

Media Release

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States of Guernsey reviewing financial support measures and calling on business tenants

The States of Guernsey is actively reviewing the financial support measures for the self-employed and sole traders.

Feedback indicates that the first set of economic support measures that have been put in place are not meeting the legitimate needs of a significant number of the self-employed and sole traders.

Deputy Lyndon Trott, the Vice-President of the Policy & Resources Committee said:

“I have been encouraging business of all sizes to give us feedback on the economic measures – and that includes the self-employed and sole traders, who are a vital part of our economy and community. We are paying real attention and not lip service, to the comments coming into our helplines, to social media, and to the feedback from those contacting their States Members directly.

“It is clear that a gap in provision exists, albeit an unintended one and that is partly because no two businesses are the same, and no two sole traders’ circumstances are the same either. We are working to update measures before the end of this week.

“We knew that we wouldn’t get everything right first off and that adjustments would be needed. Not only are the support initiatives new, they are also unprecedented in both their cost and urgency. But we are dealing with public funds and not confetti and we know that people want the support targeted as effectively as we can.

“I have directed officers to resolve that so that we can update the measures accordingly before the end of this week. The measures will continue to be monitored and revised on an ongoing basis. The feedback from the self-employed and sole traders is hugely important in enabling us to get this right.”

The work to review the economic measures is being undertaken in line with efforts to expedite applications for support. A virtual call centre to deal with the high volume of calls is being set up, and will be operational from Friday morning, and further resources from other

areas of the States are being deployed to support the Business Support team to continue processing applications seven days per week.

As of Tuesday (14th April) over 700 businesses and traders had received some £2.2m of funds, meaning that their applications had resulted with money being put in their bank.

Paul Whitfield, Chief Executive of the States of Guernsey said:

“The establishment of a virtual call centre is important. Although we have strived to ensure that the process is as simple as possible, many businesses also wish to speak to officers before submitting their applications via e-mail. The call centre means we can do that, setting up as many lines as we need, and sticking to our objective of responding to the submission of every application or initial contact from businesses within 24 hours.

“This call centre, combined with moving more people to the team, will mean we can continue to process applications while clearing the backlog as new applications come in. By the end of the week the Business Support team will have 20 people working with businesses to get them the support that they need, and if we need to augment that further next week we will do so.

“The team is working seven days a week, and with the additional resource we are continuing to support the aim of getting money into as many businesses’ bank accounts as we can, as soon as we can.”

Deputy Trott has also called on those business and traders who are not benefiting from the deferral of commercial TRP to come forward.

Deputy Trott said:

“Two weeks ago I spoke with the representatives of the Guernsey Private Residential Landlords Association, and with many of their members. I also wrote to them, making it clear that the States’ clear expectation was that the benefits of the commercial TRP deferral would be pass to business tenants – and if not, we would be prepared to legislate.

“That position has not changed. Any business that feels its landlord is not passing on the benefits of the commercial TRP deferral should contact me direct and blow the whistle. If the reassurances I was given by the landlords is not borne out, I will act on that.”

Ends

Notes to Media

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