

## **Additional Restrictions Grant**

**Summary:** Following the Council's success in fully defraying its initial allocation from the Government funded Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), NNDC has now qualified for additional funding. The top-up fund represents an opportunity for the Council to continue to assist local businesses, with a particular focus on supporting the recovery process from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and helping them to become more resilient to potential future threats and challenges.

As agreed at Full Council on 28 April 2021, delegation is provided to the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth, to:

1. establish the terms and processes to commit the remaining ARG fund by 30 June 2021, and;
2. develop a programme of business support using the anticipated ARG top-up funds that the District will benefit from following the full dissemination of the current fund.

The former point has now been concluded and the Council has received £760,411 to fund the delivery of a new programme of support. This report sets out the broad concepts for a proposed programme.

**Options considered:** The Council is obliged to use the ARG fund to support local businesses, particularly those who may not have been able to benefit from the mandatory grant schemes. The Government has advised that this should predominantly take the form of discretionary grants. However, the fund also allows the Council to use funding to deliver wider business support to which a range of options, including those outlined within this report, are possible.

The Council could choose to focus the remaining allocation solely on providing grants. However, it is recognised that businesses would additionally benefit from a broader offering of non-financial support to assist their recovery process, enable them to embed Covid-safe practices and to support resilience.

**Conclusions:** The Covid-19 pandemic has taken a considerable toll on local businesses. Whilst some businesses were able to trade to some extent, many have been heavily impacted, struggling to meet their ongoing fixed costs and now, having reopened, are having to make

significant efforts to recoup their losses. However, it is also recognised that the pandemic has also created opportunities and new revenue channels, to which the Council would wish to nurture and encourage.

Whilst the mandatory schemes have played a significant role in helping some businesses, there are many others who did not qualify for these grants. The ARG scheme has to date helped to address some of those who have *slipped between the cracks*. The next phase provides an opportunity for the Council to further develop the scheme to provide a wider range of assistance to help the local economy to bounce back.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. note the content of the report and the progress to date in committing the ARG funding;
2. agree and approve the Business Support and Recovery Grant Scheme;
3. confirm support for the appointment of administrative resource (1 FTE) to support the grant scheme(s) and, as required, to support the delivery of wider business support;
4. agree to the further development of a wider scheme, with specific targeted support for the visitor economy, social care sectors and digital skills;

Reasons for Recommendations:

To continue to support the recovery of the local economy and to ensure the funding is fully defrayed within the timescales determined by the Government.

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS AS REQUIRED BY LAW**

*(Papers relied on to write the report, which do not contain exempt information and which are not published elsewhere)*

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Cabinet Member(s) Cllr Richard Kershaw Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth	Ward(s) affected All
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## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on trading conditions. Restrictions imposed on businesses to control the spread of Covid-19 have had a significantly negative effect on the national and local economy. In April 2020, the UK experienced a 25% contraction in GDP, the largest fall the country has ever experienced. Whilst the economy did partially recover during the second half of the year, most businesses were unable to recoup earlier losses and any traction made to return to pre-pandemic levels were reversed following the return of national restrictions in November, ultimately leading to further tightened measures in January 2021. Overall the UK economy shrank by 9.8% in 2020.
- 1.2 As a result of the severe impact of Covid-19 restrictions, the Government introduced a plethora of Covid business grant schemes. These schemes have been allocated to businesses via Local Authorities. NNDC has now distributed over £126m in grants, which has required a significant amount of unanticipated resource, time and effort.
- 1.3 Following the imposition of national restrictions on 5 November, the Government established a new discretionary fund called the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). This scheme was introduced to complement the Local Restrictions Grant (and its subsequent incarnations), with a particular emphasis placed on helping those businesses who may not have been able to benefit from the LRSF fund, which was essentially aimed at businesses subject to non-domestic business rates. These schemes have now closed.
- 1.4 Local Authorities are permitted to have a high level of discretion as to how this is spent, but are advised that this money should predominantly take the form of discretionary grants. It can also be used to fund wider business support activities. Councils will need to fully defray this money by 30 March 2022 or return any remaining funds.
- 1.5 Following an additional top-up in January, NNDC has received a total ARG allocation of £3,028,013. At the Spring Budget on 3 March 2021 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that Local Authorities would receive an additional top-up to their ARG allocation, amounting to £760,411 for north Norfolk. However, in order to qualify for this money, Councils needed to have fully defrayed (not just committed) all of their current allocation by 30 June 2021 (subsequently extended by one month in line with the national restrictions extension).
- 1.6 NNDC was successful in fully defraying the original allocation within the original end of June deadline – one of only two Norfolk authorities to do so – and the Council is now in receipt of the top-allocation.
- 1.7 The Council's success in delivering these schemes has been recognised at a national level with no less than two finalist positions for two prestigious awards: The Public Finance Awards 2021 – for 'Digital Finance Project of the Year' and The Institute of Revenues Ratings and Values 2021 Performance Awards 2021 – for 'Excellence in Innovation'.

## **2. Current Position**

- 2.1 As outlined to Full Council, it is suggested that the ARG fund be delivered in two broad phases: a 'Rescue Phase' and a 'Recovery Phase'
- 2.2 During the **Rescue Phase** (which ran to 30 June 2021) the Council concentrated on defraying the remaining initial funding allocation. The focus was on providing continued support to new and existing applicants to assist them as national restrictions eased, recognising that many businesses may have been initially limited in their ability to trade normally and that some will have not been able to open at all during the early stages.
- 2.3 In addition to the main grant, £250k was allocated to provide for an Outdoor Education Sector Support Grant and £22,578.22 was allocated to the Go Digital programme (outlined later in this report).
- 2.4 During the **Recovery Phase** (through to no later than 30 March 2022) the Council will concentrate on defraying the top-up fund allocation (£760,411). It is proposed that the majority of the top up fund should be allocated towards providing a Business Recovery and Resilience Grant, which is in line with the Government's expectation that the ARG fund should predominantly take the form of discretionary grant funding. The remainder can then be used to deliver other suitable business support initiatives to help businesses to recover.
- 2.5 It is noted within the Grant Offer Letter for the top-up that the Terms and Conditions consists of a single line, that: *Grants paid to a Local Authority under this determination can be used for grants and wider business support.* Its brevity is assumed to imply that we continue to have a reasonable degree of flexibility and discretion as to how we use this fund. Nevertheless, for the purpose of developing a new grant scheme and other initiatives, we have referred to the latest ARG guidance and FAQs issued to Local Authorities to ensure that it continues to conform with previous advice.

### **3. Business Recovery and Resilience Grant (BRRG)**

- 3.1 It proposed that £500,000 is initially ring-fenced to support a Business Recovery and Resilience Grant. The allocation will be routinely monitored and the fund and terms of the scheme will be reviewed on (no less than) a monthly basis by the Director of Resource, the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth and the Economic Growth Manager as part of routine programme review meetings. These meetings will serve to review the outputs delivered to date, consider the remaining fund and to ensure that the terms of the scheme continue to meet its original ambitions. If/as required, this monitoring panel will agree to amend the allocation and/or the terms of the grant to ensure the successful delivery of the scheme and that the ARG fund is fully defrayed by March 2022.
- 3.2 It is proposed that the scheme will provide funding to enable local businesses to implement changes and initiatives that will support their plans to invest, recover, sustain, diversify and/or grow, following the challenges experienced due to COVID-19. Grants will be available to all businesses based within the North Norfolk District Council area and payments will be made available for one-off costs, up to a maximum amount of £25,000 per business.
- 3.3 **Core Criteria**
  - The scheme will fund both capital and one-off revenue costs;
  - Min Grant £2500, Max Grant £25,000;
  - Businesses must have been impacted by Covid-19;

- Relevant permissions/licences will need to be in place prior to the application;
- Projects will need to be delivered with 8 weeks of receipt of signed Grant Offer Letter;
- Projects must deliver one or more of the ambitions of this scheme, within the following themes:
  - Digitalisation – investment in e-commerce, contactless payments, online booking systems, click and collect, new websites
  - Adapt and Diversify – investment in new product or services, improved resilience
  - Green Initiatives – eg sustainable procedures, energy efficient measures
  - Investment in new equipment/machinery/facilities/processes – to support turnover growth, increase customer capacity etc
  - Physical adaption to premises

3.4 In addition to the above priorities, a grant will also be available to support businesses in a position of hardship. This strand is intended to assist businesses that are experiencing difficulties in their ability to trade due to ongoing Government enforced restrictions within their industry.

### 3.5 Decision-making Process

It is suggested that grants will be awarded on a first come, first serve basis and that applications will be assessed on their relative merits in terms of the outputs offered, in particular, the number of jobs safeguarded and/or the number of jobs created. These will be decided on by a panel size and make up dependent on the grant amount applied for:

#### **Grant below £10,000**

Grant determined by Panel composed of the Grant Administrator + the Business Development Officer (supported by Economic Growth Manager as required).

#### **Grants above £10,000**

Grant determined by Panel composed of the Grant Administrator + no less than two Officers and the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth.

### 3.6 Ineligible Costs and Activities

Proposed ineligible activities and costs:

- Projects where the applicant cannot demonstrate a market demand (either new or existing);
- Wage subsidies, cashflow, buying stock;
- Expenditure on continuous or periodic activity, routine building maintenance; routine tax consultancy, regular legal services or advertising, or costs to comply to statutory regulations;
- Non-business expenditure;
- The replacement of items and consumables including laptops and software;
- Land purchase and building repairs;

- VAT, unless this cannot be recovered;
- Repeat applications, including from linked companies;
- Any costs relating to insurance policies;
- Costs for any expenditure incurred prior to any grant offer letter.

#### **4 Wider Business Support**

4.1 In addition to the BRRG, it suggested that consideration be given to 3 other areas of specific/sectorial support:

- Digitalisation (available to all)
- Visitor Economy
- Care Sector

Details as to why these priority areas have been identified and the potential support solutions are outlined within Sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4.

#### **4.2 Digitalisation – Go Digital Programme**

4.2.1 It became very apparent early on in the pandemic that those businesses who already had a strong digital presence or were quick to embrace new ways to trade, promote or diversify their business – better functioning websites, new payment methods, video conferencing, agile working, online bookings etc – were better placed to continue trading and more resilient to the lockdowns. In many respects, like other parts of our lives, the pandemic has served to fast track the embracing of technology and new ways of doing things.

4.2.2 However, there is growing consciousness that many businesses still lack the basic digital skills and ready-cash to invest in such technologies and practices. This potentially makes them not only vulnerable to future threats, but also the risk of losing trade to those who have successfully embedded new systems into their business.

4.2.3 In recognition of this, it was previously agreed from the initial allocation that £22k approx. would be provided to Norfolk County Council to allow them to extend their Go-Digital programme. To date this programme has supported 38 north Norfolk businesses – 13 through the initial NCC-funded pilot scheme and a further 25 placements through NNDC's contribution funded via ARG.

#### **4.2.4 Scheme Overview**

- 9 hours of free business support by an industry expert within their field to help SME's to identify the digital tools and projects to support their business;
- Help for the business to understand the benefits of using digital tools, develop the confidence to undertake digital transformation projects and to discover and grow their knowledge of the digital tools available;
- Focus has been on businesses in the tourism and care sectors and food & drink producers, although any business can apply;
- A £500 grant voucher is then provided to the business to (via a claim back process) to fund items/services identified within the professional advisor's report.

- 4.2.5 Six of the Norfolk authorities have to date funded an extension of the Go Digital Programme which, pending a more formal evaluation due shortly, has by accounts been welcomed by businesses and well received.
- 4.2.6 NCC intend to launch the next phase of the programme in September. This extension to the programme will be funded by the European Interreg programme and is intended to support a further 600 placements over the next two years.
- 4.2.7 However, whilst the scheme has successfully secured some funding for the programme, it is presently oversubscribed, with a number of north Norfolk businesses sitting within a waiting list for it to reopen. The opportunity therefore exists for NNDC to ensure a greater level of local delivery through a further contribution (circa £22-23k) to secure another 25 placements on the scheme, which could be further reviewed - subject to programme development, take up and ARG budget. We are advised that most authorities will again similarly choose to invest in the programme (funded by their ARG allocation) in recognition that a digital scheme will form a valuable component of their overall recovery programme. It is therefore recommended that we do the same, benefitting from an established scheme and the economies of scale gained from having multiple funding partners.

### **4.3 Visitor Economy**

- 4.3.1 Pre-pandemic figures (2019) estimate that tourism – via direct, indirect and induced spend – contributes over £500m to the local economy and employs circa 30% of the active working population in the district (vs 11.3% in Norfolk and Suffolk as whole).
- 4.3.2 Following the gradual re-opening of businesses we must now seek to position ourselves to recover in a way that will be fit for a different tourism and hospitality landscape, certainly in the short to medium term, and to take advantage of any opportunities that arise. Overseas tourism is unlikely to recover quickly, and staycations represent a good opportunity for north Norfolk in particular as people seek out the space and fresh air in rural and coastal destinations on our own shores.
- 4.3.3 However, whilst it is recognised that accommodation providers are reporting a high level of bookings, there is perhaps concern that some businesses may not be sufficiently orientated to fully benefit from this or have sufficient capacity to capitalise on these opportunities. Industry bodies suggest that one in five workers have left the sector during the coronavirus pandemic, with Covid and Brexit cited as exacerbating the problem. For staff that have returned to their roles, the so-called "pingdemic" also led to further shortages due to workers being told to isolate by the NHS app.
- 4.3.4 Nevertheless, figures from the [ONS](#) identify that job vacancies in the industry were already consistently at high levels before the UK went into its first lockdown in March 2020. This suggests that although Covid and the effects of Brexit might be driving worker shortages in the short-term, there are longer-term issues affecting the industry. It seems likely that the pandemic and Brexit have acted as catalysts in condensing the recruitment crisis and meant that, instead of playing out over two or three years, an exodus has suddenly

come to pass in two or three months.

- 4.3.5 A likely contributor to the staffing problem is the perception of the hospitality industry itself - with its perceived culture of very long working-hours and low wages. In north Norfolk, the issues are further compounded by an aging demographic and restrictive public transportation which particularly inhibits the less mobile younger employees. Moreover, hospitality businesses were re-opening at a time when students had not necessarily returned home to take on local seasonal employment.
- 4.3.6 Some businesses have also reported a perceived apathy from young people, with some perhaps demoralised by the pandemic and effectively moving further away from the labour market. There is also a long held view that people entering the industry would benefit from additional training (beyond on the job), including customer service skills and specific vocational qualifications to support career development and CPD. Investment in staff development typically improves staff retention which is important in an industry that commonly suffers from employee leakage into other sectors.
- 4.3.7 A key challenge for the sector is the relatively low productivity at £26,000 GVA per job (less than half the value for the ICT sector in comparison). However, Deloitte estimates the tourism GVA multiplier to be 2.8, meaning that for every £1,000 generated in direct tourism GVA, a further £1,800 is supported elsewhere in the economy through supply chain and consumer spending.
- 4.3.8 A priority for the sector, post-pandemic, should be to invest in boosting productivity, encouraging innovation, improving skills and training (including digital skills) and helping to promote career opportunities. This will require much stronger collaboration in order to build and promote a higher quality product if we are to attract higher-value visitors all year round. It is also a sector with multiple job opportunities across a disparate range of roles – accountancy, human resources, customer service management etc. To support this NNDC and VNN are presently working with the College of West Anglia to develop a project that will bring prominent local tourism businesses into schools to help raise awareness of the industry and the potential professional career paths it could offer.
- 4.3.9 Throughout the pandemic VNN have played a vital role in communicating to their membership - keeping them up to date with the latest Covid-19 safety measures, sharing industry news, engaging them in local and national surveys and sign-posting to the local and national business support. Moreover, whilst tourism promotion had to remain necessarily dormant during the national restrictions, from April onwards VNN recommenced its marketing activities, with the present campaign focussed on encouraging people to explore some of the lesser known (ie quieter) parts of north Norfolk.
- 4.3.10 Senior Officers and the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth have recently met with the Chair of VNN and the Brand Manager to discuss the general climate of the tourism sector, the challenges their members have raised and the opportunities that present themselves as the industry starts to recover.
- 4.3.11 It is considered that the ARG fund presents a good opportunity for NNDC to support the recovery of the visitor economy and that it could be used, via a

number of interlinked interventions, to simultaneously help improve the tourism offer for visitors, support businesses in their recovery and further raise the profile of VNN.

4.3.12 At this stage Cabinet are asked for their *principle* support for the Economic Growth Team and VNN to further develop a project to support this important sector to the local economy. However, initial ideas are focused around a possible two pronged approach :

**i. Membership/Marketing/Improved customer experience**

To provide a grant to cover the equivalent cost of a 12 month Membership subscription to VNN for a basic marketing package. This would be available to all relevant businesses.

This will serve a number of purposes:

- To provide an opportunity to support a high number of local businesses to market themselves on VNN's webpage;
- To improve the customer experience for visitors to the VNN page as there are presently circa 160 members and the proposed substantial uplift in content would add significant value;
- It will potentially provide the opportunity for VNN to be in a position in 12 months' time (when renewals come around), to invest and increase its capacity through higher future revenue. This would be achieved through an anticipated degree of member retention from those wishing to maintain (or enhance) their subscription package, which VNN has historically been strong at;
- Members (new and existing) will be able to benefit from access to an enhanced programme of support achieved via a *re-investment* of the grant money – see point (ii).

**ii. An Umbrella Package of Business Support for VNN Members**

Utilising the funds generated via the grant, NNDC will work with VNN to create a package of support for Member businesses. This potentially could include the establishment of a Skills Academy (eg providing accredited/non-accredited training), working with businesses to support recruitment (immediate posts, long-term career paths, possibly helping trainees with travel expenses etc) and a package of other professional support.

4.3.13 The process of providing grants would be considered an effective defrayal of the ARG money, with the *immediate* benefit for business being the marketing offering. However, it would be anticipated that the *bigger picture* is that this project would have a significant legacy benefit to the local economy that extends significantly beyond the ARG spend period through the effective seeding of a programme of immediate and ongoing support that could evolve over time.

4.3.14 Whilst it is difficult to estimate the demand and thus total grant allocation required, if we were to initially assume a notional 500-1000 VNN Membership

Grants then potentially up to an estimated £180,000.00 would need to be allocated from the ARG top up fund. New members would be required to complete an application form and provide marketing content and this would then need to be loaded onto the VNN website. This work will require additional resource as it would be beyond the present capacity of NNDC and VNN (refer to Section 5, Resource Implications).

4.3.15 EG Officers would then work with VNN to develop a programme of support under the VNN banner utilising the grant funds.

#### 4.4 Care Sector

4.4.1 The Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy 2021-2026 ([Living a Good Life - Excellence in Care](#)), outlines the strategy for adult social care across Norfolk and Waveney. The thrust of the report is about having the right people in the right place at the right time with the right values, skills and experience to deliver the care needed both now and in the future. The strategy provides an overview of the diverse nature and needs of its dispersed workforce - social care workers, unpaid carers and the volunteers - that collectively deliver social care across Norfolk and Waveney. Recruitment is one of the key challenges for social care. In Norfolk and Waveney, the older population is increasing while the proportion of people of working age declines. The current economic climate and previous political uncertainties have made European and international recruitment increasingly challenging. We are advised that the UK Points Based Immigration system has effectively removed the possibility of future international recruitment to direct care worker roles. Under the Skilled Worker Route, care workers are specifically excluded, and senior care workers will not be able to achieve the additional points required because their median salary is well below the current minimum salary requirement.

4.4.2 Prior to the pandemic, social care providers were facing a workforce crisis with high vacancy and turnover rates with hotspots in domiciliary care, particularly in rural areas such as north Norfolk and in roles such as social care nursing. If the social care workforce grows in proportion to growth in numbers aged 65 and over, then adult social care jobs in the Eastern region will have to increase by 35% (from 192,000 to 248,000) between 2020 and 2035. (Skills for Care 2020 area profiles). The age projections locally pose the risk that we will not have enough people of working age to meet the demand - the demographic drivers are pulling in opposite directions. Furthermore, the average *healthy* life expectancy for men and women is around 65 years meaning older workers may themselves have to cut short their working lives. Given the typical profile of a care worker - predominantly female, aged 43 and above - and the potential difficulties of international recruitment, particularly post-Brexit, the industry will be drawing on a limited pool of workers unless steps are taken to attract people into the industry.

4.4.4 Officers have undertaken initial discussions with a care support provider around the potential support options for this prominent sector within north Norfolk. Given the issues outlined, we are presented with a good opportunity to address a critical matter – we have an evidenced immediate (and long term) demand for care staff *coupled with* a potential supply of labour who are either presently unemployed, soon to be potentially impacted by the removal of furlough support or have otherwise been displaced during the pandemic.

The support required is thus about helping to raise the profile of the industry and providing the mechanisms to provide a hand-held career pathway.

4.4.5 The recommendation of this report is that consideration should be given to an ARG funded (pending fee proposal) North Norfolk Sector Based Work Programme. This would be via an SLA agreement with the provider who would work with partners (to include DWP) to deliver the scheme. Similar schemes delivered locally in the past have demonstrated positive outcomes, with 70-90% of placements gaining successful employment following the training.

4.4.6 A Sector Based Work Programme (formerly Academy) is a type of pre-employment training programme that offers unemployed people the opportunity to combine training and a work experience placement, with a view to moving into employment and/or further training at the end of it. Schemes typically includes three main components:

- Industry recognised pre-employment training
- A work experience placement
- A guaranteed job interview

#### **4.4.7 Scheme Benefits**

These programmes are considered a good way to offer unemployed people, or those who may be wishing to change career, the opportunity to train and gain work experience to support them into employment. The scheme provides people with the chance to understand more about the adult social care sector and explore if it is the right job for them – providing a direct recruitment process, improving retention and helping to reduce local unemployment.

In addition to the core programme, we would look to further offer a wraparound package of support to the business, including:

- Practical training related to the induction - including health and safety, moving and positioning, hygiene and infection & prevention control and First Aid;
- Support the candidate by providing the knowledge components of the Care Certificate to enable this to be completed quickly with their new employer;
- A fast track induction training available to the employer when they take on a new member of staff;
- Mentoring for the first month – an opportunity to discuss with a trainer involved in the programme issues/concerns in the first 4 weeks;
- An evaluation summary
- Publicity resources – a range of options that could be offered such as photographs to promote care work in their setting, support with their website to support better recruitment material and scope, virtual tours of their provision to promote on their website.

4.4.8 This project would require minimal resource from NNDC Officers, but poses the opportunity to create a good number of outputs - to be agreed through further project development and underpinned by an SLA.

## **5. Financial and resource implications**

5.1 The grants delivered to date have been undertaken using existing staff resource. Whilst this is a credit to the hard work of those Officers who have supported this thus far, it is considered that this position is not sustainable given increasing workloads and the Officer time required to commit to the project elements outlined in this paper. It also does not offer a position of comfort in terms of resilience (sickness, holidays etc).

## 5.2 Resource Requirement

It is considered that there is a need for a 1 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) role to support the ARG programme:

- Business Recovery and Resilience Grant – 2 to 2.5 days pw for an Admin Support Assistant (proposed to recruit from the Temporary Staff Register) to undertake day-to-day processing of grants (and if/as required to support the wider ARG project). Required until grant fully defrayed, no longer than March 2022.
- Visitor Economy Project – 2 to 2.5 days pw for an Admin Support Assistant (proposed to recruit from the Temporary Staff Register) to undertake day-to-day processing of VNN applications and upload on to VNN website (and if/as required to support the wider ARG project). Required until grant fully defrayed, no longer than March 2022.

5.3 The latter role could be undertaken by the same person or two individuals could be employed amounting to the 1 FTE. An appropriate Job Description for this post has gone through the Job Evaluation process which has been evaluated at Grade 10 (£20,903 to £22,627). This would equate to a maximum cost of £11,313.50 plus on-costs, assuming a 6 month commitment. Funding for this has been identified from money allocated to the Council to support the Council during the pandemic.

## 5.5 Projected Fund Allocations (also refer to Section 8.2)

Business Recovery and Resilience Grant	£500,000
Visitor Economy Project	£180,000
Go Digital	£23,000
Care Sector	£10,000 (up to)
Total	<b>£713,000</b>

Whilst this represents an under-commitment, it provides the flexibility to consider other areas of support during the 6 months (to March 2022), including the potential to top up the grant schemes, which are likely to be oversubscribed anyhow.

## 6. Legal implications

6.1. The BRRG Guidance Document will be prepared in line with Government guidance and will be reviewed by Eastlaw prior to launch. All partners will be required to work within the agreed Terms and Conditions, established from the outset and underpinned by SLAs where appropriate.

## 7. Communications issues

7.1. The Council will wish to promote the Grant scheme and it is considered, subject to approval of the wider package of support as outlined, that the Council may wish to provide a communications release outlining the broader ambitions of the proposed programme and provide an update on the Council's delivery to date, which has been widely considered successful.

## 8. Risks

- 8.1 Should the Council not fully defray the ARG fund, then the Council will have to return any unspent funds. Whilst this is a legitimate position, it is something the Council would wish to avoid as this would represent a lost opportunity to maximise our support for the local economy through this fund.
- 8.2 To minimise risk, all project strands will have periodic monitoring reviews installed from commencement, including:
- ARG Programme Management meeting – to include the Director of Resource and Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Growth, Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth, the Economic Growth Manager and other Officers engaged in the delivery as required. A key responsibility of this group will be to review the funding position for the different strands. Given the Council strongly desires to fully commit the allocation, there may be a requirement to review the initial allocations for each strand, so as to maximise the fund use.
  - Business Recovery and Resilience Scheme - Panel Review meetings (no less than monthly) to include the Director of Resource and Portfolio for Sustainable Growth;
  - Go-Digital – NNDC will sit on the steering group committee, alongside other Norfolk Authorities;
  - Visitor Economy Programme – update report to VNN Board meetings, to include the Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth;
  - Sector Based Work Programme for Care Sector – monthly monitoring meetings with projects partners, to include the Business and Skills Support Co-ordinator.

## **9. Conclusions and Recommendations**

- 9.1 The ARG top up fund provides a good opportunity for the Council to further support the recovery of the local economy. Cabinet are requested to give consideration to the recommendations as outlined and provide their support for the identified project elements.