

1. To send Committee details of all Covid-19 grant programmes available to businesses.

The ARG (Additional Restrictions Grant) is a funding pot that has been made available by central government's Department for Business Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), to all Local Authorities in England to support businesses as part of the emergency response to the pandemic. So far, Westminster have received 4 tranches of funding, cumulatively totalling circa £18m. The Council have obtained Cabinet Member approval to administer this third tranche of funding in the form of grants to individual eligible businesses in accordance with the fourth-round eligibility criteria, as well as to fund a suite of business support activity. The ARG funding must be defrayed by 31 March 2022, or it will be subject to recovery by central government.

Please see below Business Support schemes that have been funded by the ARG that are all due to launch from March:

1.1. Green Business Audit Scheme – launch w/c 21 March, go live w/c 22 April

Westminster City Council have declared a climate emergency and have committed to the City becoming net zero carbon by 2040. We have an ambitious vision to be a City for All and a Smart City. Commercial buildings are responsible for 11% of Westminster's carbon emissions and represent a significant challenge to meeting our net zero targets. We recognise the challenges faced by small to medium enterprises, charities and social enterprises in taking steps to address these.

The Green Business Audit scheme project aims to provide support to Westminster businesses to assist them in transitioning to a green economic recovery following the economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council has partnered with GEP to deliver this programme of business support which seeks to provide businesses with bespoke recommendations and tailored support to reduce their emissions and associated costs. Suitably qualified experts will conduct an audit of the businesses carbon impact. The results of the audit will be articulated in a report along with a recommended action plan setting out improvements that can be made either to the business' premises or operations. This scheme helps to address the issues of the funding, knowledge and resource gaps that exist for small businesses in this space whilst simultaneously battling with the on-going challenges imposed by Covid-19. A funding pot of £500,000 has been made available to deliver this scheme which will support up to 1000 Westminster businesses.

Eligibility criteria/target audience:

- Fewer than 250 employees.
- A turnover of not more than £36million.
- A balance sheet total of not more than £18 million.
- Businesses must be the freeholder or leaseholder with more than 3 years unexpired on a lease OR a private tenant with a full repairing obligation
- Must be a business that is trading in the City of Westminster

The scheme is open to all sectors providing they meet the above criteria.

Partners

- Share via Business Support Orgs & Trade Associations – Enterprise Nation, FSB, London Business Hub, Abbey Centre, Soho Business Alliance, Westminster Business Council, UK Screen Alliance.
- Internal Services: Licensing, Planning, Business Rates, Waste & Recycling.
- BIDs.
- Landowners: Crown Estate, Grosvenor, Shaftsbury.

1.2. Westminster Hospitality & Leisure Recruitment Service – launch w/c 21 March, go live date RBC

Hospitality & leisure have been amongst the hardest-hit sectors of the Covid-19 pandemic. There are three key issues which drive the need for the service:

- *Businesses are finding it difficult to fill vacancies* – 3 in 10 hospitality and leisure businesses are finding vacancies difficult to fill which is impacting on businesses' productivity and viability.
- *The impact of Covid and Brexit on the available talent pool* – 300,000 people left jobs and returned to their home countries in the past year (source Caterer.com).
- *Confidence in the sector and interest in hospitality & leisure careers* – 64% of furloughed hospitality and leisure workers plan to move industries. Hospitality and leisure has been a long standing hard-to-fill sector because of perceived unattractiveness of the sector and an absence of awareness of the myriad of occupations and career advancement opportunities within the sector.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate negative impact on Westminster's hospitality and leisure sector. The importance of this sector to other related sectors that depend on it cannot be overstated. Many of our businesses in this sector were among the last to re-open following lockdowns, and recently, the emergence of the omicron variant has exacerbated the economic impact of the pandemic on the visitor economy that has been a priority sector in Westminster and the lifeblood of the West End.

The Council has partnered with the New West End Company (NWEC) and the Knightsbridge Partnership to develop a scheme to address the recruitment challenges faced by these sectors. The Council and its partners' interests in developing a local response ultimately stems from the scale and importance of the sectors in Westminster. There are over 3000 hospitality businesses within the Westminster area, including Food and Accommodation services (UK Business Counts, April 2021) employing over 80,000 people (BRES 2020), and 4,415 leisure businesses, including the arts, entertainment, recreation and other industry services (UK Business Counts, April 2021), employing 41,000 people. Westminster is the hub for world renowned names, innovative start-ups and wider supply chain organisations. Currently, there are 27 Michelin star restaurants within the area of Westminster.

The service to be delivered will create the much-needed, exclusive, recruitment infrastructure to support Westminster's hospitality and leisure businesses at no cost. The following services are some examples of the type of support that is to be provided through this scheme.

Eligibility Criteria/Target Audience:

Businesses within the hospitality and leisure sectors in the City of Westminster will be eligible for support through this scheme. These sectors are defined as the following business groups:

- *Hospitality & leisure definition:* a business whose main function is to provide a venue for the consumption and sale of food and drink.
- *Leisure definition:* a business that provides opportunities, experiences and facilities for culture, recreation, entertainment, celebratory events, days and nights out, betting and gaming.
- *Accommodation definition:* a business whose main lodging provision is used for holiday, travel and other purposes.

The Council have identified the following business categories who would be supported by this scheme in accordance with the above definitions:

- Food courts, public houses/pub restaurants, restaurants, roadside restaurants, wine bars, cafés, country house hotels, guest houses, hostels, hotels, canal boats or other, wedding venues, events venues, night clubs & discotheques, arenas, concert halls, casinos and gambling clubs.

Partners:

- Share via Business Support Organisations and Trade Associations – Enterprise Nation, FSB, London Business Hub, Abbey Centre, Soho Business Alliance, Westminster Business Council, UK Screen Alliance.
- Internal Services: Licensing, Planning, Business Rates, Waste & Recycling.
- BIDs.
- Landowners: Crown Estate, Grosvenor, Shaftsbury.
- Recruitment Agencies specialising in sourcing talent for these sectors.
- Large Hoteliers and restaurants.

1.3. Start-up to Scale-up – launch w/c 7 March, go live date 26 April

This programme has been designed and piloted to support Westminster based businesses on a high-growth trajectory prior to Covid-19, to harness the resilience required to survive, and adapt their business to thrive in the post-covid future economy. With a combination of peer networking and business education, the pilot was delivered between November 2020 and April 2021 to 10 Westminster based businesses. The participating companies came from a diverse range of ethnicity and business backgrounds and the participants ranged from start-ups to more established businesses and not-for-profits.

Westminster is home to 9% of all UK companies which have received equity investment over the last decade (1,452 Westminster based companies) and has the highest density of scale-ups in London. A number of significant high-growth sectors are already well represented in the borough, including business banking and financial services (19% of the UK's high-growth population in this sector) and software-as-a-service (8% of the UK base). Westminster-based companies have raised £1.4bn in 2020 alone via 544 equity deals. According to Beauhurst research:

- There are 2,155 active high growth companies in the City of Westminster.
- 1,452 of these companies have received equity investment.
- 23% of ambitious companies (1,156) in London are based in Westminster.

The Council has partnered up with Gazelle's to deliver these courses for businesses located in Westminster. There will be 4 cohorts of 10 businesses, supporting 40 businesses in total.

Eligibility Criteria/Target Audience:

- Fewer than 250 employees.
- A turnover of not more than £36million.
- A balance sheet total of not more than £18 million.
- Start-ups on a high-growth trajectory.

These courses are open to all business sectors.

2. To confirm the date of the next Harrow Rd Forum meeting (general request for Cllr Green from Cllr Roca).

Ward Councillors, Cllr Hitchcock and officers from the Council met on 4 February to discuss Maida Hill Market. This was followed by a meeting between Cllr Green, Cllr Bush and the

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Maida Hill Neighbourhood Forum on 25 February. Another meeting on the Maida Hill Market project is taking place on 25 March.