
UPDATE ON THE COVID-19 FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR BUSINESS

Report by Executive Director, Corporate Improvement & Economy

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

18 May 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This paper provides information on the various financial support funds distributed to businesses by Scottish Borders Council as part of Scottish Government's Coronavirus Support Schemes since April 2020.**
- 1.2 The current value of funding distributed to local businesses by Scottish Borders Council is in excess of £70 million, with over 5770 businesses currently supported through the grant process.
- 1.3 The Scottish Borders Discretionary Fund has currently allocated over £2.8 million to approximately 420 businesses throughout the Scottish Borders from a total allocation of £3.1 million from Scottish Government. It is recommended that the residual funds be allocated to self-employed businesses as a top up payment.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Executive Committee:

- **Recognises the Council's achievement in successfully distributing the Scottish Government's COVID-19 Grant Support Funding to businesses throughout the Scottish Borders;**
- **Agrees to allocate the residual funds from the Scottish Borders Discretionary Fund to the eligible self-employed businesses that made an application to the fund as a top-up payment.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Scottish Borders Council along with other local authorities across Scotland was involved in distributing funding to local businesses as part of the Scottish Government's coronavirus support response. The focus of this support was on the immediate impact of the crisis, helping businesses to

address the immediate pressures. However, during the course of the past 12 months a range of additional support grants have been issued by Scottish Government and Local Authorities have been required to manage a number of these funding schemes.

- 3.2 The administration, management and delivery of the business support grant process has been primarily undertaken by the Council's Customer Services Section, along with Business Gateway and Economic Development, with a large number of staff from a range of other Council Departments such as Finance and Procurement involved 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.
- 3.3 The majority of the business grants are now closed, although Council officers are still processing applications for a small number of the allocated funding schemes. The total allocation of funding to businesses throughout the Scottish Borders is currently in excess of £70 million, with over 5770 businesses supported financially through the grant process.
- 3.4 An appeals panel consisting of a small number of senior officers and chaired by The Executive Director of Finance and Regulatory Services was set up to reconsider a number of declined applications in the spring of last year and has continued to meet regularly throughout the grant process to discuss and determine specific requests from applicants.
- 3.5 In addition to the grant support funds administered by Scottish Borders Council, a number of additional funding schemes have been managed by a wide range of partner authorities such as South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) and Visit Scotland. A detailed account of the funds available to businesses is available on the Find Business Support Website: (www.findbusinesssupport.gov.scot).
- 3.6 The Scottish Government recently provided funding for restart grants. This funding was administered by Local Authorities and allocated to eligible businesses during the month of April. The total amount of funding allocated to businesses throughout the Scottish Borders in relation restart grants is in excess of £12.5 million.
- 3.7 A list of the funds that have been administered by Scottish Borders Council along with a brief description, an indication of the funding allocated and an estimate of the number of businesses supported throughout the Scottish Borders from each fund has been provided in **Appendix A**.

4 PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The Council was provided with a grant of £3.1 million to administer a Local Authority Discretionary Fund. The key aim of the fund, agreed by Executive on 19 January 2020 was to help mitigate the short-term financial challenges

experienced by local businesses that were not able to access support from Scottish Government since October 2020.

- 4.2 The Council has currently been able to deliver approximately £2.8 million of support to approximately 420 businesses throughout the Scottish Borders through discretionary fund payments. It is proposed to utilise the residual funding contained within the fund by providing a top-up payment to the eligible self-employed businesses that made a successful application to the fund. The proposal would provide approximately 240 eligible self-employed businesses with an additional payment of between £1,000 and £1,500 per business if approved.

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

This report mainly concerns historical financial support from Scottish Government and therefore there are no specific risks identified.

5.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

There is no impact associated with an Integrated Impact Assessment.

5.4 Sustainable Development Goals

There are no sustainability implications associated with this report.

5.5 Climate Change

There are no climate change issues associated with this report.

5.6 Rural Proofing

There is no impact in relation to rural proofing.

5.7 Data Protection Impact Statement

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

5.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no proposed changes to the Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Executive Director of Finance and Regulatory Services, Monitoring Officer, The Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Rob Dickson
Executive Director,

Signature

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Graeme Johnstone	Lead Officer

Background Papers: Executive Committee – 19 January 2021

Previous Minute Reference:

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Information can also be given on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at gjohnstone@scotborders.gov.uk 01835 825138

Appendix A

Name of Fund	Announced	Description	Status	Funding Allocated by Scottish Borders Council	Number of Businesses Supported Within the Scottish Borders
Small Business Grant (Including Retail Hospitality and Leisure)	18 March 2020	A £10,000 or £25,000 grant for eligible businesses that operated from Non-Domestic Rates paying premises.	Closed for Applications	£33,640,000	3168
Newly Self-Employed Hardship Fund (Phase 1)	29 April 2020	Hardship payments of £2,000 to those unable to access the UK Government's Self-Employed Income Support Scheme by virtue of being newly self-employed.	Closed for Applications	£288,000	144
B&B Hardship Fund	16 June 2020	A fund specifically for B&Bs operating from a personal bank account.	Closed for Applications	£33,000	11
Contingency Fund	27 October 2020	Payments to soft play centres and nightclubs that had been closed by regulation between March and November 2020.	Closed for Applications	£165,000	8
Strategic Framework	2 November 2020	Grants of up to £3,000 (depending on rateable value) every four weeks for businesses required to close by law and	Closed for Applications	£12,558,900	1667

Business Fund		up to £2,100 (depending on rateable value) every four weeks for businesses specifically required to modify their operations by law.			
Strategic Framework Business Fund - Additional Top-up Payment for Hospitality Businesses	15 January 2021	One-off payments of £2/£3k depending on rateable value to hospitality businesses (pubs, licensed clubs, restaurants and cafes to help them deal with the traditional post-Christmas dip in demand.	Closed for Applications	£6,661,000	N/A – Top-up Payment
Scottish Borders Council Discretionary Fund	19 January 2021	The Council was provided with a £3.1m fund from Scottish Government to allocate primarily to businesses that had not received any financial support since October 2020.	Closed for Applications	£2,800,000	419
Taxi and Private Hire Driver Fund	24 January 2021	A national scheme which provided a one-off £1,500 payment to taxi and private hire drivers.	Closed for Applications	£315,000	213
Contingency Fund Plus	27 January 2021	A funding scheme providing specific support for travel agencies, breweries and indoor football centres.	Closed for Applications	£165,000	11
Large Self Catering and exclusive use Properties	11 February 2021	A one off payment of £2,000 to owners of self-catering properties that cater for seven or more people and a payment of £10,000 to owners of	Closed for Applications	£196,000	96

		properties that are used as exclusive use venues.			
Small Accommodation Providers Paying Council Tax (Three Sections)	2 March 2021	A £2,000 payment for B&B, guest houses and self-catering businesses that pay council tax and not rates.	Closed for Applications	£492,000	36
Licensed Bingo Clubs and Casinos	17 March 2021	A one-off support payment of £50,000 for licensed Bingo Clubs.	Closed for Applications	£50,000	1
Strategic Framework Business Fund – Restart Grants	12 April 2021	Combination of a one-off transition payment and a business restart grant: A one-off payment of £7,000 for retail businesses with a rateable value below £51,000 and £7,500 for businesses with a rateable value above £51,000. A one-off payment of £9,000 for all other eligible businesses with a rateable value below £15,000, a payment of £13,000 for businesses with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000 and a payment of £19,500 for businesses with a rateable value above £51,000.	Currently being processed	£12,714,000	N/A – Top-up Payment
Total				£70,078,000 *	5774*

* Current Estimated Totals