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| <b>Report on</b>         | 1. Rural Micro Business Development Scheme 2022<br>2. Lough Neagh Rescue (LNR) |
| <b>Date of Meeting</b>   | 10 March 2022  |
| <b>Reporting Officer</b> | Assistant Director of Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Programmes   |

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| <b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>         | Yes |   |
| If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon | No  | X |

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| <b>1.0</b> | <b>Purpose of Report</b>  |
| 1.1        | To provide Members with an update on key activities as detailed below.  |
| <b>2.0</b> | <b>Background</b>   |
| 2.1        | <p><b>Rural Micro Business Development Scheme 2022</b><br/>The Rural Micro Business Development Scheme funded through DAERA's Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation programme (TRPSI) will run again in 2022 subject to approval of a business case and budget within the Department. This Scheme will offer a capital grant at 50% of eligible project costs up a maximum of £4999 for business development and recovery activities.</p> <p>This Scheme has been running annually since 2019 and has proved very popular with rural businesses across the district with 289 letters of offer issued to the value of just over £982,000 in grant aid.</p> |
| 2.2        | <p><b>Lough Neagh Rescue (LNR)</b><br/>Lough Neagh Rescue (LNR) operates a 24/7 all year service of search and rescue activities for Lough Neagh and its tributaries. As a registered charity LNR operate on a voluntary basis and has 3 stations around the Lough, with one established at Battery Harbour, Ardboe. Each station endeavours to finance their needs, sharing costs, such as, insurance, audit and accounting. LNR receives funding from Councils surrounding the Lough and other public bodies. Majority of annual running costs are met through voluntary fundraising.</p>   |
| <b>3.0</b> | <b>Main Report</b>  |
| 3.1        | <p><b>Rural Micro Business Development Scheme 2022</b><br/>DAERA has indicated a preference for an earlier opening date of May for the 2022 Rural Business Development Grants Scheme. This is subject to DAERA approval of a business case which will be jointly prepared by all Councils participating.</p>  |

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|            | <p>Subject to DAERA approving the business case, a contract will be issued to each participating Council. Council acceptance of the contract will be needed before the Scheme can be opened.</p> <p>The indicative budget for this year's scheme is £1m across all Councils participating with individual Council allocations to be confirmed once the business plan has been completed. Based on the volume of applications received in previous years of this scheme it is highly likely that the value of approved projects will again exceed the level of funding available. Additional funding may become available for the 2022 scheme subject to DAERA approval.</p> <p><b>3.2 Lough Neagh Rescue (LNR)</b><br/> Covid19 has impacted Lough Neagh Rescue's ability to voluntarily fundraise to meet annual running costs.</p> <p>Mid Ulster Council previously provided £12,000 funding towards Lough Neagh Rescue in 2020/21, and proposed that the SLA for future service level requirements and associated funding be reviewed on an annual basis.</p> <p>Lough Neagh Rescue has submitted their request to Council for £12,000 financial assistance for 2021/22 (<b>See Appendix 1</b>) seeking support towards eligible operating costs of running the service from Battery Harbour from April 2021 to March 2022. It is recommended that £12,000 financial assistance is provided to LNR via a Service Level Agreement for 2021/22 financial year.</p> <p>The financial assistance will benefit the Lough Shore area within Mid Ulster by providing faster response times for rescues and other operations carried out in and around the Western Shores of Lough Neagh, and provide an emergency flood response service for Mid Ulster (subject to receipt of the necessary accreditation to provide the service).</p> |
| <b>4.0</b> | <b>Other Considerations</b>   |
| <b>4.1</b> | <p><b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b></p> <p>Financial:</p> <p><b>Rural Micro Business Development Scheme 2022</b><br/> N/A – all grant aid will be paid through DAERA.</p> <p><b>Lough Neagh Rescue (LNR)</b><br/> £12,000 in respect of 2021/22 expenditure.</p> <hr/> <p>Human: Officer Time</p> <p><b>Rural Micro Business Development Scheme 2022</b><br/> Officer's time. An administration budget is to be agreed with DAERA. For the 2021 Scheme this was based on 10% of the total value of letters of offer issued.</p> <hr/> <p>Risk Management:</p>  |

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|            | <p><b>Rural Micro Business Development Scheme 2022</b><br/>Council policies and procedures will be adhered to in the roll out of this scheme.</p> <p><b>Lough Neagh Rescue (LNR)</b><br/>Potential damage to Council's reputation were it not to fund LNR and the decision resulted in a reduction in service to users of the Lough.</p>                                   |
| <b>4.2</b> | <b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>  |
|            | <p><b>Equality &amp; Good Relations Implications:</b></p> <p><b>Rural Micro Business Development Scheme 2022</b><br/>Equality and Good Relations screening will be carried out prior of commencement of the Scheme.</p>  |
|            | <p>Rural Needs Implications:</p> <p><b>Rural Micro Business Development Scheme 2022</b><br/>Screening will be carried out prior of commencement of the Scheme.</p> <p><b>Lough Neagh Rescue (LNR)</b><br/>Mid Ulster Council is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity in all its activities with a focus on all citizens living within the Mid Ulster.</p> |
| <b>5.0</b> | <b>Recommendation(s)</b>   |
|            | <p>It is recommended that Members:-</p>  |
| 5.1        | <p><b>Rural Micro Business Development Scheme 2022</b><br/><b>Approve</b> Councils participation in the 2022 Rural Business Development Grants Scheme and subject to the business case being approved for funding, seek permission for the Chief Executive to sign and return the contract document when received from DAERA in due course.</p>                            |
| 5.2        | <p><b>Lough Neagh Rescue (LNR)</b><br/><b>Approve</b> funding request of £12,000 from Lough Neagh Rescue for 2021/22.</p>  |
| <b>6.0</b> | <b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>   |
|            | <p>Appendix 1 – Financial Request from Lough Neagh Rescue 2021-2022</p>  |