MEETING OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENTERPRISE AND TOURISM SPC

Thursday, November 14, 2018

HEADED ITEM NO. 4

**Report to Economic, Enterprise & Tourism SPC on Business Support Fund**

Between 2014 and 2018, the Council’s Business Support Fund has committed almost €3.2 million in funding both directly to local ratepayers and also through facilitating improvement works and broader business support initiatives.

A total of €5.48 million was allocated to the Business Support Funds between 2014 and 2018. Approximately €1.8 million was expended on the Business Support Grant and a total of €1.4 million was expended or has been committed on the other measures including; the Industrial Area Improvement Scheme (€400,000), the Microenterprise Development Fund (€400,000), Individual supports (€95,000), Microenterprise Start Up Support (Rates) (€150,000) and initiatives with the South Dublin Chamber.

**Potential Innovation/Enterprise Space Project:**

Based on the financial overview, the projected, uncommitted reserves remaining in the Business Support Fund at the end of 2018 will be approximately €2.4 million. This together with any proposed provision in the Council’s 2019 Annual Revenue Budget provides resources for a larger initiative in the County that could provide a significant impact on both the enterprise culture and economic activity in the County.

As the SPC members are aware South Dublin County Council procured a study for the development of new enterprise/innovation space with associated enterprise support services in the County in 2017 (which was an action under the Dublin Regional Enterprise Strategy 2017-2019, approved by this SPC in November 2016 and adopted by the Council in December 2016).

The completed report was presented to the members of the County Council, CPG and SPC in April/May 2018 and its recommendations were endorsed following a number of briefings. The primary recommendation was that a 3,000 sq. metre enterprise/innovation space be provided in the County at either Grange Castle or Tallaght Town Centre.

The consultants were requested to do further analysis of the preferred locations. Following this analysis and discussion they recommended that the Centre be based in Tallaght.

Accordingly, it was proposed to and adopted by the SPC to invite proposals in respect of the next stages of the project:

* Advice on specific site selection within the preferred location, (Tallaght Town Centre).
* Advice on the planning and design of the building on the identified site.
* Operation and management of the completed innovation/enterprise space.

Currently, a request for tender is being finalised with a view to publishing before the end of 2018.

**Area Improvement Scheme:**

A range of projects have been completed under the Area Improvement Scheme in areas including Cookstown Enterprise Park, Old Belgard Road, Ballymount and JFK Industrial Estate. Significant works on Merrywell Industrial Estate have commenced, with a view to the estate being brought to taking in charge standard. A further series of projects are progressing with the most significant private sector investment proposed for a project in Greenhills Industrial Estate and further preliminary investigations progressing for additional projects in Avonbeg, Cherry Orchard and Cloverhill Industrial Estates.

**Microenterprise Development Fund:**

To date, 24 applications have been approved under this fund for works to vacant industrial units in the County to facilitate their re-development to support both the development of microenterprises, job creation and innovation. The approved applications represent a total commitment by the Council of approximately €400,000 with over €126,300 paid out to date with a projected expenditure of €70,000 in 2018.

**Individual Unit Support Scheme:**

This scheme supports external works to business premises in industrial areas with individual grants of up to €2,500 available. 38 applications have been approved under this scheme so far with total potential support of €95,000 of which €22,343 has been drawn down to date. To date we have approved 12 applications in 2018 and we have projected an expenditure in 2018 of €10,000 under this scheme.

**Microenterprise Start Up Support (Rates) Scheme:**

To date 11 new microenterprises have been approved for support under this scheme with an estimated total commitment of €150,000. Approximately €20,000 has been spent to date. In addition, as more funds are drawn down under the Microenterprise Development Fund, this will yield more applications for support under the Microenterprise Start-Up Support (Rates) Scheme.

**Business Support Grant 2014 to 2017**

As agreed with the SPC in 2017, only applications received by the closing date of 30th September, 2017 were processed and no further applications accepted. This fund is now closed. The total expenditure under this grant fund was approximately €1.8 Million over the 2014 to 2017 period.

**LEO / South Dublin Chamber Business Support Training Programme:**

Following the training needs analysis survey conducted by South Dublin Chamber in 2015 a range of training programmes targeted at the specific requirements of local businesses have been delivered to more than 1,000 participants by the Local Enterprise Office in partnership with the Chamber.

**Business Surveys and Other Initiatives in partnership with South Dublin Chamber:**

These have included a series of annual business surveys (including the Economic Survey 2014, the 2015 Training Needs Survey, an Exporters Survey 2016, a 2017 Business Sentiment Survey as well as a survey and study of vacant business premises in the County), support for the South Dublin Business Awards, the Gaelforce event and membership of the Asia Matters business network with expenditure of approximately €80,000 anticipated in 2018.