

Item: 13

Development and Infrastructure Committee: 26 March 2024.

Economic Development Grants and Cost of Living Crisis Business Support Schemes – Budget Monitoring Statement and Delegated Approvals.

Report by Corporate Director for Enterprise and Sustainable Regeneration.

1. Purpose of Report

To present budget monitoring information in respect of Economic Development Grants and Cost of Living Crisis Business Support Schemes for the period to 31 January 2024.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That, for financial year 2023/24, the approved budget in respect of Economic Development Grants amounts to £306,300.

2.2.

Spending to 31 January 2024, in relation to Economic Development Grants, totalling £160,599 of which £137,009 relates to grant commitments made in previous financial years and £23,590 to current year commitments.

2.3.

That, as at 31 January 2024, the budget available for approval from the Economic Development Grants budget, amounted to £116,057, as detailed in Annex A to this report.

2.4.

Grant approvals made in the period 1 April to 31 January 2024, totalling £190,243 including grants approved under delegated schemes for the same period, totalling £93,443 as detailed in Annex B to this report.

2.5.

That, on 21 February 2023, the Policy and Resources Committee recommended that Cost of Living Crisis Business Support Schemes should operate for a period of two years to 28 February 2025, funded from the unassigned remaining balance of the Coronavirus Response Fund, estimated at £1.3 million, and reported to the

Development and Infrastructure Committee in addition to standard reporting of Economic Development Grants budget monitoring.

2.6.

Approvals made in the period to 31 January 2024, totalling £120,000, in respect of Cost of Living Crisis Business Support Schemes, as summarised in Annex C to this report.

3. Introduction

3.1.

Current Council policy in respect of Economic Development schemes of assistance was approved on 8 July 2014.

3.2.

In March 2013, following a successful two-year pilot, the Council established the following schemes:

- New Business Start Up Grant Scheme, offering up to £1,500 of assistance.
- Flexible Business Development Grant Scheme, offering assistance of up to 50% of eligible costs, up to a maximum grant of £5,000, in terms of the EC de minimis aid regulation.

3.3.

Approval of applications for financial assistance within the policy guidelines referred to above, is delegated to the Corporate Director for Enterprise and Sustainable Regeneration.

4. Budget Monitoring Statement

4.1.

The budget available for approval for financial year 2023/24 is £306,300, the calculation for which is shown in the table below.

	%.	£.
Approved budget 2023/24.		291,700.
Policy to Over-commit.	5%.	14,600.
Initial Budget Available for Approval.		306,300.

4.2.

It should be noted that the Strategies and Studies and Project Initiation budget was approved at a level 'up to' £50,000. In the event that this budget allocation is not required, then it will be possible to reinstate the budget available for Economic Development Grants.

4.3.

Annex A to this report summarises the budget available for approval, as at 31 January 2024, in respect of Economic Development Grants.

5. Economic Development Grants

Details of the applications for Economic Development Grants approved by the Corporate Director for Enterprise and Sustainable Regeneration, in terms of delegated powers during the period 1 April to 31 January 2024, totalling £93,443, are listed in Annex B to this report.

6. Cost of Living Crisis - Business Support Schemes

6.1.

On 21 February 2023, the Policy and Resources Committee recommended that the following Cost of Living Crisis Business Support Schemes be approved, to operate for a period of two years to 28 February 2025, funded from the unassigned remaining balance of the Coronavirus Response Fund, estimated at £1.3 million, with any remaining uncommitted funds to be returned to non-earmarked General Fund Reserves in February 2025:

- Council Business Hardship Support Grant (BHSG).
- Council loan facility.
- Energy resilience and transition support.
- Exceptional requests.

6.2.

Delegation to determine application was also approved, depending on the value of each application and it was agreed that grant assistance committed from the support schemes be reported to the Development and Infrastructure Committee in addition to standard reporting of Economic Development Grants budget monitoring, over the two-year period in which the support schemes would be available.

6.3.

Annex C to this report summarises the Cost of Living Crisis Business Support Scheme funding approved, in terms of delegated powers to 31 January 2024.

7. Corporate Governance

7.1.

This report is presented in order to comply with internal governance and financial processes and procedures and is not for the exclusive purpose of supporting or relating to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan or the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

7.2.

However, the schemes of assistance available through the Economic Development service will help progress milestones outlined in Priority E2 – Support for local businesses of the Council Delivery Plan.

8. Financial Implications

The financial implications are detailed throughout the report.

9. Legal Aspects

9.1.

Budget monitoring procedures help the Council meet its statutory obligation to secure best value.

9.2.

Under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public should be excluded from the meeting in respect of any discussion relating to Annexes B and C to this report. Annexes B and C contains exempt information as defined in paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

10. Contact Officers

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11. Annexes

Annex A: Budget Available for Approval, as at 31 January 2024.

Annex B: Approvals for Year to 31 January 2024, including applications approved under delegated powers.

Annex C: Cost of Living Crisis Business Support Schemes: Funding summary as at 31 January 2024.

Budget Available for Approval as at 31 January 2024.

Budget Available for Approval.	£.	£.
Annual Budget.		306,300.
Less spending: Previous year commitments (note 1).	137,009.	
Less spending: Current year commitments (note 2).	23,590.	
Ledger totals as at 31 January 2024.		160,599.
Current year commitments: Grants approved to date (note 3).	190,243.	
Current year commitments: Less current year spending.	(23,590).	
Current year commitments outstanding (note 4).		(166,653)
Economic Development Grant Fund: Add back previous year commitment.		137,009.
Current budget available for approval.		116,057.

Note on terminology:

1. Spending: Previous year commitments.	Spending made in 2023/24 for grants approved in 2022/23 and earlier. Funded by transfer from Economic Development Grant Fund.
2. Spending: Current year commitments.	Spending made in 2023/24 in relation to grants approved in 2023/24.
3. Grants approved to date.	Total grants approved in 2023/24.
4. Current year commitments outstanding.	Balance still due to be paid on grants approved during 2023/24 transferred to Economic Development Grant Fund.