

REPORT TO INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE – 14th MAY 2020

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SERVICE RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ECONOMIC RENEWAL PROPOSALS

1 Reason for Report / Summary

- 1.1 This report updates Councillors on the actions taken by the Council's Economic Development Service in response to the COVID-19 outbreak and seeks approval for a package of renewal measures to support Aberdeenshire businesses to deal with some of the short to medium-term impacts of the outbreak.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the proactive approach and interventions undertaken by the Economic Development Service in immediate response to the COVID-19 outbreak and its particular impacts on businesses and residents;**
- 2.2 Approve the COVID-19 renewal package and measures as set out in paragraphs 4.20-4.22, noting that some of these interventions may have already started in response to specific business needs under existing officer delegations;**
- 2.3 Approve the use of up to £175,000 of the unallocated regeneration reserve to deliver renewal activities in town centres across Aberdeenshire;**
- 2.4 Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure Services, following consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair and Opposition Spokesperson for Infrastructure Services Committee to approve appropriate and timeous changes to the renewal package in order to ensure that the proposals remain relevant to the needs of the Aberdeenshire economy and continue to add value alongside other activity and investments;**
- 2.5 Approve the drawing down of additional EU funding resources to support the Council's COVID-19 renewal package and deliver enhanced services to businesses and individuals.**

3 Purpose and Decision Making Route

- 3.1 The COVID-19 crisis has had a significant and potentially lasting impact on Aberdeenshire's economy, our communities and residents. The Council's

Economic Development Service has worked closely with other internal services and external partners to deliver as effective a response as possible given the restrictions placed on all organisations and people. This report sets out the work that has been done to date and changes to the Economic Development Service's priorities that are proposed as a result of the crisis and to support a strong renewal for the Aberdeenshire economy.

- 3.2 Due to the urgent and rapidly changing nature of economic pressures and demands, some of the activities set out in this report may have already started utilising existing delegated powers, exercised in consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair and Opposition Spokesperson of the Infrastructure Services Committee. If this is the case, a verbal update will be provided to Members at the Committee meeting.

4 Discussion

Response to immediate issues caused by the pandemic

- 4.1 The economic impact of the pandemic cannot be underestimated. Numerous reports have been published setting out the global and national implications, most forecasting a wide range of potential outcomes, all of which are very negative in the short to medium term. In terms of reported data, the following gives an indication of the scale of the issues at hand:
- 21% increase in the number of business dissolutions in Scotland in March 2020 (compared to March 2019, <https://www.enterpriseresearch.ac.uk/uk-companies-facing-covid-19-pincer-movement-data-shows/>)
 - 76% of UK firms have furloughed some or all of their staff. 51% of UK firms have three months cash flow or less in their reserves (<https://www.britishchambers.org.uk/page/bcc-coronavirus-business-impact-tracker>)
 - 73% of Scottish firms in the accommodation and food services sector report that they will not be able to survive for more than 3 months if current trading conditions continue (https://fraserofallander.org/scottish-economy/scottish-business-monitor-findings-by-sector/?utm_source=Fraser+Blog+and+subs+list&utm_campaign=c365ef5eab-Email-Blog-RSS&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c855ea57f7-c365ef5eab-82692294)
 - Over 1.4 million applications (UK-wide) have been made for Universal Credit since the middle of March (DWP)
 - Oil and Gas UK predicts at least 30,000 job losses in the sector in the next 12-18 months (<https://oilandgasuk.co.uk/call-for-three-stage-framework-to-help-head-off-thousands-of-job-losses-in-oil-and-gas-industry/>)

Please note that these statistics were current at the time the report was published, and a short presentation will be made to the Committee with updated local figures, where these have become available.

- 4.2 As the scale of the outbreak became clear and UK and Scottish Government restrictions on the hospitality, leisure and retail sectors were announced (Fri 20th March), followed by the wider 'lockdown' restrictions (Mon 23rd March), the Economic Development Service implemented an immediate review of its services and activities with a view to repurposing all of its staff and resources to supporting businesses and people affected by the crisis. To date, the service response has focused on the following areas:

Business Gateway

- 4.3 The Business Gateway service for Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City, contracted by Aberdeenshire Council and delivered by Elevator, has been refocused to support survival of local businesses during the immediate disruption caused by the lockdown. The contract for 2020-21 has been reviewed and revised so that it no longer focuses principally on business start-ups, although it is anticipated that start-up activity will revive later in the year.
- 4.4 All workshops scheduled by Business Gateway are being delivered online and take-up is high. 1-to-1 support for client companies is continuing by phone and email and the Digital Boost programme has been extended until the end of June 2020. Business Gateway have been able to offer specialist HR and emergency cash-flow planning support as a core part of their response.
- 4.5 Business Gateway directors have been supporting the Council's programme of webinars for local business communities and are actively involved in promotion of the variety of support services and funding streams that are available to businesses in the North East.

Coronavirus business support grants / other sector grants

- 4.6 The Council's Business Rates Team are managing the [Coronavirus business support grant and rates relief fund](#) for Aberdeenshire. They have processed 2,520 applications, issuing grants with a total value in excess of £29,310,000 as at 1st May. The Economic Development Service has been proactively promoting the availability of coronavirus business support grants (funded by the Scottish Government) to eligible businesses. Business Development Executives in particular have been supporting companies to apply. Sector specific grants (e.g. fishing and fish processing; creative industries) are being actively promoted on the Council's COVID-19 business page and via the Economic Development Service's social media channels.
- 4.7 The Economic Development Service has been keeping a log of enquiries from businesses, averaging 30 per week. The overwhelming majority of these enquiries have been about eligibility for the grant scheme.

Support for Aberdeenshire Business (SAB) scheme

- 4.8 The last SAB grant award panel met on 18th March 2020. It was agreed at that point that the scheme should be suspended and repurposed to support the COVID-19 response. Subsequently, numerous UK and Scottish Government grant and loan schemes were announced and the focus of the future SAB scheme has therefore shifted to supporting businesses in the renewal phase. Further details are provided in section 5 below.
- 4.9 For businesses with outstanding SAB loans, a 3-month repayment holiday was implemented covering April, May and June. This will be reviewed during May and any extensions to the repayment holiday will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Self-employed hardship scheme

- 4.10 The Scottish Government has announced a £34million investment in a self-employed hardship scheme which will support people who are newly self-employed and who haven't yet submitted a tax return. This group is not eligible for the UK Government's Self Employment Income Support scheme. The scheme was launched on 30th April. Aberdeenshire's anticipated allocation of the fund is £1.8million, which at a nationally agreed grant level of £2,000 will support up to 900 newly self-employed people in Aberdeenshire.
- 4.11 The Economic Development service is leading on the delivery of the [Aberdeenshire Self Employed hardship fund scheme](#), managing the application process and undertaking appropriate levels of due diligence. Finance and business support teams have worked on the implementation of the scheme through access to the Civica system and through releasing staff to help with the administrative and processing requirements. A verbal update on the number of applications received will be offered at the Committee meeting.

Employability and supporting people at risk of redundancy

- 4.12 The Employability Support Team's keyworkers have continued to manage their caseloads via phone / video calls. All group activity has been suspended. Much of the team's work has been focused on advising clients about hardship resources available to them. Referral to online training opportunities has continued and the team have also been supporting companies with short-term workforce pressures such as those in the larger retail and agricultural sectors.
- 4.13 The Aberdeenshire Employability Partnership's website ([Employment Connect](#)) is regularly updated with COVID-19 updates and provides a public-facing resource for employment support.
- 4.14 The team continues to work with the Department for Work and Pensions and Skills Development Scotland on national response initiatives such as Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (for larger scale redundancies) and No-One Left Behind. Further flexibilities are being sought for funding streams that are devolved to local authorities to enable locally relevant COVID-19 responses to be developed.

Communications and promotion

- 4.15 The Economic Development Service has been managing the Council's business-facing COVID-19 web resources and updating the [page](#) and information for the Grampian Coronavirus Assistance Hub and Elected Members as and when new initiatives have been announced. The service has also been actively promoting the availability of support services and good news stories (e.g. Banff Academy's production of Personal Protection Equipment face masks) through its [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) feeds.
- 4.16 In addition to online promotion, the service has been hosting webinars for business associations and Business Improvement Districts, providing updates to local firms on support services available to them. Officers have also been participating in webinars organised by third parties such as the Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI) and Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce.

Business as usual

- 4.17 Officers within the service have also been working hard to ensure that, where possible and appropriate, business as usual continues. This is particularly relevant to the work of the Regeneration and European Funding teams, where contract and funding deadlines require to be met, funding applications need considered and grants need paid. Some revenue projects are continuing to operate, albeit with changed delivery models. All of the capital programmes funded through regeneration plans and programmes such as LEADER are paused due to national restrictions on construction and deadlines have been eased to accommodate the delay. In April, the Council received confirmation that the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund application for the Vinery project in Banff had been confirmed, which will see an investment in excess of £660,000 to bring a derelict building back into community use in Banff.
- 4.18 Our collaboration with Aberdeen City Council on Invest Aberdeen also continues to operate and a number of live enquiries related to sites and potential investments in Aberdeenshire are being actively handled.

Regional Economic Strategy

- 4.19 It had been planned to report to the Committee with a new economic vision on behalf of North East Scotland. However, with the current crisis this work will need to be amended. It is important that a wider North East Economic Recovery plan is developed that will tie together the work and support being offered by economic development agencies, organisations and membership bodies. A further report to the Committee on this will be forthcoming.

Proposals to support Aberdeenshire's economic renewal – Aberdeenshire Back to Business

- 4.20 These proposals will form a coherent and holistic package of support for businesses and communities to optimise opportunities for economic growth,

jobs and revival as the pandemic restrictions start to ease. They have been developed with reference to UK and Scottish Government support schemes and will be under continuous review to ensure that they do not duplicate any new schemes that might be announced by the national governments, their economic development agencies, sector representative bodies or other funding bodies in the coming weeks and months.

- 4.21 Approval is therefore sought in this report for the appropriate delegated authority to enable changes to the Economic Development Service's renewal package to be made in a timeous manner, should new initiatives and funding become available that may displace Aberdeenshire Council funding or activity.
- 4.22 The proposals set out in the table below are intended to be for the remainder of the 2020-21 financial year in the first instance. Where funding allows (e.g. the wage subsidy and Business Gateway programmes), activity may continue into 2021-22. References to European Union funding relate to the UK Government underwriting provisions of the European Structural Funds programmes, which allow for funding committed in the 2014-2020 programme to be spent until the end of 2023.

ABERDEENSHIRE BACK TO BUSINESS – RENEWAL AND GROWTH PROGRAMME

Title	Description	Criteria	Outcomes	Aberdeenshire Council funding	External funding sought / contributed
Aberdeenshire Town Centre Phoenix Fund	<p>A new grant fund, allocating a set amount to town centre groups (Traders' or Business Associations, Business Improvement Districts, Community Councils or other appropriate accountable bodies) to deliver partnership activities to support town centre revival.</p> <p>Grants of £10,000 will be made available to each of the 13 key town centres¹ and of £5,000 to 9 of Aberdeenshire's smaller town centres².</p> <p>A currently vacant Regeneration Project Officer post will be temporarily filled to support delivery of this scheme.</p>	<p>Town centres as set out below. No prescribed activities but likely to include town marketing campaigns, loyalty and voucher schemes, digital platforms etc.</p>	<p>Locally decided, but likely to include:</p> <p>Increased footfall; businesses participating; volunteers engaged; events held / attendees; marketing campaigns</p>	<p>Up to £175,000 from previously unallocated Regeneration Reserves</p>	<p>Costs could be mitigated by contribution from the Crown Estate (coastal communities) Fund, pending any flexibility in the use of this fund as part of COVID-19 response.</p>
Town Centre Retail Support	<p>Retailers and businesses in Banchory, Huntly and Stonehaven have been supported through LEADER funds with consultancy advice on how to improve their retail performance and access new markets. This fund would offer up to £500 per business to support implementation of the consultants' recommendations.</p>	<p>Retailers and businesses supported through the LEADER funded programme. Businesses will contribute match at same level.</p>	<p>Number of improvement projects implemented; improved business outcomes</p>	<p>£22,500, agreed at ISC in March 2020</p>	<p>Builds on existing LEADER investment</p>

¹ Ballater, Banchory, Banff, Ellon, Fraserburgh, Huntly, Inverurie, Macduff, Peterhead, Portlethen, Stonehaven, Turriff, Westhill

² Aboyne, Alford, Braemar, Kemnay, Kintore, Laurencekirk, Mintlaw, Newtonhill, Oldmeldrum

Title	Description	Criteria	Outcomes	Aberdeenshire Council funding	External funding sought / contributed
Business Resilience and Sustainability Fund ³	<p>A scheme has been designed which focuses on the following core aspirations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables viable businesses to invest in diversification proposals for new products and / or markets; • Supports businesses to respond to public expectations around climate change and net zero; • Builds digital resilience and ensures that all businesses that could trade online have the platform and skills to do so; • Enables businesses to secure accreditations that will improve their market position and access to new markets (e.g. SALSA accreditation for food and drink producers); • Supports digital and / or net zero audits to help companies to access other grant funds and plan their own investments; • Builds on crisis grant schemes for smaller businesses and the hospitality, retail, tourism and leisure sectors and removes the requirement for businesses to be (or aspire to be) trading out with Aberdeenshire 	<p>Priority will be given to sectors most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and those with the most significant growth potential, but no sector will be ineligible. The fund will only be available to SMEs, co-operatives and social enterprises that are based in Aberdeenshire.</p>	<p>Likely to include:</p> <p>Business supported; investment leverage; jobs sustained or created; accreditations secured; audits undertaken; new markets accessed or new products developed</p>	<p>£157,500 remains in Economic Development budget to support this activity</p>	<p>Fund could be enhanced with Crown Estate (coastal communities) fund subject to any flexibilities on this year's allocation that might be announced by the Scottish Government. Other funding streams will be kept under review and aligned where possible.</p>

³ Governance and decision-making processes for managing applications and the release of funds have been streamlined and lessons learned from the changed working practices of recent months have been built in to the new process. Subject to Committee approval of the overall approach as outlined here, it is intended to launch the scheme before the end of May

Title	Description	Criteria	Outcomes	Aberdeenshire Council funding	External funding sought / contributed
Business Gateway service expansion (includes Aberdeen city)	<p>An opportunity has arisen to draw down an additional £600,000 of European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) to significantly expand the services offered through the Business Gateway programme. This would involve matching the existing Business Gateway contract against ERDF to deliver a range of new renewal focused services, including:</p> <p><u>Re-ignition programmes and launch-pad grants</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 10 x cohorts of 10-15 people; ○ Business development and market development activities; ○ Monthly meet ups and access to wider networking with Business Gateway alumni; ○ Investment showcases – pitching opportunities; ○ £3,000 grant for individuals on completion of the programme <p><u>Extension of Expert Help programme</u> Additional 300 days of Expert Help support for qualifying businesses focused on marketing support, HR, sales, financial resilience and merchandising.</p> <p><u>Community Business Hubs</u> The creation of new business hubs at locations (TBC) to encourage businesses to drop-in, network and utilise digital equipment to progress their business ideas.</p>	SMEs based in Aberdeenshire with the potential to grow. Target cohorts might include the under 25s; women entrepreneurs; sector specific cohorts; hospitality and leisure businesses and / or town centre specific cohorts	Businesses supported; grants awarded; investment secured; community hubs established and footfall / usage	Business Gateway core contract (value £800,000 p/a)	Up to an additional £600,000 European Regional Development Fund

Title	Description	Criteria	Outcomes	Aberdeenshire Council funding	External funding sought / contributed
Aberdeenshire Jobs programme	Recruit two additional employability keyworker posts to manage the anticipated increase in demand for employment support and to deliver a wage subsidy scheme for employers, which would pay wages at 30hrs/week at the minimum wage for 6 months for new jobs created. Activity under this programme will be developed in conjunction with the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Group (currently approving Fairer Aberdeenshire Fund awards) and with the wider employability partnership.	Support would be targeted at unemployed people in Aberdeenshire and at businesses looking to recruit.	Up to 300 jobs supported through wage subsidies. Up to 500 unemployed people supported each year.	£905,569 combination of existing Economic Development budget and No-One Left Behind	Up to £960,000 European Social Fund ⁴⁵

⁴ Infrastructure Services Committee agreed on 28 November 2019 to withdraw the Council’s ESF Phase 2 extension bids and close the programmes. This new proposal is to proceed with Phase 2, but deliver in house by Council Services rather than allocate direct grants to external groups. This delivery model would mitigate many of the risks of delivering ESF programmes and ensure that the Council has more direct control over delivery and the achievement of outcomes.

⁵ Both of the European funding proposals require Committee’s approval to proceed and, if approved, will be considered by the Scottish Government’s Managing Authority Assessment Panel in June. Taken together, they will result in an additional £1,562,311 being invested in COVID-19 economic renewal activity in Aberdeenshire over the next two years.

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 5.1 This report helps deliver Council Priority 1 - Support a strong, sustainable, diverse and successful economy; Council Priority 8 - Work to reduce poverty and inequalities within our communities; and Council Priority 11 - Protect our special environment, including tackling climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- 5.2 The actions recommended in this report support Aberdeenshire Council's overall response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 5.3 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial	x		
Staffing	x		
Equalities	x [EIA attached as Appendix 1]		
Fairer Scotland Duty	x [EIA attached as Appendix 1]		
Town Centre First	x [TCFP impact assessment attached as Appendix 2]		
Sustainability	x		
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing		x	

- 5.4 An equality impact assessment has been carried out as part of the development of the proposals set out above. It is included as Appendix 1 and there are positive impacts as follows:
- Up to 300 jobs supported through new wage subsidy scheme, targeted at people who have multiple barriers to employment
 - Up to 500 unemployed people per year supported by keyworker
 - Grants to encourage business diversification and consideration of opportunities related to digital and net zero
 - Approximately 20 grants awarded to town centre partnerships to support promotional activity, community based responses to the pandemic and the easing of restrictions

5.5 The staffing / financial / sustainability implications are as follows:

- Staffing – the proposals include the establishment of two new fixed-term keyworker posts within the Employment Support Team and enhanced arrangements for supporting the delivery of the European funded projects through additional staff capacity in the European Funding and Programmes team. These posts will be funded from the European programmes. Existing officers across the service will continue to focus on COVID-19 responses and the delivery of the renewal package, alongside business as usual, for the remainder of this financial year
- Financial – the proposals seek to refocus most of the service's discretionary budgets on the COVID-19 renewal package as set out in paragraphs 4.10-4.16. It is anticipated that this will be a temporary package for this financial year only, although this will be reviewed before the end of the 2020 calendar year. In addition to service budgets, the report proposes that the Council accesses additional European funds to support the renewal package (through in-house delivery) and that some of the next annual allocation of the Crown Estate / Coastal Communities Fund could be pooled into the proposed Business Resilience and Sustainability Fund. Finally, the report recommends releasing up to £175,000 of uncommitted funds from the regeneration reserve to support town centre revival across Aberdeenshire. These funds are part of the balance in the regeneration reserve after accounting for the forecast spend on all of the approved town Vision and Action Plans, the Property Investment Fund and Resourcing allocations to 2022
- Sustainability – it is anticipated that the proposals in this report will have positive sustainability implications. The addition of climate change / net zero as a specific ambition for the Business Resilience and Sustainability Fund will encourage businesses to consider adaptation and new market opportunities that respond to the net zero agenda. Building on the service's response to the COVID-19 lockdown measures, more emphasis will be placed on service delivery through webinars and video / conference calls to reduce the requirement for travel

5.6 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a [Corporate Level](#):

- ACORP001 – budget pressures
- ACORP004 – business and organisational change
- ACORP005 – working with other organisations
- ACORP006 – reputation management
- ACORP007 – social risk (e.g. poverty and social inequality)

The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a [Strategic Level](#):

- ISSR002 – regeneration
- ISSR008 – economic development

6 Scheme of Governance

- 6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and they are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.
- 6.2 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of Section F.1.1b of the [List of Committee Powers in Part 2A](#) of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to policy issues and resource matters for the Economic Development Service.

Stephen Archer
Director of Infrastructure Services

Report prepared by Matt Lockley, Service Manager, Economic Development, Date 30 April 2020

List of Appendices

1. Equalities Impact Assessment
2. Town Centre First Principle Impact Assessment

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

EIA Version	Date	Author	Changes
1.0	29.04.2020	Matt Lockley	

Stage 1: Title and aims of the activity (“activity” is an umbrella term covering policies, procedures, guidance and decisions including those that affect services the council delivers).	
Service	Economic Development
Section	N/A
Title of the activity etc.	COVID-19 recovery and renewal package
Aims and desired outcomes of the activity	To support businesses and communities with a package of economic and employment related activity during the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic
Author(s) & Title(s)	Matt Lockley Economic Development Service response to COVID-19 pandemic and economic renewal proposals

Stage 2: List the evidence that has been used in this assessment and explain what it means in relation to the activity you are assessing.

Evidence	What does it say?	What does it mean?
Internal data (customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints).	Data from the revenues team in terms of their delivery of the coronavirus business grants scheme suggests that many businesses are confused about the grants and services available to them or are not eligible. Issues with digital capability and access have also been flagged. Property services are handling requests for rent abatement from business tenants. Economic Development officers are supporting businesses and sector / town centre organisations with specific issues that have arisen as a result of the lockdown.	Proposed services and activities in the recovery package are based on intelligence from internal colleagues across a range of services. The recovery package is intended to be flexible and responsive to changing circumstances and delegated authority is being sought to be able to amend services in response to any further government interventions or specific economic pressures.
Internal consultation with staff and other services affected.	Businesses may need access to specialist advice as the pandemic restrictions are gradually lifted in order to pursue new business opportunities. Consultation with Environmental Health and Trading Standards teams.	Offer of support from Environmental Health and Trading Standards teams to be built into the overall package.
External consultation (partner organisations, community groups, and councils).	Ongoing review through various partnership mechanisms (e.g. Cairngorms National Park Authority; Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Group; Regional Economic Strategy Group).	Continue to ensure that Economic Development Service responses are adding value to wider partnership efforts. Seek regular feedback on key issues from Grampian Coronavirus Assistance Hub.
External data (census, available statistics).	Economic and employment data is regularly reviewed both internally and with partner organisations. Forecasts are for significant economic impacts across Aberdeenshire, with likely high rates of unemployment and benefit claimant numbers increasing to up to 10% of the working age population.	Report proposes increased capacity within Employment Support Team to work with people who have lost their jobs and those furthest from the labour market. Accessing additional European funds to support labour market interventions and business support activity. Negotiating with Scottish Government on flexibilities for future funding streams (e.g. Crown Estate).

Other (general information as appropriate).	NA	
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Stage 3: Evidence Gaps.	
Are there any gaps in the information you currently hold?	No

Stage 4: Measures to fill the evidence gaps.		
What measures will be taken to fill the information gaps before the activity is implemented? These should be included in the action plan at the back of this form.	Measures:	Timescale:

Stage 5: What steps can be taken to promote good relations between various groups/areas?	
These should be included in the action plan.	

Stage 6: How does the policy/activity create opportunities for advancing equality of opportunity?
The activities set out in the report aim to mitigate some of the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and enable businesses and communities to build new opportunities during the recovery and renewal phase. They include a wage subsidy scheme to encourage new employment and a town centre revitalisation grant scheme which will support new partnerships to come together to generate new ideas for their communities.

Stage 7a:
Are there potential impacts on protected groups?
The protected groups covered by the equality duty are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
Who is affected by the activity or who is intended to benefit from the proposed activity and how? Complete the table below for each protected group by inserting "yes" in the applicable box/boxes below.

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unknown
Age – Younger			Yes	
Age - Older	Yes			
Disability	Yes			
Race – (includes Gypsy Travellers)			Yes	
Religion or Belief			Yes	
Sex			Yes	
Pregnancy and maternity			Yes	
Sexual orientation – (includes Lesbian/ Gay/Bisexual)			Yes	
Gender reassignment – (includes Transgender)			Yes	
Marriage and Civil Partnership			Yes	

Stage 7b: Do you have evidence or reason to believe that this policy, activity etc. will or may impact on socio-economic inequalities?

This is about trying to be fair to everyone. Part of that is realising that not everyone may be starting at the same place. Some individuals and families may have low income, may have very little or no savings which means they are living from month to month therefore changes to council policies/services may have a greater adverse impact on them.

On this basis you should consider potential impacts on individuals/families by:

- Place: on specific vulnerable areas or communities (SIMD, regeneration, rural) e.g. housing, transport.
- Pockets: household resources, (Income, benefits, outgoings) ability to access a service
- Prospects: peoples life chances e.g.access to, or ability to access: employment, training, services (such as council or health) or support.

Groups of people who may be impacted include, but not limited to:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployed • Single parents and vulnerable families • People on benefits • Those involved in the criminal justice system • People in the most deprived communities • People who live in rural areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pensioners • Looked after children • Carers including young carers • Veterans • Students • Single adult households • People who have experienced the asylum system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those leaving the care setting including children and young people and those with illness • Homeless people • People with low literacy/numeracy • People with lower educational qualifications • People in low paid work • People with one or more protected characteristic
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Please complete by inserting "yes" in the applicable box/boxes below.

Socio-economic disadvantage	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unknown
Pockets: Low income/income poverty – cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing	Yes			

Pockets: Low and/or no wealth – enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future	Yes			
Pockets: Material deprivation – being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies			Yes	
Place: Area deprivation – where you live, where you work	Yes			
Prospects: Socioeconomic background – social class i.e. parents education, employment and income , educational achievement.			Yes	

Stage 8: What are the positive and negative impacts?		
Impacts.	Positive	Negative
Please detail the potential positive and/or negative impacts you have highlighted above. Detail the impacts and describe those affected.	Up to 300 jobs supported through new wage subsidy scheme, targeted at people who have multiple barriers to employment	
	Up to 500 unemployed people per year supported by keyworkers	
	Grants to encourage business diversification and consideration of opportunities related to digital and net zero	

	Approximately 20 grants awarded to town centre partnerships to support promotional activity, community based responses to the pandemic and the easing of restrictions.	

Stage 9: Have any of the affected groups/areas been involved, engaged with or consulted?	
If yes, please give details of how this was done and what the results were. If no, how have you ensured that you can make an informed decision about mitigating steps?	No, this has not been possible given the current restrictions and compressed timescale for developing proposals. However, it should be noted that the proposals in the report include appropriate delegations for activities to be amended as required, should external factors change.

Stage 10: What mitigating steps will be taken to remove or reduce negative impacts?		
These should be included in any action plan at the back of this form.	Mitigating Steps	Timescale

Stage 11: What monitoring arrangements will be put in place? How the EIA will be used to monitor the proposal	
These should be included in any action plan (for example customer satisfaction questionnaires).	Each of the activities proposed will report on outcomes achieved and these will be reported on a monthly basis to the Service Manager, Economic Development. A small number of them will be used for pentana reporting purposes, where appropriate.

Stage 12: What is the outcome of the Assessment?		
Please complete	1	No negative impacts have been identified –please explain.

the appropriate box/boxes	The proposals in the report are for new activities in response to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such they are targeted at economic recovery, supporting businesses to survive and grow and supporting people who are at risk of losing their incomes or who are already unemployed into sustained jobs. There are wider macro-economic risks in terms of the scale of economic disruption but forecasts vary as to the extent of these and the likely pace of the economic recovery. We will continue to work with local and regional partners and the Scottish and UK Governments on appropriate interventions and investments to support sustainable economic growth.	
	2	Negative Impacts have been identified, these can be mitigated - please explain. * Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen.
	3	The activity will have negative impacts which cannot be mitigated fully – please explain. * Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen

* Stage 13: Set out the justification that the activity can and should go ahead despite the negative impact.

Stage 14: Sign off and authorisation.			
Sign off and authorisation.	1) Service and Team	Economic Development	
	2) Title of Policy/Activity	COVID-19 response and economic renewal package	
	3) Authors: I have completed the equality impact assessment	Name: Matt Lockley Position: Service Manager, Economic Development Date: 29/04/2020 Signature:	Name: Position: Date: Signature:

for this policy/ activity.	Name: Position: Date: Signature:	Name: Position: Date: Signature:
4) Consultation with Service Manager	Name: As above Date: 29/04/2020	
5) Authorisation by Director or Head of Service	Name: Position: Date:	Name: Position: Date:
6) If the EIA relates to a matter that has to go before a Committee, Committee report author sends the Committee Report and this form, and any supporting assessment documents, to the Officers responsible for monitoring and the Committee Officer of the relevant Committee.		Date: 01/05/2020
7) EIA author sends a copy of the finalised form to: equalities@aberdeenshire.gov.uk		Date: 01/05/2020



APPENDIX 2

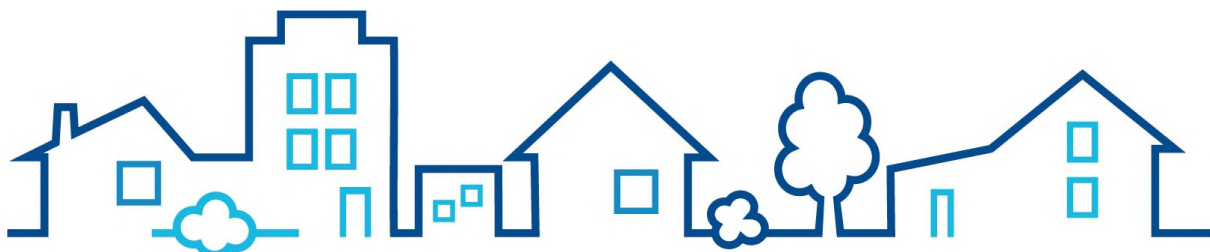
TOWN CENTRE FIRST IMPACT ASSESSMENT (TCFIA)

Aberdeenshire Council recognises that town centres have an important role to play in the sustainable development of local economies.

The Town Centre First Impact Assessment (TCFIA) allows officers in all services to identify the detrimental and beneficial effects that decisions we take may have on our town centres. It will allow officers to consider any implications that council decisions may have on Aberdeenshire's key town centres. Examples of this include changes to: the provision of civic and community facilities, employment land, retail, residential buildings, cultural assets, transportation, leisure and tourism.

A Town Centre Ambassador has been nominated within your service, you can locate your Town Centre First Ambassador through the Town Centre First Principle Arcadia pages.

Project Information	
Title of Committee Paper	Economic Development service response to COVID-19 pandemic and economic renewal proposals
Service	Economic Development
Department	Infrastructure Services
Author	Matt Lockley
Have you consulted your Town Centre First Ambassador?	Yes

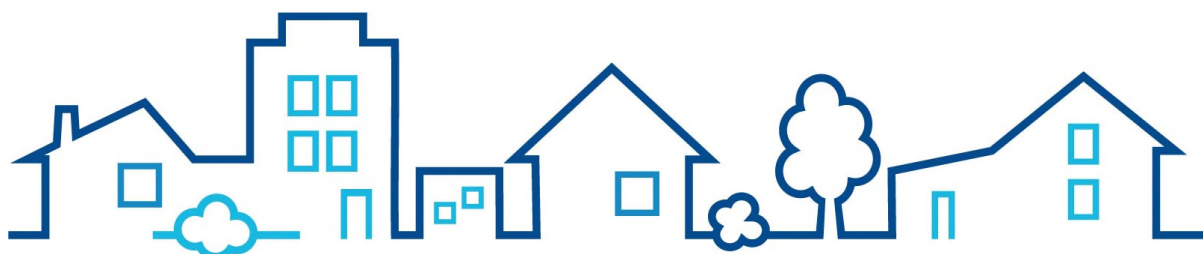




1) If approved would your project cause an impact (either positive or negative) with regards to the footfall of any of these town centres? – Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Inverurie, Westhill, Stonehaven, Ellon, Portlethen, Banchory, Turriff, Huntly, Banff, Macduff.	
Yes	

2)	
Please describe the aims of the committee paper?	The report sets out proposals to support economic recovery and renewal for Aberdeenshire businesses and communities as the COVID-19 restrictions are eased. It recommends a specific new town centre investment fund for the 12 key town centres plus Ballater, and 9 smaller town centres.

3) What are the positive and negative impacts?		
	Describe the positive impact?	Describe the negative impact?
Aberdeenshire Town Centre Phoenix Fund	Flexible fund for local partnerships to develop and deliver initiatives to revitalise town centres	None
Business Resilience and Sustainability Fund	Business grants to support diversification, digital resilience, net zero preparedness. Retail, hospitality and leisure businesses will be eligible	None
Business Gateway expansion	Extended Business Gateway services, including new 're-ignition' programme which will have specific cohorts focussed on town centre businesses	None

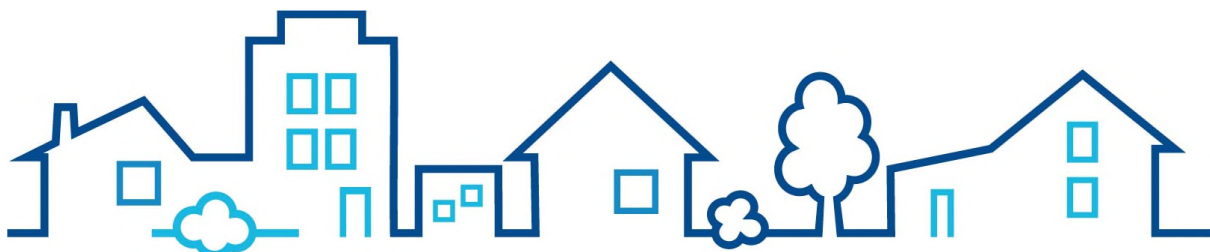




Town centre grant fund	(Previously approved). Grants of up to £500 per business for businesses in Banchory, Huntly and Stonehaven that have been supported through a pre-COVID retail revival programme.	None
Aberdeenshire Jobs Scheme	Wage subsidies for employers who create new jobs. Up to 300 new jobs to be supported with wage subsidy for 6 months.	None

4) What mitigating steps will be taken to reduce or remove negative impacts? If none see Q6	
Mitigating Steps	Timescale

5) Set out the justification that the activity can and should go ahead despite the negative impact.





Question 7: Sign off and Authorisation

3) Author: I have completed the TCIA impact assessment for this policy/ activity.	Name: Matt Lockley Position: Service Manager, Economic Development Date: 30-04-2020 Signature: Matt Lockley
4) Consultation with Service Manager	Name: As above Position: Date:
5) Authorisation by Director or Head of Service	Name: Belinda Miller Position: Head of Service Date: 30-04-2020
6) Have you consulted with your Town Centre First Ambassador?	Yes
7) TCFIA author sends a copy of the finalised form to: tcfia@aberdeenshire.gov.uk	Date Sent: 01-05-2020

