

FOI number: **HBC_FOI_20200265**
Date FOI Received: **15/04/2020**
Department: **Business Rates**
Title: **Covid-19 Small business grant communications**
Description: **Figures relating to COVID-19 small business grant applications as of April 2020 and details of the Council's process for responding to applications.**

Request: (As Redacted sent by requestor)

I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information:

Regarding the £10,000 COVID-19 Small Business Grant Fund for businesses with rate relief or rural rate relief:

1. What is the council's process for communicating with eligible businesses and handling applications?
(e.g automatic payments, businesses notified via letter and asked to apply via link, email notification and link etc.)
2. When were businesses first notified by the council that they may be eligible to apply?
3. What is the payment turnaround time from receipt of application?
4. Is there a staggered process for making payments, and what is the process? (e.g do you deal with first 1000 applications in a block and pay them by a certain date, before moving onto the next 1000 applications etc.)
5. How many businesses within your council jurisdiction are eligible for the grant?
6. How many applications have been received as of April 17 2020?
7. How many applications have been rejected as of April 17 2020?
8. How many businesses have been paid as of April 17 2020?

Please provide the information in the form of an email, with relevant attachments.

If it is not possible to provide the information requested due to the information exceeding the cost of compliance limits identified in Section 12, please provide advice and assistance, under the Section 16 obligations of the Act, as to how I can refine my request.

If you can identify any ways that my request could be refined I would be grateful for any further advice and assistance.

If you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact me via email or phone and I will be very happy to clarify what I am asking for and discuss the request, my details are outlined below.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to your response.

Response: (Response as Redacted sent by service)

1. What is the council's process for communicating with eligible businesses and handling applications?

(e.g automatic payments, businesses notified via letter and asked to apply via link, email notification and link etc.)

We do not have an application process as such but we do have an online form for businesses to complete. This is so they complete the disclaimer and confirm which bank account the payment is to be sent. Once completed, the payment is sent via BACS.

2. When were businesses first notified by the council that they may be eligible to apply?

The grants became available on Saturday 4th April

3. What is the payment turnaround time from receipt of application?

The payment is made immediately but it takes 3 working days to go through the BACS process and reach their accounts

4. Is there a staggered process for making payments, and what is the process? (e.g do you deal with first 1000 applications in a block and pay them by a certain date, before moving onto the next 1000 applications etc.)

There is no staggered process – we pay the grants daily

5. How many businesses within your council jurisdiction are eligible for the grant?

We have identified 1,255 businesses that are eligible.

6. How many applications have been received as of April 17 2020?

We do not have an application process – so we do not record the number received. Some people may have accessed the online form a number of times before being successful etc. so we do not hold this information

7. How many applications have been rejected as of April 17 2020?

As above – we do not hold this information

8. How many businesses have been paid as of April 17 2020?

Up to and including 17th April, we awarded 647 grants

If you have any queries about the processing of your request then please do not hesitate to contact me. Further information explaining the Council's process for responding to information requests together with a complaints/appeals procedure is available in our reception or via our website at:

<https://www.hertsmere.gov.uk/Your-Council/Official-Publications--Guides--Policies/Access-to-Information.aspx>

The Information Commissioner oversees the application of the Freedom of Information Act. You may contact the Information Commissioner at:

Information Commissioners Office
Wycliffe House, Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF
Telephone: 01625 545700
Website: www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

Please include the above reference number on all correspondence related to this request.

Thank you for your request.

Kind regards

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