

Agenda Item	8
Report No	ECI/4/2022

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Economy and Infrastructure

Date: 2 February 2022

Report Title: Covid-19 Business Grants

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 Due to the emergence of the new Covid-19 variant and the public health advice to individuals to be careful about unnecessary contacts and the associated restrictions on business, the Scottish Government is providing a range of business grants to affected sectors. The Council has been asked to deliver a number of these grant schemes on behalf of the Scottish Government.
- 1.2 This report updates Members on the current Covid business grants being processed.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to **note** the current work underway to deliver a number of Covid-19 business grants to Highland businesses.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – The Scottish Government provides the Council with dedicated grant to enable it to deliver the various grant schemes on its behalf.
- 3.2 **Legal / Risk** – When accepting external funding the Council does so with a number of associated grant conditions. Therefore, any risks to the Council need to be assessed/mitigated to protect Council financial and reputational interests. The proposed management of Covid Business Grants follows established and Audit approved processes.

3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** – A key consideration behind the creation of the Discretionary Grant Scheme was recognition that the Council – in knowing its business community, will be able to respond to known/identified challenges experienced. The Council is in active dialogue with business representative groups to ensure that the Discretionary Grant Scheme is used to best effect.

3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever /Gaelic** – No direct implications arising.

4. Grant Schemes been delivered on behalf of Scottish Government

4.1 In response to the emergence of the new Covid-19 Omicron variant and the associated public health advice to individuals to be careful about unnecessary contacts and the associated restrictions on business, the Scottish Government has put in place a range of business grants to affected sectors. The Council is delivering a number of these grant schemes, but others are been delivered by other public sector organisations, for example, Creative Scotland is delivering the COVID-19 Cancellation Fund for Creative Freelancers. Full up-to-date details of the various grant schemes are available on the [Scottish Government's Find Business Support website \(external link\)](#).

4.2 The grant schemes currently been delivered by the Council on behalf of the Scottish Government are:

4.3 Business Ventilation Fund

- This grant seeks to help businesses improve ventilation and air quality on their premises to help reduce the risk of coronavirus transmission. Businesses can claim back costs to improve ventilation of up to £2500. The grant scheme is targeted to high-risk settings where people come into close proximity, such as hospitality and leisure sectors.
- This grant scheme was launched in November before the current emergence of Omicron variant. Businesses first apply to Scottish Government before their details are passed to the Council to process. There has been a small uptake with 25 applications, 16 approved to next stage, 5 rejected (all not eligible sector) and 2 pending awaiting further information.

4.4 Hospitality Business Top-up Grant Scheme

- The Hospitality Business Support Top-Up Grant Scheme provides grant for businesses in the hospitality sector who have lost bookings during December 2021 and January 2022. Business will receive either a grant of £4,500 or £6,800 depending on their rateable value.
- This grant scheme launched on 10 January with the Council writing out to 790 eligible businesses inviting them to apply. The first applications were processed, and payments approved two days later on 12 January.
- In addition to this grant the Scottish Government has asked the Council to give these businesses a further grant (either £1,400 or £2,100 depending on their rateable value) to reflect the requirement for physical distancing and capacity limits that came into force from 27 December. A verbal update will be provided to Committee.

4.5 Leisure Business Top-up Grant Scheme

- This grant scheme is for leisure businesses who are impacted by the requirement for physical distancing and capacity limits that came into force from 27 December. Grants of either £2,100 or £3,150 depending on rateable value. At the time of writing this report full details of this grant scheme have not been released and it has not launched. A verbal update will be provided to Committee.

4.6 Taxi and Private Hirer Driver and Operator Support Fund

- This grant provides a £750 one-off payment to eligible drivers and a grant of £750 - £15,000 to operators subject on the number of vehicles they have. At the time of writing this report full details of this grant scheme have not been released and it has not launched. A verbal update will be provided to Committee.

4.7 Brewers Fund

- This grant will be paid to a small number of brewers who have been affected as part of the supply chain to the hospitality sector. This scheme will be similar to a previous Covid business support grant payment which the Council delivered last year. At the time of writing this report full details of this grant scheme have not been released and it has not launched. A verbal update will be provided to Committee.

4.8 Nightclubs Fund

- This grant (£25,000 to £75,000 depending on rateable value) will be paid to a small group of nightclub businesses. Delivery of this grant scheme will be part Scottish Government (application/assessment) and part Council (grant payment). At the time of writing this report full details of this grant scheme have not been released and it has not launched. A verbal update will be provided to Committee.

4.9 Table Service Fund

- This fund will provide grants to be paid to bars / pubs and licensed premises affected by the re-introduction of social distancing and table service measures as part of the covid business restrictions. The role of Councils in this grant is to facilitate payment to businesses, with Scottish Government taking on a role in administering the applications and determining eligible businesses. At the time of writing this report full details of this grant scheme have not been released and it has not launched. A verbal update will be provided to Committee

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Date: 13 January 2022

Authors: Andy McCann, Economy and Regeneration Manager