



Councillor Cliff Lunn

Executive Member for Finance and Resources September 2020

Work to support businesses and Council Taxpayers during Coronavirus

Since my last report to Council, work on the various business grants and business rate relief has been completed and claims for additional Council Tax Support are on-going. In summary the following financial support has been provided to date:

- Small Business and Retail Hospitality Grants - £16,790,000 paid to 1,472 businesses
- Discretionary grants - £800,000 paid to 96 businesses
- Business Rate relief - £6,972,544 awarded
- Council Tax Support - £285,000 awarded to 2040 customers

Debt Recovery

Debt recovery action was suspended for 12 weeks to provide a period of respite for those that needed it. Soft reminders were issued at the end of August to encourage people to make contact to discuss their options should they find themselves in financial difficulty. The format of these has been well received with many customers contacting the council to claim Council Tax Support and make arrangements that are more affordable for them. Official reminders will be issued from mid-September to allow steps to be taken towards more formal recovery action, particularly for those persistent non-payers. Our policies and procedures are such that support is available for those finding themselves in genuine hardship.

Financial Impacts of Covid-19

SDC has received £1,068k of the £3.7bn announced by government to help local councils. This extra funding is welcomed and we have used it to support emergency spending on things such as personal protective equipment, homelessness support and enabling people to work from home so we can continue to deliver core services and it is also helping to cover losses in key income streams.

A new fees and charges compensation scheme has been announced by the Government and officers are working on our first claim which is due for submission at the end of September – I will report on the outcome of that at our next Council meeting.

As at the end of July these income and cost pressures were estimated at around £3.8m for the year but these figures are very much dependent on the how the economy recovers as lockdown measures are eased. The financial impacts are being closely monitored and revised through monthly updates to the Government.

The quarterly finance and treasury management reports to Executive earlier this month highlight the financial pressures evident to date and the potential impacts for the rest of this year. A revised budget for 2020/21 is elsewhere on this agenda, along with a refresh of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

Cliff Lunn