

Additional Restrictions Grant

Report to Executive



DATE	1 st December 2021
PORTFOLIO	Economy & Growth
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PURPOSE

1. The purpose of the report is to seek approval for the proposed revisions to the use of the remaining Additional Restrictions Grant Funds

RECOMMENDATION

2. It is recommended that the Executive:
 - a) Approves the proposals for the use of the remaining ARG grant as set out in paragraph 6.
 - b) Delegates authority to Strategic Head of Economy and Growth in consultation with the Head of Finance and Property and Executive Member for Economy and Growth the final policy detail
 - c) Delegates authority to Strategic Head of Economy and Growth in consultation with the Head of Finance and Property and Executive Member for Economy and Growth to agree any further changes to the use of ARG in response to arising situations and the limited time to commit the allocation.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

3. On 31 October 2020, the Government announced the introduction of additional support for Local Authorities under national and Local Covid Alert Level 3 restrictions. It is for local authorities, within the broad parameters set out in the ARG Guidance, to determine how to use the fund. The Council approved a scheme on the 14th November 2020 and revised the scheme in January 2021 following the second lock down period and again in July 2021 after the end of the restrictions period.
4. The remaining budget must be committed by 31st March 2022. The recommendations and revised proposals reflect the amount of money available, the lifting of all restrictions in summer 2021 and the transition from response to recovery with a new emphasis on assisting businesses to recover and invest.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

5. In July 2021 the Executive approved proposals to spend its remaining £503,000 allocation. The proposals outlined in the July report have been implemented and 150 businesses have received the additional support agreed including:
6. Taxi driver's resident in Pendle with a Burnley Licence received a one of grant payment of £750.00. Nightclubs, catteries and kennels, and events sector businesses all received additional payments reflecting on-going restrictions on the operation of some businesses and international travel restrictions.
7. A Business Hardship fund was also established, and 10 businesses have been supported.
8. A Covid Closure Grant scheme was designed to support businesses that were forced to close as a result of Covid outbreaks. Eight businesses have received support totalling £11,866. Two applications are currently under consideration. There has been very little demand for this fund following the removal of the 10 day isolation rule in August.
9. The recommendations and revised proposals set out below reflect the transition from Respond (i.e. responding to the immediate impact of closures and restrictions) to Recover as outlined in the Council's Economic Recovery and Growth Strategy.
10. There is £212k remaining in the additional restrictions budget and it is proposed to widen the support available to ensure we maximise the support available to businesses for recovery as follows:
 - The hardship fund will be made available to support any size of business (currently businesses must employ 10 staff) that is able to evidence that their business continues to be impacted due to the pandemic but meets the remaining criteria of the hardship fund.
 - Continue to operate the Covid Closure Grant scheme and to support any businesses that are forced to close over the winter months.
 - Deliver a program of business startup workshops in January, February and March 2022 to support people who may be looking to set up their own business, and three days of advice, support and health checks to recently opened retain start ups in Burnley and Padiham Town Centres to help them become sustainable businesses supporting town centre recovery.
 - The Council currently offers a very limited number of very small grants (outside of the Padiham TH and Lower St James Street HAZ) to support businesses who are undertaking shop front improvements. The Economy and Growth Service is aware of a number of businesses wishing to undertake shop front improvements but there are currently insufficient resources in the Council's budget to support either the number of applicants or the size of applications. It is proposed to offer a grant between 50% and 80% with a maximum grant of £12k depending on the scale and scope of works. The scheme will enable businesses to invest in properties at a time when they may have limited working capital as a result of restrictions over the last 18 months. Schemes must have relevant consents and be completed by 31st March 2022.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND BUDGET PROVISION
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11. The Council has available after existing commitments £212,870 of ARG funding. The funds must be defrayed by 31st March 2022. The use of the funding is strictly monitored and once the funding is spent the scheme will close.
12. It should be noted that should there be further serious outbreaks leading to a full or partial lockdown the Council would not have resources available to provide grants to businesses unless it is provided with additional government support.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

13. The decision supports the Council's strategic priorities for economy and growth and the recently adopted Economic Recovery and Growth Strategy

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION

14. All Executive Members

BACKGROUND PAPERS

15. Report to Executive 14th July 2021

FURTHER INFORMATION
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