

(9vii) **Mr P Sagers**

To the Budget Leader/Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee

“Many Wards are finding a low number of applications to their Supporting Community Resilience funds. Has consideration been given to changing the criteria and the maximum sums available for awards under the scheme and what is the final destination of any unspent money when the scheme closes?”

Response

The Supporting Community Resilience funds are distributed through the Ward Discretionary Grant. The funding is to support covid related community resilience efforts where a group has identified an ability to provide an essential service to vulnerable people locally. Examples of support could include:

- supporting local volunteer efforts and expenses;
- developing promotional activities;
- support for local volunteer telephone systems;
- making up food packs for vulnerable households; developing measures to address social isolation; and
- providing a source of funding to enable groups to shop for individuals in the community where households no longer have cash available and they cannot source local deliveries.

The total fund is £536k. Community groups can apply for up to £500 at any one time and they can reapply once initial funding is spent.

As at 17th July £106k has been awarded. This means nearly 20% of the fund was awarded in the first quarter. The breakdown of awards by Ward is shown in Appendix 1 of the report to this meeting of the Council on Review of Covid-19 services: Humanitarian assistance and food supply.

In that report Members are advised that community groups across Highland have accessed over £2.2m of grant funding, including the Council's supporting community resilience fund. The report also sets out how humanitarian assistance can be provided going forward, including the offer of Government grant to the Council for that purpose to September 2020, subject to claims being accepted.

The demand for ongoing humanitarian assistance is not yet clear; while requirements for people to shield are expected to be pause from 31st July, we are expecting increased demand from people in financial difficulty and food poverty seeking assistance, and from any Test and Protect programme requirements. Engagement with community bodies highlights their concern about growing need for this type of support as the furlough scheme comes to an end. It is proposed to review the model of humanitarian assistance in September to learn from experience and by then we should be clearer on any further Government grant available and the Council's budget situation. The supporting community resilience fund can be reviewed at that time for Members to consider.