

**ANGUS COUNCIL – 13 MAY 2021**

**COVID-19 FUNDING – USE OF DELEGATED POWERS AND FURTHER PROPOSALS**

**REPORT BY IAN LORIMER, DIRECTOR OF FINANCE**

**ABSTRACT**

This report updates members on actions taken under delegated powers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic including the use of COVID-19 funding for specific purposes. The report also seeks member approval to use COVID-19 funding for an urgent purpose in advance of more detailed proposals on adjustments to 2021/22 budgets coming to Council in June 2021.

**1. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

It is recommended that the Council:

- (i) note the use of officer delegated authority as set out in sections 4 and 5 of this report;
- (ii) note that a report setting out proposed adjustments to the 2021/22 revenue budget for COVID-19 financial impacts will come to Council in June 2021; and
- (iii) approve the proposed use of Covid-19 funding for an urgent purpose as set out in Section 6 and Table 2 of this report.

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN**

2.1 This report contributes to the following strategic priorities in the Angus Council Plan, we want:

- Angus to be a go-to place for businesses
- Our communities to be strong, resilient and led by citizens

As will be evident from the report contents the Council and its staff continue to be on the front line in providing support to people and businesses in response to the pandemic and these support actions will contribute to many of the priorities and ambitions in the Council Plan

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 Reference is made to Report 328/20 – Angus Council – 17 December 2020 and to Report 333/20 to the same Council meeting. Through those reports the Council agreed to delegate to officers authority to undertake specific actions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic subject to reports being brought back to members advising of where those delegations had been exercised. This report advises members of where officers have exercised those delegations since the December 2020 Council meeting.

3.2 Responding to the pandemic continues to be a huge challenge and this report therefore seeks member agreement to use COVID-19 funding provided to the Council for a specific purpose as set out in the report in advance of a further more detailed report coming to Council in June 2021 setting out proposed adjustments to the 2021/22 General Fund Revenue Budget set on 4 March 2021.

**4. USE OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE DELEGATED POWERS**

4.1 In accordance with Report 328/20 the following use of delegated powers has been made since the 17 December 2020 Council meeting:-

Power Exercised	Date Exercised	Reason	Statutory Procedure related to function of Council
Variation to school transport contracts during part of January and February 2021 resulting in provision of support payments under the Council's Key Supplier Support arrangements	22 Jan 2021	Restrictions on the number of children permitted to attend school due to COVID-19 meant the Council did not need the normal level of school transport provision and accordingly 26 out of 28 contracts were varied. In line with the arrangements which applied during 2020 in the first national lockdown transport contractors were paid a proportion of what they were due under the contract in line with the Council's Key Supplier Support arrangements	School Transport – Section 51 of the Education (Scotland) Act
Use of COVID-19 Government funding to address food and financial insecurity affecting Angus citizens (£359,000)		<p>The Council was provided with time limited funding to support people experience food insecurity / financial hardship. Although the timescales for using this funding were subsequently extended in early March it was considered essential to address need as soon as possible. All costs were met from Government funding provided for this type of need.</p> <p>Used as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency Funds Angus Carers - £20k</li> <li>• Hardship grants Kirrie Connections - £4k</li> <li>• (£2k to come from another source)</li> <li>• Direct payment of £100 to families entitled to free school meals - £254k</li> <li>• School Grant hardship fund for head teachers - £75k</li> <li>• Voluntary Action Angus – Food packs - £6k</li> </ul> <p>Total =£359k</p>	
Use of COVID-19 Government funding to address hardship (£7,000) and for the administration of business support grants (£185,800)	8 Apr 2021	<p>Significant additional workloads for the economic development and communications teams have arisen from administration of business support grant and general communications work so approval was given to use funding to deliver this work to buy in additional support including temporary staff. All commitments are short term/one-off.</p> <p>Used as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grants Co-ordinator £49.7k</li> <li>• Comms Capacity incl. Social Media Support, tools and training - £78.7k</li> <li>• Business grant processing staff overtime - £7k</li> <li>• Econ Development sector support – staff backfill - £38.4k</li> <li>• Completion of Sustainable Energy &amp; Climate Action Plan (SECAP) - £12k</li> </ul> <p>Total = £185.8k</p> <p>Kirrie Connections – Wellbeing Sessions - £5k and Hardship Grants - £2k to be funded using SG hardship funding</p>	

## 5. USE OF DIRECTOR DELEGATED POWERS

- 5.1 Report 333/20 authorised a number of Directors to exercise delegated powers for specific purposes as set out in the following paragraphs.

### **1 – Discretionary Business Support Grant Scheme**

The Director – Strategic Policy, Transformation and Public Sector Reform following consultation with the Director – Finance, the Leaders of the Administration and Non-Administration and the Deputy Leader of the Administration was authorised to establish and implement a Discretionary Business Support Fund scheme (including establishing criteria for awarding such grants) subject to confirmation of funding, guidance and criteria from Scottish Government. This Scheme was launched in January 2021 based on funding of £30m nationally but following a significant increase in the funding for the scheme from the Scottish Government of a further £90m the local Angus scheme has been revised and expanded. Further details can be found on the Council’s website [https://www.angus.gov.uk/business/angus\\_council\\_discretionary\\_fund](https://www.angus.gov.uk/business/angus_council_discretionary_fund). The value of funding awarded to Angus Council is included in Table 1 below.

### **2 – £100 Winter Hardship Payment**

The Director of Finance, following consultation with the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning was given authority to make the winter hardship payment of £100 per child to eligible families in line with the Scottish Government’s eligibility criteria and on the basis set out in Section 5 of Report 333/20. These payments have now been made to just over 2,500 children. Further hardship payments are planned by the Scottish Government and have been or will be actioned under the Director of Finance’s delegated authority (see 3 below).

### **3 – Other Grants & Schemes**

The Director of Finance was given authority to administer and arrange the administration of payments whether under grant schemes or otherwise where the Scottish Government is funding such payments and has asked that local authorities in Scotland administer the payments, provided (i) that such administration does not require additional resources to be paid for by Angus Council and (ii) a follow up report is brought to Council or the relevant Committee or Sub-Committee confirming the detail of such payments.

The following table lists the instances where this delegation has been applied since the December Council meeting up to and including 4 May 2021. The table only covers those grants and schemes where the Council is acting as an “agent” (local administrator/deliverer) on behalf of the Scottish Government. In line with the delegation given it does not cover other COVID-19 funds allocated to the Council where the Council’s use of such funds is discretionary because the use of those funds will be the subject of separate reporting to members for approval. It also does not cover additional funding provided for delivery of existing / normal service provision.

**Table 1 – Government Grant Support/Schemes Angus Council is Delivering**

<b>Government Grant / Scheme *</b>	<b>Angus Allocation</b>	<b>Actions Taken</b>
Provision of free school meals during school holidays (Oct 20, Christmas 2020 and February 21)	£125,000	Vouchers have been provided to eligible families in line with Government requirements
Level 4 Welfare / Social Support (Flexible Fund)	£652,000	A grants sub-group of officers is assessing options for use including engagement with third sector – bids received and being assessed
Extension of local self-isolation assistance service	£43,890	The Council’s Contact Centre continues to support this work
Partnership Action for Continuous Employment (PACE) – No One Left Behind	£108,820	The Council has accepted this grant offer to deliver the programme which includes Key Worker support and single point of contact (SPOC) within local authorities and dedicated key support for those facing redundancy situations. Work being led by our Economic Development team
Additional Community Justice Funding	Up to £40,000	None – grant offer declined on the basis that there was no capacity to procure within the timescale provided and we had not fully utilised the s27 grant which was a condition
COVID 19 Strategic	£8,250,000	This is part of the numerous business support grant

Framework Business Fund			schemes being administered through the Economic Development team
Provision of free school meals during school closures (5 - 29 Jan 21)	£123,000		Vouchers have been provided to eligible families in line with Government requirements
Winter Plan For Social Protection – Funding For Vulnerable Children Young People	£336,633		Money has been used to support a discretionary fund for families, support residential provision for children, extend specific support such as domestic abuse and young carers Is subject to a separate report to Children & Learning Committee
Business Support Fund (Hospitality – large self-catering exclusive use)	£130,000		Support provided in line with the scheme
Business Support Fund (Hospitality – small providers paying Council Tax) – 3 waves	£132,000		Support provided in line with the scheme
Business Support - Taxi and Private Hire Driver Support Fund	£429,088		Applications from eligible applicants have been invited and processed in line with the scheme
Business Support - Brewers, Travel Agents And Indoor Football Centres (Contingency Plus)	£60,000 + £10,000		Support provided in line with the scheme
Provision of free school meals during school closures (2 – 26 Feb 21)	£102,000		Vouchers have been provided to eligible families in line with Government requirements
Temporary Restrictions Fund For Childcare Providers	£101,000		Support provided in line with the scheme
Strategic Framework Business Fund – Hospitality, Retail And Leisure Sector Top-Up Payments	£4,522,400		Support provided in line with the scheme (3 tranches)
Provision of free school meals during school holidays (Easter 2021)	£75,000		Vouchers have been provided to eligible families in line with Government requirements
£100 Spring Hardship Payment	£292,030		These payments have been made to the families of just under 3,000 children
Tackling Financial Insecurity – Additional Funding	£359,000		A grants sub-group of officers is assessing options for use including engagement with third sector – bids received and being assessed
Provision of free school meals during school closures/restrictions (1 Mar – 1 Apr 21)	£82,000		Vouchers have been provided to eligible families in line with Government requirements
Funding for Justice Social Work for Recovery Work Linked to The Pandemic 2021-22	£286,187		Approach to use of the funding being assessed by Children, Families & Justice service
Business Support Grants - Local Authority Discretionary Fund (under Director – Strategic Policy, etc. delegation)	£1,904,920		This fund was intended to empower local authorities to direct additional financial support to specific groups or sectors within the business community where they consider this to be necessary or justified based on distinct characteristics of their local economy.
£500 thank you payment to third party social care providers	£3,312.249		Being actioned in line with Government requirements
Strategic Framework Business Fund – Transition Payments and Scottish Restart Grants 2021/22	£7,691,179		Final payments to businesses.

\* - for some of these schemes the Council has been provided with an element of funding for administration. The sums shown in the table are only for the delivery element.

5.2 It is probable that further grants and schemes will be brought forward by the Scottish Government as the 2021/22 financial year progresses and these will be actioned as follows:-

- i. Council acting in agency capacity (local administrator/deliverer on behalf of Scottish Government where the Government set the criteria, etc.) – Director of Finance delegation from Report 333/20 will be applied;
- ii. Council able to use the funding on a wholly discretionary basis – will be reported to members for prior approval before funds used (unless in case of urgency the Chief Executive's emergency powers require to be used)

## 6. PROPOSED USE OF COVID-19 FUNDING FOR URGENT PROJECTS/ISSUES

- 6.1 Reference is made to report 72/21 submitted to the special budget setting meeting of the Council on 4 March 2021. That report recommended setting the 2021/22 revenue budget excluding the detail of potential costs and funding associated with COVID-19 and that COVID-19 implications for the Council's budget form part of budget revisions to be made during financial year 2021/22 when there is sufficient information and clarity to adjust budgets with confidence. The report also noted an intention to bring an update report to the May 2021 cycle of meetings setting out proposals for initial COVID-19 related adjustments to 2021/22 revenue budgets, including the impact of recent funding announcements.
- 6.2 Work to identify adjustments to the 2021/22 revenue budget is well underway and a full report on proposed adjustments will be brought to Council in the June cycle taking account of the very latest position on the pandemic and guidance for the operation of public services including schools. Finance officers are also assessing the year end position for financial year 2020/21 and as indicated in Report 72/21 the expectation is that significant COVID-19 funding allocated to the Council will carry over into the 2021/22 financial year.
- 6.3 While the intention is to seek agreement to a number of COVID-19 budget adjustment in June 2021 there is one proposal for which relevant officers are seeking an earlier decision primarily so that issues can be addressed now. This initial request of £55,000 is in Table 2 below and members are being asked to approve this using the funding source indicated.

**Table 2 – Urgent Projects/Issues seeking approval**

Project / Issue	Cost	Proposed Funding
1. Contact Centre/Business Support – funding required to backfill for Team Leader, LG12 to support the recovery and redevelopment of Business Support and the Contact Centre and to identify and deliver better customer service, operational efficiencies and to meet savings targets. Backfill required due to secondment of Team Leader to support the Contact Centre's Covid response.	£55,000	General COVID funding 2021/22 (£5.656m)

## 7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 In all cases where delegated authority has been exercised the financial impact is covered by additional government funding provided to the Council as COVID-19 funding for specific schemes the Government has asked Councils to administer on their behalf. In relation to the cessation of school transport (see Table in Section 4 of this report) the costs of providing support under the Council's Key Supplier Support arrangements have been met from the existing budget for school transport provision. The proposal in Table 2 can be funded from the additional funding allocated to the Council as shown in the table.

## 8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried and is attached.

**NOTE:** No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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## Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment Form

(To be completed with reference to Guidance Notes)

### Step 1

**Name of Proposal** (includes e. g. budget savings, committee reports, strategies, policies, procedures, service reviews, functions): COVID-19 FUNDING – USE OF DELEGATED POWERS AND FURTHER PROPOSALS

### Step 2

Is this only a **screening** Equality Impact Assessment Yes/No  
**(A)** If Yes, please choose from the following options **all** reasons why a full EIA/FSD is not required:

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| (i) It does not impact on people   | Yes/No |
| (ii) It is a percentage increase in fees which has no differential impact on protected characteristics | Yes/No |
| (iii) It is for information only   | Yes/No |
| (iv) It is reflective e.g. of budget spend over a financial year                                       | Yes/No |
| (v) It is technical  | Yes/No |

If you have answered yes to any of points above, please go to **Step 16**, and sign off the Assessment.

**(B)** If you have answered No to the above, please indicate the following:

Is this a full Equality Impact Assessment	Yes/ <del>No</del>
Is this a Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment	<del>Yes</del> /No

If you have answered Yes to either or both of the above, continue with Step 3.

If your proposal is a **strategy** please ensure you complete Step 13 which is the Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment.

### Step 3

(i) Lead Directorate/Service: Finance (for reporting purposes only – delivery has been by a number of services)

(ii) Are there any **relevant** statutory requirements affecting this proposal? If so, please describe.

None

(iii) What is the aim of the proposal? Please give full details.

To advise members of where officers have used delegated authority in responding to the pandemic and in using COVID-19 funding provided by the Government and to seek approval for additional expenditure for urgent projects/issues

(iv) Is it a new proposal?      Yes/~~No~~      Please indicate      OR

Is it a review of e.g. an existing budget saving, report, strategy, policy, service review, procedure or function?      ~~Yes~~/No      Please indicate

**Step 4: Which people does your proposal involve or have consequences for?**

Please indicate all which apply:

Employees                      Yes/~~No~~

Job Applicants                ~~Yes~~/No

Service users                 Yes/~~No~~

Members of the public      Yes/~~No~~

**Step 5: List the evidence/data/research that has been used in this assessment (links to data sources, information etc which you may find useful are in the Guidance). This could include:**

**Internal data** (e.g. customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints).

Some Data used to deliver Government support schemes has come from local information systems such as SEEMIS, our licensing system or our non-domestic rates system. In the main the Council has been asked to deliver support to eligible cohorts using data / criteria provided.

**Internal consultation** (e.g. with staff, trade unions and any other services affected).

Proposals have been subject to consultation internally and with third sector partners and some of the funding is being used to support projects proposed by partners

**External data** (e.g. Census, equality reports, equality evidence finder, performance reports, research, available statistics)

For some support schemes the Council has been provided with data on eligible applicants by Government

**External consultation** (e.g. partner organisations, national organisations, community groups, other councils).

Proposals have been subject to consultation internally and with third sector partners and some of the funding is being used to support projects proposed by partners.

**Other** (general information as appropriate).

In the main for the actions and issues covered by this report the Council has been an agent of the Scottish Government and has delivered the support schemes as directed. Where discretion has been applied this has been based on assessment of needs and use of existing eligibility criteria such as free school meals data so support is targeted

**Step 6: Evidence Gaps.**

Are there any gaps in the equality information you currently hold?      Yes/~~No~~

If yes, please state what they are, and what measures you will take to obtain the evidence you need.

For discretionary support schemes it is difficult to know whether we are reaching all those in need but every effort is being made to do so through information available internally and through partners e.g. via schools leadership, welfare rights and third sector partners

**Step 7: Are there potential differential impacts on protected characteristic groups?** Please complete for each group, including details of the potential impact on those affected. Please remember to take into account any particular impact resulting from **Covid-19**.

**Please state if there is a potentially positive, negative, neutral or unknown impact for each group. Please state the reason(s) why.**

Age

**Impact**

Some of the actions and support will have a positive impact on older people (who may be shielding or otherwise unable to access services normally) and younger people who might otherwise go without proper food/clothing

Disability

**Impact**

Some of the actions and support will have a positive impact on disabled people (who may be shielding or otherwise unable to access services normally)

Gender reassignment

**Impact**

None



Marriage and Civil Partnership

**Impact**

None

Pregnancy/Maternity

**Impact**

None

Race - (includes Gypsy Travellers)

**Impact**

None

Religion or Belief

**Impact**

None

Sex

**Impact**

Some of the actions and support will have a positive impact on women by providing a source of funding which may not otherwise have been available

Sexual orientation

**Impact**

None

**Step 8: Consultation with any of the groups potentially affected**

If you have consulted with any group potentially affected, please give details of how this was done and what the results were.

None

If you have not consulted with any group potentially affected, how have you ensured that you can make an informed decision about mitigating action of any negative impact (Step 9)?

No negative impacts have been identified

**Step 9: What mitigating steps will be taken to remove or reduce potentially negative impacts?**

Not required

**Step 10: If a potentially negative impact has been identified, please state below the justification.**

Not applicable

**Step 11: In what way does this proposal contribute to any or all of the public sector equality duty to:** eliminate unlawful discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between people of different protected characteristics?

The actions taken are considered to have had a positive impact some of that likely to have been more apparent and important for some groups with protected characteristics as described in Step 7

**Step 12: Is there any action which could be taken to advance equalities in relation to this proposal?**

No

**Step 13: FAIRER SCOTLAND DUTY**

This step is only applicable to **strategies** which are key, high level decisions. If your proposal is **not** a strategy, please leave this Step blank, and go to Step 14.

**Step 14: What arrangements will be put in place to monitor and review the Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment?**

Support arrangements are subject to ongoing review as part of the Council's pandemic response

**Step 15: Where will this Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment be published?**

As part of the report

**Step 16: Sign off and Authorisation.** Please state name, post, and date for each:

Prepared by: Ian Lorimer, 9 April 2021

Reviewed by:

Approved by:

NB. There are several worked examples of separate EIA and FSD Assessments in the Guidance which may be of use to you.

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