of decision maker

Signed



Name: Cllr Damian White, Leader of Havering Council

Cabinet Portfolio held:

CMT Member title:

Head of Service title

Other manager title:

Date:

Lodging this notice

The signed decision notice must be delivered to the proper officer, Debra Marlow, Principal Committee Officer in Democratic Services, in the Town Hall.

For use by Committee Administration

This notice was lodged with me on _____

Signed _____