

COVID Economic Recovery programme approved – Declaration of interest.

5 With reference to the minutes of 10th March 2022 (Print 7, page 508) approving the proposed COVID Economic Recovery programme and instructing officers to further develop the COVID Low Income Gift Card, Councillor Aitken, Leader of the Council and Convener for City and City Region Economy and Just Transition, presented a report regarding the progress of the development of the COVID Low-income Gift card, advising

- (1) of the responses received from Scotland's Towns Partnership in relation to restricting the use of the gift card for the sale of tobacco, the exclusion of national chain retailers and service providers to allow the spend to be directed towards local/regional businesses and services, to ensure that they could only be used in-person or for delivery from local retailers and services to encourage footfall within local retail and service providers and to expand the number of local businesses and services which were signed up to the scheme prior to its expected launch in late Spring/early Summer 2022;
- (2) that the announcement of the Council's intention which had been made public in March 2022 had attracted substantial media attention, resulting in a number of enquiries from other groups who did not qualify by using the proxy of Council Tax reduction and taking this into account, it was proposed that the value of the card was reduced from £110 to £105 providing a ring-fenced fund of circa £423,000 to support other groups at the Council's discretion, as detailed in the report;
- (3) as of 1st June 2022, around 84,622 households were in receipt of Council Tax Reduction and the next stage of the process would involve engaging with SPT and its preferred supplier Miconx to begin the process of loading cards to the value of £105 for distribution to households in the city; and
- (4) to ensure that cards were sent securely, a 2-stage verification process would be implemented so that cards had no value throughout postage thus reducing the risk of theft and fraud and an expiry date would be put on the cards, after which point the funds would be returned to the Council minus any associated administration costs.

After consideration, the committee

- (a) approved the COVID Economic programme, as detailed in the report; and
- (b) noted the cost-of-living and economic recovery public transport initiatives in Germany and elsewhere, and the ongoing climate emergency, welcomed Strathclyde Partnership for Transport's support for making the gift cards redeemable with it, and urged all public transport operators in the city to engage with this opportunity also.

In terms of Standing Order No 27, Councillor Wardrop declared an interest in this item.

