

FOI number: **HBC_FOI_20210174**
 Date FOI Received: **25/03/2021**
 Department: **Business Rates**
 Title: **COVID-19 Business support grants**
 Description: **COVID-19 Business support grants**

Request: (As Redacted sent by requestor)

I am writing to you to ask for information under FOI Act 2000 relating to the following coronavirus grant schemes:

- Local Restrictions Support Grants (LRSG)
- Additional Restrictions Support Grant (ARG)
- Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) - closed August 2020
- Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grants Fund (RHLGF) - closed August 2020
- Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund (LADGF) - closed August 2020

Please provide the following information for each of the schemes above separately:

1. How much money has been issued from the start of the scheme to date and to how many businesses?
2. How much money has been assessed as obtained fraudulently and how many businesses have been involved?
3. How much of the money identified in the answer to Q2 has been recovered to date?
4. Where fraud was identified how many of those cases have been referred to the authorities to date?
5. How much has been issued in error and to how many businesses? For each please explain what the error was.
6. How much of the money issued in error identified in Q5 has been recovered to date?
7. What policy was in place to ensure that grants were not fraudulently obtained or granted in error to businesses?

Response: (Response as Redacted sent by service)

1. How much money has been issued from the start of the scheme to date and to how many businesses?

Grant	Amount Issued	Number of businesses
Local Restrictions Support Grants (LRSG)	£3,239,375.85	535
Additional Restrictions Support Grant (ARG)	£1,703,519.15	614
Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) - closed August 2020	£8,470,000.00	847

Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Grants Fund (RHLGF) - closed August 2020	£9,790,000.00	484
Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund (LADGF) - closed August 2020	£910,380.00	168

2. How much money has been assessed as obtained fraudulently and how many businesses have been involved?

£25,000 – involving one business

3. How much of the money identified in the answer to Q2 has been recovered to date?

Nothing has so far been recovered

4. Where fraud was identified how many of those cases have been referred to the authorities to date?

The case has been referred

5. How much has been issued in error and to how many businesses? For each please explain what the error was.

£25,000 was incorrectly paid to one business. The grant was paid to a business whose rateable value was greater than £51,000 so they were not entitled due to officer error.

6. How much of the money issued in error identified in Q5 has been recovered to date?

£19,188

7. What policy was in place to ensure that grants were not fraudulently obtained or granted in error to businesses?

The business had to complete an on line form with various validation checks before being allowed to proceed. Once the form was completed officers carried out a number of pre-payment checks. Following payments, all businesses have been referred to our fraud team for further post payment assurance cross checks.

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

Information Services