



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr. Allen Brett
c/o Number One Riverside
Smith Street
Rochdale
OL16 1XU

20th January 2021

Dear Councillor Brett,

I am writing to you today on behalf of the many constituents who have contacted my office throughout the course of the coronavirus pandemic to share with me their concerns about the impact that the national situation has had on their businesses.

I am pleased to have been able to share news with these constituents that the Government has made millions of pounds of funding available to Rochdale Council, to support local businesses which have been negatively affected by the pandemic. I was also glad to see that these funds have in many cases reached the people who they were intended to support and that officers have ensured that Government support has reached those people in an extremely efficient and timely manner.

However, I am still being contacted by business people from Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale who have been unable to access support from the Government's Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) scheme. These businesses include driving instructors, beauticians, tattoo artists, dog groomers, and people working from home with no business premises, to name a few.

Whilst Government gave local councils the freedom to determine the eligibility criteria for these grants, they also made clear that they expect the funding to help those businesses which – while not legally forced to close – are nonetheless severely impacted by the restrictions.

I know how hard these constituents are working to keep their businesses viable through these difficult times. In some cases, access to ARG support could be the difference between these business surviving or not, and it is not right that support which has been provided by Government is not made accessible to them, as it has been to others. It is extremely important that Rochdale Council recognises the need for them to access Government grant funding as a matter of urgency.

I am therefore asking that Rochdale Council approve measures to begin accepting applications for support grants from more businesses who have been adversely affected, including those who have not been told to close but have seen their revenues severely reduced as a direct result of coronavirus, those people working from home who have no business rates but still incur specific



business running costs, and those people who are self-employed but rent a chair or space within another business, such as nail technicians, or hairdressers.

I know that we all want to do the right thing for these hard-working local people, their businesses and families, so I strongly encourage you to give them access to the support they need.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'C' followed by a long, horizontal, wavy line.

Chris Clarkson MP
Member of Parliament for Heywood and Middleton