

REPORT OF Chief Executive

To: Community & Resources Committee

Subject: Budget & Funding Allocations

Date: 14 March 2022

Reference:

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

1. For Members of the Committee to consider proposals for the allocation of funding, which have been presented at Council meetings since the start of 2022.

1. Introduction

As we emerge from the pandemic the Council, our residents and businesses are likely to feel and be subject to long lasting impacts whether they be impacts on:

- Living standards – higher inflation & income pressures
- Housing – lower availability and higher costs
- Education & skills – missed opportunities through successive lockdowns
- Economic recovery & dynamics – changes to shopping habits, tourism, cultural activities, leisure and business
- Health and well being – missed, late or delayed treatments and mental health issues

Whilst direct intervention in many of these is complex, requires wider partner and or Governmental intervention as a District Council it is imperative that we both recognise them and where possible take steps to support our residents, our communities, and businesses in dealing with the associated impacts.

The report considers the areas the Council could allocate funding in terms of either direct support or the preparation of longer-term plans for a more sustainable set of interventions. In terms of amount of funding available the Council is forecasting an increase in it's level of reported surplus for 2021-22 to £0.32m, which is primarily driven via sources and impacts related to the pandemic.

2. Report

This report does not intend to present and or analyse the various impacts of the pandemic and or the lasting effects as these are already well documented, but instead seeks to consider an appropriate level and balance of funding allocation from the Council's forecast and yet unallocated surplus for the 2021-22 financial year.

2.1 Living Standards

There are two areas of potential support the Council could consider within this theme:

- Citizen’s Advice Bureau – at its last External Overview & Scrutiny Committee Members received a presentation from the CEO of Torridge, North, Mid and West Devon CAB, which outlined the many impacts and service demands the pandemic has caused. Some of these impacts are expected to continue as we emerge from the pandemic and therefore demand for CAB services is more than likely to be higher than pre-pandemic levels for some time yet. External O&S, whilst making an initial recommendation to increase the levels of funding to the CAB from £38k to £50k are due to receive a detailed report at their next meeting on the services provided and impacts.
 - **Recommendation to allocate a one-off grant of £12,000 for the financial year 2022-23.**
- Hardship funding – Central Government developed a funding stream, which in turn supported “the Household Support”, which has been provided to individuals (simple means testing application process) to provide financial support to households facing hardship. The funds provided to individuals could be used to support things for example such as, housing, food, utility, and appliances costs (not exhaustive list). However, Whilst the fund has reached its end the financial impacts on households are getting worse with inflation, utility, and other costs continuing to rise therefore the Council could set aside resources to continue to support hardship cases (mechanism to be determined should funding be approved).
 - **Consideration - to allocate a sum of £36,000**

2.2 Housing

This is a significant area of work, which is already a predominant objective in the Council’s Strategic Plan. Progress of the work streams has been reported to recent Full Council meetings with the last being on the 31 January 2022.

- As reported to Full Council 31 January 2022 we have been successful in a funding bid to the Local Government Associations’ Housing Advisor Programme with an approved allocation of £25k. The report to Full Council recommended TDC match fund this with £25k from our own resources, which required a report to C&R to consider. This is to enable TDC to wide and develop its Housing Strategy and where necessary procure the expertise of housing professionals to develop our plans, which we do not have in house.
 - **Consideration to allocate a sum of £25k to match the LGA grant**

2.3 Health and Well Being

At the last Full Council meeting on 31 January 2022 Members received a combined presentation from:

Andrea Beacham – OND Programme Manager, Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust
 Toby Davies – Superintendent, Devon and Cornwall Police
 Darran Hill – Chief Executive TTVS

Their respective presentations focussed on the work done by:

- The Community Developers working within One Northern Devon and, how they work with communities to provide cohesion and support on many health and well-being matters.
- The High-Flow project, which aims to provide a cohesive set of wrap around support for those individuals in our communities who for whatever reason need to link in with a wide range of public sector organisations from health to police, education to housing for example.
- TDC is being asked to match fund contributions from other partner organisations (North Devon Council, Police and NHS Trust) to enable these support services to continue into 2022-23 at a cost of £10,000 and £12,000 respectively.
 - **Consideration to allocate a one-off grant of £10,000 to Community Developers and £12,000 for the High Flow Project for 2022-23**

2.4 Education & Skills

Whilst not an area TDC can directly intervene with our Economic Development Team is working on the preparation of schemes and projects (getting shovel ready) that will enable TDC to submit funding bids with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up Fund in mind (expected to be announced this shortly). We have been working with local and regional education and university organisations discussing opportunities with our key strategic land assets in our thoughts (Holsworthy Agri Business and Middle Dock) to consider how they might feature in an advanced technology style bid, which could attract higher skills and higher salary employment into the district. However, research, economic impact studies and feasibility works that will be required for the bids need expertise that in these sectors we do not have in house so will need to be bought in.

- **Consideration to allocate £50,000 Economic Development Reserve**

2.5 Economy and Regeneration

This area of work is closely linked to section 2.4 above where many of the schemes and funding bids submitted will have overlapping themes between education, skills, economy, and regeneration. However, there is one area of work that is progressing albeit slowly that is likely to be critical for the allocation of funds from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Whilst still lacking in the granular detail in the Levelling Up White Paper the paper makes clear that Local Investment Plans will be required as part of the allocation process for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Exactly what they entail and at what level “local” means is yet to be confirmed. However, TDC in partnership with NDC have amongst other shared arrangements joint Local Plan, Economic Recovery Prospectus, North Devon Plus and the emerging Northern Devon Futures Partnership.

It is the latter that needs a boost (resource and capacity) in order to get the Strategic Partnership up and running on a firm footing, with a much needed clear and articulated vision, a fit for purpose governance and accountability model and an operating model that brings together all partners in a meaningful and constructive framework. We believe that this will add considerable weight to our Northern Devon Investment Plan.

A funding bid has been submitted to the LGA to their Sector Improvement Programme for resources to fund the temporary contracted employment of a project / programme manager to bring together the partnership within a suitable framework / model that once in place can

them be managed through ongoing support from the anchor organisations. The bid has been successful and an award of £20k made between TDC and NDC Council's to support this work.

- **Consideration to allocate £15,000 to match fund (£20,000 LGA Grant) and NDC allocation of £15,000 (subject to approval)**

2.6 Other areas of support

The sum of the recommendation in 2.2 to 2.5 amounts to funding allocations of £160k from the forecast surplus of £320k therefore half therefore leaving a balance of £160k.

Whilst there are many pressures on the Council's revenue and capital budget it would be prudent to allocate the resources toward areas considered the most pressing and beneficial in terms of outputs and positive impacts for our residents and communities.

Full Council on 21 February 2022 considered and approved the Council's Capital Programme for the next 5 years. Whilst a number of high priority projects were approved it was recognised that the financial pressure on the Capital Programme and more significantly the resources to fund capital projects are stretched. Therefore it would be prudent to allocate the balance of resources available (£160k) to the Capital funding, which can be called upon when required.

- **Consideration to allocate balance of surplus (£160k) to reserve capital funding**

3. Implications

Legal Implications

N/a.

Financial Implications

The financial implications of the proposal are provided in the report to allow an informed decision to be reached.

Human Resources Implications

N/a

Sustainability/Biodiversity Implications

N/A

Equality/Diversity

N/a

Risk Management

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

N/A

Data Protection (GDPR) Implications

N/A

Climate Change

Leader and Lead Member Views – Cllrs James and Hodson

As we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic its, clear that there are going to some long lasting and potentially life changing impacts across Torridge for our residents, businesses, and communities. Whilst we can't fix all the problems there are many areas where our support either directly or indirectly can help those in need. The use of our forecast surplus generated partially as a result of pandemic funding and associated impacts allows us to take this positive action.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Due to a range of factors, but mainly due to the impacts of the pandemic the Council is projecting a further surplus of £320k. It is recognised that the effects of the pandemic will be long lasting on TDCs residents, communities and businesses and therefore is prudent that the additional resources are allocated to support them. The report concludes spreading the resources across a range of activities that aim to address a variety of concerns and develop plans and interventions to mitigate the impacts.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- That Members of the Community & Resources Committee consider whether to allocate the forecast surplus as follows (as identified in the sections above):

2.1 Living Standards

*a one-off grant of £12,000 for the financial year 2022-23 to CAB
a sum of £36,000 to provide a hardship funding*

2.2 Housing

a sum of £25k to match fund the LGA grant of £25k

2.3 Health & well Being

*a one-off grant of £10,000 to Community Developers for 2022-23
a one-off grant of £12,000 to the High Flow Programme for 2022-23*

2.4 Education & Skills

£50,000 Economic Development Reserve

2.5 Economy & Regeneration

*£15,000 to match fund (LGA Grant of £20,000) and NDC & Petroc funding of
£15,000 (both the latter subject to their individual internal decision making)*

2.6 Other Support

to allocate balance of surplus (£160k) to reserve capital funding

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations:	Leader – Cllr James Lead Member for Resources – Cllr Hodson
Contact Officer:	Steve Hearse, Chief Executive
Background Papers:	None

