

N/A

Climate Change

N/A

Ward Member and Lead Member Views
Date of Consultation – N/A

4. CONCLUSIONS

N/A

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

That members note the decisions made under urgency procedure.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations:	Date of Consultation –Chief Executive, Leader, Chair of Community and Resources Committee.S151 Officer, Head of Legal and governance Officers Consulted -
Contact Officer:	Sean Kearney
Background Papers:	



URGENCY PROCEDURE

Officer: Sean Kearney	Position: Head of Communities and Place	Date: 18/03/22
------------------------------	--	-----------------------

Subject of Urgency:

Additional Restrictions Grant – Business Boost Top Up

Reason for Urgency:

To seek approval to allocate the remaining balance of the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) Fund £61,765 to top up the Business Boost Grant Scheme that has been delivered for the Council by North Devon +.

The ARG is a discretionary fund and the Council has been administering the distribution of grants to qualifying business through the Covid Pandemic and subsequent recovery phase.

Guidance issued by Government states that the funding allocated will be used by authorities to fund business support activities. The Guidance envisaged this to consist mainly of direct grants but stated that it could also be used for wider business support activities.

ND+ have been successfully delivering the Business Boost scheme funded from the ARG. The Business Boost Scheme is described in Appendix A and ties in with the Northern Devon Road to Recovery prospectus which members have previously endorsed.

The Business Boost scheme has been funded by a contribution of £100,000 from both Torridge District Council and North Devon Council and has been focussed on business support for sectors hardest hit by the pandemic. There is flexibility within the scheme to react to changes in circumstances and to react to the needs of the area.

North Devon Council have no ARG funds left to allocate so will not be topping up the scheme. The top up amount will be used to support businesses in the Torridge Area only.

If approved, it is intended that the business support scheme will continue rolling out immediately and would run until the funding is exhausted.

The Business Boost scheme is designed in accordance with the Additional Restrictions Grant Guidance. Funds must be defrayed by the 1st April or any remaining balance will be reclaimed by the Government

CONCLUSIONS

While the predominance of the ARG funding made available to the Council has been delivered as grant assistance to local businesses to help compensate their Covid

related losses, it has been prudent to ensure that a proportion of the ARG funding is used for longer term support for businesses as set out in the Northern Devon Road to Recovery Prospectus.

As set out in Appendix A, a range of flexible ongoing business support interventions has been delivered (guiding business through the changes they need to make) for recovery and innovation focused on the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic across northern Devon (NDC / TDC) and individuals interested in exploring the possibilities of self-employment:

- Supporting new entrepreneurs - Assisting individuals to explore self-employment and business start-up as a positive choice. In particular, 16–24-year-olds, people aged 50+ and those made redundant looking to return to the labour market.**
- Supporting business transformation and innovation - Supporting businesses to explore opportunities, innovate and transform themselves in the context of changed markets and environment - for survival, safe operating, and growth. Support will be focused on sectors hardest hit by the pandemic and their supply chains e.g., tourism, hospitality, leisure incl. events & festivals, retail.**
- *Small grants for business support and development - Alongside the above support, businesses could apply for a Small Business Support Grant to cover the cost of purchasing key services such as website / marketing support or small pieces of capital equipment up to £2,000 to support continued trading, to grow and develop, and for business start-up.**

Benefits of this approach:

- It continues to provide support to the hardest hit sectors, local needs and gaps in support relevant to the Torridge experience.**
- It is progressive, helping small businesses to not just to survive, but to take the next step to thrive within a changed operating environment.**
- It is flexible and geared to the needs of individual businesses.**
- It is inclusive and relevant to all businesses – a true ‘levelling up’ approach.**
- It can contribute directly to a wide range of target outputs, including jobs, new businesses, new skills, and knowledge transfer.**

To date on Business Boost, ND+ have engaged with 54 Torridge Clients offering them business support. 25 of these have applied for a small grant, 19 have had grant funding agreements and are in progress and further 6 are currently being processed. This will take us up to the current budget ceiling for the small grants pot.

In addition, ND+ had a further 8 grant applications submitted from TDC business that have engaged with the business adviser that we are currently on hold as they are unable to fund these (totalling £15,688). There are a further 3 businesses on the waiting list to see if any further grant funding becomes available and the grants have been very popular.

Scheme delivery will continue to be monitored and there will be an evaluation report following closure.

This will be available for presentation to Councillors who can assess the immediate and legacy impacts of their Council’s contribution.

RECOMMENDATION

To approve the use of £61,765 from the ARG funding to deliver a continuation of the ND+ business Boost scheme set out in Appendix A. (Torridge Only)

Ward and/or Lead Member(s) comments:

Date:

Strategic Manager Agreement: :

Signed:



Date:

18/3/22

Member Agreement:

Signed:

SEE ATTACHED EMAIL

Date:

Leader of Council / Deputy Leader of Council*

Signed:



Date: 22/03/2022

Chair / Vice Chair of Community & Resources Committee*

Chief Executive Approval of Decision:

Signed:



Date:

22/3/22

*delete as appropriate

Once completed a copy of this form should be given to the Democratic Services for record purposes.

IMPORTANT: Please ensure that a report is prepared for the next Community & Resources Committee meeting in accordance with the Report Writing Protocol.

Sean Kearney

From: Councillor Ken James
Sent: 22 March 2022 10:32
To: Sean Kearney; bob@roberthicks.co.uk
Cc: David Heyes
Subject: Re: Urgent Decision - ARG

Dear All
Happy to support the proposal
Ken

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Sean Kearney <Sean.Kearney@torridge.gov.uk>
Sent: Tuesday, March 22, 2022 9:29:27 AM
To: Councillor Ken James <Councillor.James@torridge.gov.uk>; ~~bob@roberthicks.co.uk~~ <~~bob@roberthicks.co.uk~~>
Cc: David Heyes <David.Heyes@torridge.gov.uk>
Subject: Urgent Decision - ARG

Hi both

Please find attached an urgent decision for you to consider. In a nutshell we propose to use the remaining balance of the Additional Restrictions Grant Fund to extend the very popular Business Boost scheme that ND+ have been running for the past few month.

The funds need to be spent by the end of this month and if they aren't they will be returned to Government. There is insufficient time to run another round of grants to distribute the balance on the fund and this proposal seeks to keep the funds locally so they can be used to help local small business.

Please let me know if you support this as soon as possible so we can ensure the funds are transferred in time.

Thanks

Sean

Sean Kearney Head of Communities & Place
Torridge District Council Riverbank House, Bideford, EX39 2QG
Phone 01237 428708
Email sean.kearney@torridge.gov.uk

ARG Business Support – a proposal

The Additional Restrictions Grant from Central Government has supported SMEs with small grants to assist them to survive during the COVID lockdown restrictions. Going forward, NDC and TDC would like to ringfence a small amount from this budget to help inform key business decisions at a critical time, to not just help businesses to survive but to also put them in a position to thrive.

This would support the “Restart” phase of the Northern Devon Road to Recovery strategy by *“focusing on activity which can immediately seek to address the worst impacts of the COVID-19 crisis and support our economy as it emerges from lockdown, whether around reopening and reorienting business; supporting displaced employees; or providing initial assistance for places to reopen.”*

Rationale:

- Experience of dealing with COVID-19 business grants has shown that impact of the pandemic has been wide-ranging, but particularly serious within tourism, hospitality, leisure (including events and festivals) and retail.
- Whilst grants to compensate for loss of income have helped, they disguise a range of underlying issues, such as depleted capital, mounting debt, the need for diversification or other ways of operating within a greatly changed operating environment.
- We are currently in a situation where there is limited publicly funded business support across northern Devon at a time when businesses are emerging from lockdown and their needs are acute.
- Business support is also a key and strategic part of the ‘levelling up’ agenda – for levelling up to work, it needs to be inclusive, focusing on all sectors and all places i.e., a universal but flexible proposition.
- The best and most innovative ideas for recovery are likely to come from businesses responding to local issues and needs – it is critical to support them to make the very most of those opportunities.
- Directing help at individual businesses supports activity at the most local level where the biggest differences can be made.

Sectors which rely on footfall, such as tourism, hospitality and their supply chains, have been hardest hit by the pandemic - 2020 saw inbound visitor spend drop 80% on 2019 levels, while domestic visitor spend dropped 62% (Visit England, 2021). Forecasts for 2021 are that domestic tourism will be 46% below 2019 levels in 2021 (DCMS, 2021).

Scope & geography:

A range of flexible ongoing business support interventions is proposed (guiding business through the changes they need to make) for recovery and innovation focused on the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic across northern Devon (NDC / TDC) and individuals interested in exploring the possibilities of self-employment (see also Table A for details):

- **Supporting new entrepreneurs** - Assisting individuals to explore self-employment and business start-up as a positive choice. In particular, 16–24-year-olds, people aged 50+ and those made redundant looking to return to the labour market.

- **Supporting business transformation and innovation** - Supporting businesses to explore opportunities, innovate and transform themselves in the context of changed markets and environment - for survival, safe operating, and growth. Support will be focused on sectors hardest hit by the pandemic and their supply chains e.g., tourism, hospitality, leisure incl. events & festivals, retail.
- ***Small grants for business support and development** - Alongside the above support, businesses could apply for a Small Business Support Grant to cover the cost of purchasing key services such as website / marketing support or small pieces of capital equipment up to £2,000 to support continued trading, to grow and develop, and for business start-up.

Benefits of this approach:

- It responds to the hardest hit sectors, local needs and gaps in support relevant to the northern Devon experience.
- It is progressive, helping small businesses to not just to survive, but to take the next step to thrive within a changed operating environment.
- It is flexible and geared to the needs of individual businesses.
- It is inclusive and relevant to all businesses – a true ‘levelling up’ approach.
- It can contribute directly to a wide range of target outputs, including jobs, new businesses, new skills, and knowledge transfer.

Reaching businesses / individuals:

- Through follow-up approaches to our existing businesses databases and mailing lists
- Through follow-up approaches to northern Devon businesses in receipt of COVID-19 ARG funding.
- Through a range of communication channels, including social media, District Council communication mechanisms.
- Through local networks and links, such as Chambers of Commerce, FSB, Jobcentre Plus (e.g., for young people after completing their DWP Kickstart Scheme) etc.

Budget:

Request to ringfence £100k per local authority area to contribute towards a local Northern Devon Business Support scheme to run from August 2021 onwards. This would enable business support to reach an estimated 80-120 clients to access a flexible support package ranging from 3 -18 hours of support recognising that business needs will vary and that some will require more support than others (particularly new start-up businesses) and up to £50k from each authority would be ringfenced for small grants for business support and development *

Table A Scheme summary

Gap / opportunity	Scope / delivery	Rationale	Delivery	Outcomes
Supporting new entrepreneurs	<p>Assisting individuals to explore self-employment and business start-up as a positive choice. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 16 - 24-year-olds - 50+ - People made redundant and looking to return to the labour market <p>Delivery through combination of 1:1 support, online workshops / tutorials, counselling & mentoring.</p> <p>Linked small grants programme e.g. for essential kit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of large employers, high unemployment, outflow of skills. - Need supply of quality start-ups for a vibrant and growing economy. - Increase supply of entrepreneurs. - No current support to encourage and explore entrepreneurship as an option for individuals. - Apart from some limited local activity, there is also a gap in support for start-ups. 	<p>3 -18 hours of support for people supported to explore self-employment. / new business start-ups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New jobs - New businesses - New products & services - People in skills support
Supporting business transformation & innovation in hardest hit sectors – (tourism, hospitality, leisure incl. events & festivals, retail)	<p>Supporting businesses to explore opportunities, innovate and transform themselves in the context of changed markets and environment - for survival, safe operating, and growth e.g. COVID, post-COVID, BREXIT.</p> <p>Focus on markets, channels, diversification, productivity, contingency; also counselling (supporting the business and the person).</p> <p>Deliver through group work, case studies, 1:1 support, mgmt. & leadership skills.</p> <p>Linked small grants programme to support innovations and changes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greatly changed markets – needs, channels, products, services. - Changing business and business owner needs e.g., regulations, debt, management, personal needs, contingency planning. - Need to focus on all rather than just high growth businesses to support Levelling Up. - Currently no support for this in HotSW. 	<p>3 -18 hours of advice and guidance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diversification of business model to improve survival / growth. - Safeguard jobs - New jobs - Safeguard businesses - New products & services - People in skills support
Small grants for business support and development	<p>Alongside the above support streams, businesses will be able to apply for a grant to cover the cost of purchasing services from local suppliers such as website / marketing support or small pieces of capital equipment up to £2,000.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Businesses may be struggling to adapt and need updated equipment but may not be able to afford to take on additional debt at this time to purchase essential capital items such as laptop etc. 	<p>maximum 100 grants, minimum 50 grants between £1,000-£2,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enabled business development - new products, processes, systems, technologies

URGENCY PROCEDURE

Officer: Staci Dorey	Position: Head of Legal & Governance	Date: 11/04/2022
-----------------------------	---	-------------------------

Subject of Urgency: Household Support Fund

Reason for Urgency:

The report seeks approval for TDC to continue to participate in the Household Support Fund that was originally due to end on the 31st March 2022.

The government have decided to extend the scheme, but at this stage the guidelines for the scheme has not been agreed and we have not been told how much funding will be allocated.

A further Devon Wide Scheme will be launched, however we are 2 – 3 weeks off this being agreed, and the next C and R after agreement will be on the 6th June.

TDC have voted separately to set aside 36K for their own hardship scheme, so would like to continue with our own scheme in the interim to ensure that people who are in hardship can continue to be assisted prior to the roll out of the Devon Wide Scheme.

The fund is designed to support those in financial hardship and to provide quick short-term financial support to assist with items such as food, energy bills, water bills and other essential items.

Full details attached, but this will be a much-welcomed scheme for those struggling in these difficult times.

The decision is urgent to enable people in hardship to have continued support. The next C and R after the Devon Scheme is to be agreed isn't until the 6th June which means there would be a delay to those in the most financial hardship being able to be assisted.

Ward and/or Lead Member(s) comments:

fine 

Date: 12/4/22

Chief Executive Agreement: : see attached e-mail

Signed:	Date:
Member Agreement:	
Signed: <i>K. Hamel</i>	Date: 11-4-2021
Leader of Council / Deputy Leader of Council *	
Signed:	Date:
Chairman / Vice Chairman of Community & Resources Committee*	
HoPS/Strategic Manager Approval of Decision:	
Signed:	Date:
*delete as appropriate	

Once completed a copy of this form should be given to the Democratic Services Manager for record purposes.

IMPORTANT: Please ensure that a report is prepared for the next Community & Resources Committee meeting in accordance with the Report Writing Protocol.

Staci Dorey

From: Steve Hearse
Sent: 12 April 2022 11:36
To: Staci Dorey
Subject: RE: Household Support Fund

Hi Staci,

Yes happy to confirm.

Kind regards
Steve

Steve Hearse Chief Executive
Torrige District Council Riverbank House, Bideford, EX39 2QG Phone 01237 428969 Email
steve.hearse@torridge.gov.uk

-----Original Message-----

From: Staci Dorey <Staci.Dorey@torridge.gov.uk>
Sent: 12 April 2022 11:31
To: Steve Hearse <Steve.Hearse@torridge.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: Household Support Fund

Hi Steve

Can you email your confirmation please so that I can add to C and R Agenda. Ken and Bob have approved Thanks

Staci Dorey Head of Legal and Governance (& Monitoring Officer) Torrige District Council Riverbank House,
Bideford, EX39 2QG Phone 01237 428763 Mobile 07970 120139 Email staci.dorey@torridge.gov.uk

PLEASE NOTE TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL DOES NOT ACCEPT SERVICE OF DOCUMENTS VIA EMAIL

-----Original Message-----

From: Teresa Hector <teresa@roberthicks.co.uk>
Sent: 12 April 2022 11:29
To: Staci Dorey <Staci.Dorey@torridge.gov.uk>
Cc: Robert Hicks <bob@roberthicks.co.uk>; Councillor Hicks R <Councillor.Hicks@torridge.gov.uk>
Subject: Household Support Fund

On behalf of Councillor Hicks please find attached signed form.

Kind regards
Teresa

[https://www.roberthicks.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/website_logo.jpg]

Tel: 01237 451044 | www.roberthicks.co.uk <<http://www.roberthicks.co.uk/>> | [Follow us on Facebook]
<<https://www.facebook.com/RobertHHicksCo/>> [<https://www.roberthicks.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/twitter.jpg>] <<https://www.linkedin.com/company/robert-h-hicks-co/>>

Robert H Hicks & Co | West Hele | Buckland Brewer | Bideford | Devon | EX39 5LZ

This Email and any attachments are confidential, may also be legally privileged and are the property of Robert H Hicks & Co. If you are not the intended recipient, dissemination or copying of this email is prohibited. If you have received this in error, please notify us by returning to the sender and then delete the email completely from your system.

This email and any attachments have been scanned for computer viruses, however it is the responsibility of the recipient to conduct its own security measures. No responsibility is accepted by Robert H Hicks & Co for loss or damage arising from the receipt or use of this email and any attachments. No responsibility is accepted by Robert H Hicks & Co for personal email.

Robert H Hicks Ltd Company Registration No. 4854512.