
Report To:	Environment & Regeneration Committee	Date:	17 December 2020
Report By:	Corporate Director, Environment, Regeneration and Resources	Report No:	E&R/20/12/02/SJ
Contact Officer:	Stuart Jamieson	Contact No:	01475 712402
Subject:	COVID-19 Business Support Interventions - Update		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is provide the Committee with an update in respect of business support interventions to address the impacts of COVID-19 from the Scottish Government.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 Since the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic both the UK and Scottish Governments have deployed a number of business support interventions to assist the business sector during these challenging times.
- 2.2 On 9 December the Cabinet Secretary – Finance announced a package of measures totalling £185m.
- 2.3 Whilst the full breakdown has not yet been provided, sectors/activities covered include hospitality; events industry; food & drink, brewers; travel agents; tour & coach operators; brewers; self-catering & B&Bs; indoor football; visitor attraction; and taxi drivers. Specific funding amounts announced mentioned were:
- £1.5m for travelling shows
 - £15m for wedding venues and wedding sector supply chain
 - £19m for taxi drivers (via LAs)
 - £15m for mobile contact services (via LAs)
 - £16m for tourism and hotels / self-catering
 - £30m for one off payments to hospitality & hotels – top up under Strategic Framework Fund (via LAs)
- 2.4 Within this funding allocation discretionary grants will be available for Local Authorities to disburse which aim to “utilise the Council’s knowledge of their local economies to direct funding towards businesses experiencing immediate financial challenges as a result of COVID-19 restrictions and regulations, specifically those who have been without financial support since October.”
- 2.5 Colleagues in CoSLA and SLAED continue to work with the Scottish Government to provide guidance on the eligibility of businesses to attract support however at the time of writing this report this is not available and a verbal update will be provided to the Committee, in order that support measures can be made to business as early as possible.
- 2.6 The expectation of support from our businesses will be high. Whilst recognising the challenge faced by local business the interventions made available to the Council are not without condition and it will therefore be necessary to ensure that eligibility criteria are met.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- a) Notes the package of interventions announced by the Cabinet Secretary - Finance on 9 December to support businesses affected by COVID-19;
- b) Notes that colleagues in CoSLA and SLAED continue to develop guidance on the implementation of these interventions; and
- c) Delegates authority to the Head of Regeneration and Planning, in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer, once the guidance from CoSLA and SLAED is issued, to develop eligibility criteria for the discretionary spend using the principles set out in paragraph 4.6 to ensure maximum support, and thereafter disburse the funds.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 A number of business support interventions have been deployed by the Westminster and Holyrood Governments since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The Council, through Finance, and Regeneration and Planning, have administered these interventions using guidance from CoSLA and SLAED.
- 4.2 On 9 December 2020 the Cabinet Secretary – Finance announced a £185m package of further interventions to support businesses in Scotland, some of which are in place to support businesses for the first time.
- 4.3 Whilst the full breakdown has not yet been provided, sectors/activities covered include hospitality; events industry; food & drink, brewers; travel agents; tour & coach operators; brewers; self-catering & B&Bs; indoor football; visitor attraction; and taxi drivers. Specific funding amounts announced mentioned were:
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 - £16m for tourism and hotels / self-catering
 - £30m for one off payments to hospitality & hotels – top up under Strategic Framework Fund (via LAs)
- 4.4 Within this funding allocation discretionary grants will be available for Local Authorities to disburse which aim to “utilise the Council’s knowledge of their local economies to direct funding towards businesses experiencing immediate financial challenges as a result of COVID-19 restrictions and regulations, specifically those who have been without financial support since October.” Inverclyde Council’s allocation of the local authority discretionary fund is £233,259.
- 4.5 The expectation of local businesses, some of whom will have no support to date during the pandemic, is bound to be very high for these limited funds. Colleagues in CoSLA and SLAED continue to work with the Scottish Government to provide guidance on the eligibility of businesses to attract support however at the time of writing this report this is not available.
- 4.6 The discretionary funds are conditional on a number of factors. Despite the lack of clear guidance at this stage it is felt appropriate in order to deploy the funds as quickly as possible and that our eligibility criteria is based on the following principles:-
- Available to businesses of less than 50 employees
 - Can evidence one year of accredited accounts
 - Not limited to business premises or RV
 - Not restricted to limited companies
 - Maximum intervention £7500 for individuals who have had no support to date and limited to an intervention of £1500 to those who have had support, in exceptional circumstances
 - One off payment till 31.03.21
 - Administered by Team Leader - Business Development or any other suitably qualified nominee
 - Appeal to Regeneration Manager or Head of Regeneration and Planning.

5.0 PROPOSALS

- 5.1 It is proposed that as the guidance is developed from CoSLA and SLAED it be delegated to the Head of Regeneration and Planning to issue clear eligibility criteria for the administration of the Local Authority Discretionary Fund, in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer, in line with principles set out in paragraph 4.6 and in turn administer the fund.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Finance

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
			(233)		SG Funding

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

6.2 Legal

There are no legal issues associated with this report.

6.3 Human Resources

There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

6.4 Equalities

Equalities

(a) Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES
X	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
X	NO

(c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

X

YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.

NO

6.5 Repopulation

The creation of more successful and prosperous businesses and communities within Inverclyde would make it a more attractive place to live, invest and do business.

7.0 CONSULTATIONS

7.1 No consultation has been undertaken in the preparation of this report.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 None