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## **Update on the COVID 19 Financial Support to Business**

**Report by Executive Director, Corporate Improvement and Economy**

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### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

15 September 2020

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#### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This paper provides information on the financial support distributed to businesses by Scottish Borders Council as part of Scottish Government's Coronavirus Support Schemes.

#### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 **I recommend that the Committee:**
- **Recognises the Council's efforts in distributing the Scottish Government's COVID 19 Grant Support Funding to businesses throughout the Scottish Borders.**

#### **3 Background**

- 3.1 Scottish Borders Council as with other local authorities across Scotland was involved in distributing finance to business as part of Scottish Government's Coronavirus Support Schemes. The focus of this support was on the immediate response to the crisis, helping businesses to address the immediate impact. During the last few months as the crisis unfolded and the impact of the support schemes were examined in more detail, Scottish Government guidance was updated and additional elements of support were put in place to help address specific gaps in funding allocation.
- 3.2 The support funds that were administered by Scottish Borders Council on behalf of Scottish Government were the:
- Small Business Grant Fund (three phases);
  - Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund;
  - Newly Self Employed Hardship Fund; and
  - Bed & Breakfast Hardship Fund (B&BHF).
- 3.3 The administration, management and delivery of the business support grant process was primarily undertaken by the Council's Business Gateway, Economic Development and Customer Services Sections, with a large number of staff from a range of other Council Departments involved in assisting in the process of awarding the grants. At the height of the grant

delivery process there were a team of approximately 60 officers involved in the administration and payment of the grant funding.

#### **4 Business Grants Distributed**

4.1 At 27<sup>th</sup> August 2020 Scottish Borders Council (SBC) had received:

- 3389 applications for the Small Business Grant Fund, with 2944 grants awarded and 441 declined.

The total value of this funding was £28,597,500.

- 276 applications for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund, with 206 grants awarded and 70 declined.

The total value of this funding was £4,887,500.

- 226 applications to the Newly Self Employed Hardship Grant Fund, with 144 grants awarded and 82 declined.

The total value of this funding was £288,000.

- 14 applications for Bed & Breakfast Hardship Fund, with 11 grants awarded and 3 declined.

The total value of this funding was £33,000.

In total approximately 3900 applications were received and approximately 3300 grant awards were made. The total value of funding distributed through the four funding streams is approximately £33,800,000.

4.2 All four support funds noted in paragraph 3.2 are now closed and an appeals panel consisting of a number of senior officers which was set up to reconsider a number of declined applications met for the last time on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> September.

4.3 The Scottish Government also introduced two new Business Rates Reliefs from 1 April 2020. All non-domestic properties have been awarded a 1.6% rates relief for the billing year 2020/21. This relief effectively reverses the change in poundage for 2020/21. In addition to this, those businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure industry will receive 100% rates relief for the billing year 2020/21. To qualify for this relief, a property has to have been occupied at 17 March 2020 and satisfy the specified purpose detailed in Schedule 1 of The Non-Domestic Rates (Coronavirus Reliefs) (Scotland) Regulations 2020. Properties that closed temporarily due to the Government's COVID-19 advice are treated as occupied. To date 2440 properties have been awarded this relief. No application is necessary for either of these reliefs, they are awarded automatically based on the information held however, ratepayers can use the on-line enquiry form, specific to this relief type, if they think they are eligible for the relief.

- 4.4 In addition to the grant support funds administered by Scottish Borders Council, discretionary funding providing additional support for businesses in the South of Scotland was administered by South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) through two grant funding streams. These two funding schemes were the Creative, Tourism and Hospitality Enterprise Hardship Fund and the Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund. The funds proved useful in filling gaps and supporting the additional funding requirements of businesses throughout the South of Scotland. SOSE worked with Scottish Borders Council to help determine which businesses had already received funding from the other support schemes offered by Scottish Government. SOSE issued grant offers from these Funds to 137 companies in the Scottish Borders totalling just over £6m.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial**

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report as this work has been fully funded by the Scottish Government.

### **5.2 Risk and Mitigations**

- (a) This is a report mainly about historic financial support provided by Scottish Borders Council on behalf of the Scottish Government and there are no risks attached to it.

### **5.3 Equalities**

- (a) This is an informational report and there are no equality and diversity implications.

### **5.4 Acting Sustainably**

- (a) This is an informational report and there are no sustainability implications.

### **5.5 Carbon Management**

- (a) This is an informational report and there are no effects on carbon emissions.

### **5.6 Rural Proofing**

- (a) This is an informational report and it does not require any rural proofing.

### **5.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

- (a) There are no changes which are required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

## **6 CONSULTATION**

6.1 The Corporate Management Team, Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

**Approved by**  
**Executive Director, Corporate Improvement and Economy**

**Signature .....**

**Author(s)**

Douglas Scott	Senior Policy Adviser
Graeme Johnstone	Lead Officer Access and Transport

**Background Papers:** None

**Previous Minute Reference:** None

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Contact us at: Douglas Scott, Senior Policy Adviser [dscott@scotborders.gov.uk](mailto:dscott@scotborders.gov.uk)  
tel: 01835 825155