

Report from Cllr Judy Pearce: 28.6.21

First some important information on various grants and business rate bills:

Restart Grants

Time is running short for businesses to send in their application for the Government Restart Grants as the deadline is 30 June 2021.

The Restart Grant is a one-off payment for businesses that mainly offer in-person services to the general public and have been impacted by lockdown closures. It is available in two strands.



Non-essential retail businesses, such as gift stores or florists, are in Strand One and could receive a one-off grant up to £6,000.

Hospitality, accommodation, leisure, personal care and gym businesses, covering everything from animal groomers to pubs and B&Bs, are covered by Strand Two. These business could receive up to £18,000.

The link to apply is below.

<https://www.southhams.gov.uk/businessscovid19>

On Wednesday of this week, the Business Rates team sent an email to all applicants who had applied for a LRSG Grant (Local Restrictions Support Grant) and who had not yet applied for a Restart Grant, encouraging businesses to apply.

If you are aware of any businesses who have not yet applied, please could you stress that applications must be received by 30th June. This is a Government deadline and we cannot accept applications after this date.

Information about the Restart Grants will also be going in with the Business Rates bills being sent out below. We have also contacted Chambers of Trade and holiday letting agencies in the area to make them aware of the Restart Grants deadline. This is something that we were instructed to do by BEIS so that we can show we have made all of our businesses aware of the deadline. It has also been promoted on social media

Business Rates Bills



Between 1 April 2020 and 30 June 2021, as a response to the pandemic, Central Government introduced an expanded retail discount for businesses that primarily dealt with customers in a face to face capacity. During this period the discount was 100% meaning the bills were issued with nothing to pay for that period.

From 1 July that discount reduces to 66%. Therefore, many businesses will be receiving their first bill with a charge on since 1 April 2020. The Council has no say or discretion over this and we are obliged to charge the 34% from 1 July 2021 as per the Business Rates national legislation.

In case you receive queries, the various business grant schemes have meant that we were made aware of some businesses which we didn't know about previously and whom have received business grants support. Consequently some of these businesses will be receiving their first business rates bill.

When we completed our annual billing exercise, we did advise a further bill would be issued, so businesses are aware that this was due.

Additional Restrictions Grant

The Government has extended the deadline to the end of July for spending the second tranche. We will be looking at the approach to spending the final tranche of ARG grant funding by the end of March 2022. The Government has said that Councils may want to look at supporting certain sectors that have been impacted by the delay in lifting the national restrictions e.g. the wedding industry, travel/tourism sector, nightclubs/theatres.



Localities and street scene

We are still in high season regime and will remain so until the end of the first week in September, so Thursday – Monday there is a permanent day time presence emptying bins around town, with a further emptying about 8pm. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays there are the usual three emptyings a day.

Waste collections

You will all know that we are experiencing great difficulties with the roll out of this service, principally due to FCC not having correctly calculated the size of vehicle required for many of our narrow streets and lanes. In addition they are complaining of a great increase of recycling materials, especially cardboard, since the pandemic started. However, this feature must be universal throughout the country and not just special to the South Hams.

We are in the process of agreeing a remedial programme and all affected households will be notified. Some households with boxes will go over to having them emptied into an open backed vehicle, which may seem non-sensical, but it's important none of the recycling materials are contaminated and this is the surest way of achieving this. These recyclates will go to the mechanical sorting station in Plymouth, but be assured that everything will be recycled and nothing will go to the incinerator or landfill. Those still on the old bag collections will remain on them. One of the problems is the greater number of smaller collection vehicles FCC have found are needed and that they are filling up quicker and the offload facility at Ivybridge is getting very congested, so this needs to be solved. Yes, we are all sitting there with our mouths open wondering exactly how they can have miscalculated so much...

So some good news and some not so good, but a real hope that the service in some shape or form will get back on track.

New corporate strategy

We are developing this as it was felt that the old one no longer reflected either the Council's aspirations or what they should be doing in the changed world since Covid. There will be a public consultation over the summer/early autumn.