



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF SERVICE DELIVERY**

**to
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
6 JANUARY 2022**

**COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND TRANSFORMATION (CERT) PROGRAMME -
ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT PROPOSAL**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Members' approval of the proposed defrayal for the remaining Additional Restrictions Grant.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) That Members approve the defrayal approach for the remaining Additional Restrictions Grant funding and endorse the business support schemes (set out in section 3.6 below);
- (ii) That the Director of Service Delivery be given delegated authority in consultation with the Chairman of the Strategy and Resources Committee, to approve schemes for the remaining Additional Restrictions Grant to ensure defrayal can be targeted to changing business needs and restrictions.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) is provided to local authorities by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to provide direct business grants and wider business support.
- 3.2 Maldon District Council successfully defrayed its initial allocation of £1,875,261 by the deadline of 31 July 2021. A 'top-up' allocation of £564,745 was provided to the authority, extending the defrayal deadline for this to 31 March 2022. It should be noted that whilst defrayal must occur by the deadline, support activity can extend beyond this period.
- 3.3 £129,000 of the total allocations was ringfenced for collaborative scheme delivery via the North Essex Economic Board. The schemes delivered through this partnership will provide businesses with enhanced provision across skills and business support opportunities.
- 3.4 Additional funding was also provided to extend the Click It Local scheme.
- 3.5 Initial allocations have enabled the Council to provide funding to all eligible business applicants. If the remaining balance, circa £450,000, were to be distributed solely on direct business grants, this could equate to under £300 per business. It is felt this would have limited economic benefit and more targeted business support schemes would support better outcomes, business resilience and growth.

- 3.6 The remainder of the fund, is proposed to be defrayed on the following business support schemes to provide sustainable economic return on investment;
- 3.6.1 Social Enterprise Seed and Sector Growth Fund - Grant funding scheme targeted at social enterprise and community businesses to support community benefits, economic growth and sustainability of the organisation. Secondary programme, targeting all sectors, that will support recovery and future resilience and contribute to the economic recovery of the wider district. It is proposed to engage an intermediary organisation to administer the application process and provide on-going support to the applicants.
- 3.6.2 Keep It Local extension (currently funded by Magnox) - Additional funding to continue the delivery of the Keep It Local initiative, providing businesses with free social media and e-commerce training and 12 months promotion campaign.
- 3.6.3 Business Support Surgeries - Two events, one in Burnham-on-Crouch and one in Maldon. The events will provide information and mini consultations with business experts, as well as networking opportunities with like-minded business owners.
- 3.6.4 Wellbeing Resilience in Business - Mental health resilience and well-being training courses for businesses to support their employees.
- 3.6.5 Local Membership Federation of Small Businesses - 1-year free membership for Micro Businesses in the district to access support provided by the Federation of Small Businesses. Subsidised membership would be provided for Small and Mid-size Enterprises (SMEs).
- 3.6.6 Grant Finder - 1 year license to Grant Finder for the authority to communicate funding opportunities via our engagement channels.
- 3.6.7 Business Navigation Services - Local enhancement of North Essex Economic Board (NEEB) contract to assist businesses to identify relevant programmes, initiatives, or funding schemes currently on offer and support to access them. This would also assist to bolster our current business engagement efforts.
- 3.6.8 Visit Essex Membership - Subsidised subscription to tourism specific business support membership.
- 3.6.9 Sensory Guide to Maldon District - Delivery of sensory awareness training, and subsequent guide, for businesses to understand sensory loss/impairment issues services can be tailored to meet the needs of customers.
- 3.6.10 Additional Place Photography - Commission local photographer and drone pilot to undertake photography at all Local Development Plan (LDP) employment sites to support businesses promotion and development of investment prospectus.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The Additional Restrictions Grant provides an opportunity for the authority to support the recovering economy via hybrid delivery of direct grants and business support. Any unspent funds would need to be returned to Central Government if not defrayed by 31 March 2022.
- 4.2 Members should support the proposed schemes allowing delivery to commence immediately.

5. IMPACT ON STRATEGIC THEMES

- 5.1 The Additional Restrictions Grant primary supports the Council Prosperity Objectives of Supporting Existing Local Businesses and Enhancing and Promoting the District Visitor Economy.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – The proposal will provide the business community with additional support opportunities and enhance the current offering available via Maldon District Council.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – Defrayal is at risk and it is vital that programme activity is aligned and adequately reported to the funder to ensure the funding is not subject to return.

The programme will reduce the risk to the economy presented by Covid19.

The Council faces increased reputation risk if it fails to deliver to the expectations of stakeholders.

- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – Schemes are grant funded (paid in advance). Whilst the cost of officer time cannot be recouped from this fund, however, all scheme activity will be.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – The activity is being led by the Lead Specialist Prosperity, whose position is part funded externally by the Welcome Back Fund. However, inevitably, there may be additional work to enhance efforts of existing staff (within existing establishment).
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – None anticipated.
- (vii) **Impact on Strengthening Communities** – None anticipated.

Background Papers:

[Additional Restrictions Grant Local Authority Allocations](#)
[Additional Restrictions Grant Guidance for Local Authorities \(updated 15 April 2021\)](#)

Enquiries to: Leanda Cable, Lead Specialist Prosperity.