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| <b>Title of Report:</b> | <b>Rural Business Development Scheme</b>     |
| <b>Submitted To:</b>    | <b>The Leisure and Development Committee</b> |
| <b>Date of Meeting:</b> | <b>18th May 2021</b>                         |
| <b>For Decision</b>     | <b>For Decision</b>                          |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)</b> |   |
| <b>Strategic Theme</b>                       | Accelerating our Economy and Contributing to Prosperity   |
| <b>Outcome</b>                               | All people of Causeway Coast and Glens will contribute to and benefit from a thriving economy built on a culture of growth, entrepreneurship, innovation and learning |
| <b>Lead Officer</b>                          | Economic Development Officer  |

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Budgetary Considerations</b>    |   |
| Cost of Proposal                   | Provision of Grant from DAERA - £125,000, with cost recovery of 10% of Letter of Offer total by Council (£12,500) |
| Included in Current Year Estimates | YES/NO  |
| Capital/Revenue                    | Capital   |
| Code                               |   |
| Staffing Costs                     | As above  |

|  |  |        |       |
|--|--|--------|-------|
| <b>Screening Requirements</b>            | <b>The screening requirements for this programme are being/have been undertaken by the relevant department – DAERA</b> |        |       |
| Section 75 Screening                     | Screening Completed:   | Yes    | Date: |
|  | EQIA Required and Completed:   | Yes/No | Date: |
| Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)             | Screening Completed  | Yes/No | Date: |
|  | RNA Required and Completed:  | Yes/No | Date: |
| Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) | Screening Completed:   | Yes/No | Date: |
|  | DPIA Required and Completed:   | Yes/No | Date: |

## **1.0 Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to update members on funding from Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) for the roll-out of a third Rural Business Development Scheme for the financial year 2021-2022. This grant is delivered by all 11 councils concurrently.

## **2.0 Context**

This is proposed as a further grant under the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs' Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme (TRPSI). Its key aim is to assist in tackling poverty and social isolation within deprived rural areas. The Scheme's primary aims are to:

- Alleviate financial poverty by enhancing entrepreneurship and growth.
- Alleviate financial poverty by supporting micro businesses in rural areas.

This proposed third round of funding would be to further support recovery and sustainability post-COVID.

## **3.0 Programme Criteria**

- a. Micro businesses located in rural areas (*as per NISRA NINIS definition*).
- b. New businesses must be able to demonstrate they have commenced trading.
- c. Must demonstrate added value of proposal both to business and impact on recovery and sustainability.
- d. Must demonstrate ability to complete project and access grant by 31 Dec 2021.
- e. Minimum grant awarded £500 with maximum of £4,999.
- f. Must demonstrate they are ineligible to access similar support from elsewhere.

### **3.1 Funding Level**

- Grants providing capital support up to a maximum of £4,999 or 50% of total costs.
- Match funding must be in the form of a 'cash' contribution. Labour or 'in-kind' contributions will not be accepted.
- The total cost of a project should not exceed £20,000.

### **3.2 2020 Rural Business Development Scheme Outputs – Causeway Coast and Glens Council Area**

Total number of successful projects: 46

Total value of grant aid awarded: £158,021.27\*

\*Level of grant was increased by DAERA from original offer of £62,000 due to volume of applications received.

### **3.3 Level of Interest**

- Number of Enquiries received for the application call: 289.
- Number of applications received: 159.

## **4.0 2021 Grant Programme**

Councils have completed an evaluation of the 2020 pilot. DAERA has since requested a further collaborative business case to consider a third round of the Rural Business Development Scheme, based on the levels of uptake and feedback from the 2020 fund and specifically to further support recovery and sustainability of rural, micro-businesses post-COVID.

A Letter of Offer and Contract from DAERA are pending. It is anticipated that this grant would open in early July 2021 for a call of one month duration, with a budget in the region of £125,000 with an additional technical assistance payment to council at 10% (£12,500).

### **Indicative Timeline**

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| June 2021      | DAERA approval for Programme and Contract for Funding issued  |
| June 2021      | Revision of Programme documentation (Application Form, Scoring Matrices/Criteria) and Programme Promotion |
| 01 July 2021   | Public call for Applications  |
| 30 July 2021   | Deadline for Applications   |
| Aug 2021       | Screening & Assessment of Applications  |
| Aug 2021       | Issuing of LoOs   |
| Sept 21/Nov 21 | Project Delivery  |
| Dec 21         | Submission of Claims / End of Project Reports   |

### **5.0 Recommendation**

It is recommended that Members accept the funding on offer from DAERA and agrees to deliver the Rural Business Development Scheme in Causeway Coast and Glens in July 2021.

**Members should note that, as with all funding from central government, the timeline and other details included above are indicative only.**