

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

REPORT TO: STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Date: 5 October 2020

TOPIC: FUNDING FOR VICTIMS OF BARNSTAPLE FLOODS

REPORT BY: PUBLIC PROTECTION MANAGER

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report seeks member's consideration of whether financial assistance should be provided to victims of the flash flooding which occurred in Barnstaple on the 17 August 2020. Consideration is sought in particular regarding whether part of the Covid-19 Hardship Funding should be utilised, and if so what funding structure should be put in place.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members determine whether funding be provided to the victims of the flash floods which occurred in Barnstaple on the 17 August 2020, and determine an appropriate funding structure.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The floods which occurred in Barnstaple on the 17 August 2020 were of a significant level and impact, as such it will be prudent for the Council to consider the provision of funds to assist those impacted.
- 3.2 The determination of funding is not a decision appropriate for the Recovery Co-Ordinating Group (RCG) which was set up as a strategic decision making body for the recovery phase of the Barnstaple Floods, and thus a decision of the Strategy and Resources Committee is necessary.

4 REPORT

- 4.1 Following the flash floods occurring in Barnstaple on the 17 August 2020 a RCG was specifically set up to facilitate the effective recovery from the 2020 Barnstaple flooding and to:
- 4.1.1. Give the broad overview and represent each stakeholders interests and statutory responsibilities.
- 4.1.2 Provide visible and strong leadership during the recovery phase

- 4.1.3 Take advice from the Sub-Groups, decide the strategy and ensure implementation of the strategy and the re-building of public confidence.
 - 4.1.4 Ensure the co-ordination and delivery of consistent messages to the public and media.
- 4.2 In pre-empting the necessity to make a decision with respect of funding to the victims of the floods, the RCG was asked to provide comment on a suggested addition to the existing NDC Covid-19 Hardship Policy to support householders who were flooded in Barnstaple on the 17 August 2020 as follows:
- 4.2.1 *2 levels of grant to be provided.*
 - 4.2.2 *£500 in cases where households have incurred significant loss of personal possessions and or damage to property or furnishings, and do not have sufficient resources to replace lost items and or pay for repairs/ refurbishment.*
 - 4.2.3 *£1000 in cases as above, but where there is also an immediate health and wellbeing risk. The money can be used to provide any measures which will ensure the health, safety and welfare of the occupants.*
 - 4.2.4 *The grants will be provided by One Barnstaple and NDH Housing officers, who will act as 'trusted assessors' for this part of the policy.*
 - 4.2.5 *Up to £30k of the pot will be allocated for these two grants. A household will be entitled to one grant.*
 - 4.2.6 *The assistance contained within this policy is only available subject to the availability of funding.*
- 4.3 Feedback from the group was generally positive, in that any amendment to the policy would significantly help those worst hit in Barnstaple. Comments reaffirmed the need to keep any scheme simple.
- 4.4 There was a view that caution should be expressed as it may be that the Council would not be able to support flood victims to the future in a similar way, and that the Council's distancing itself from the allocation of funds was sensible.
- 4.5 Members must be mindful that utilising funding for this purpose will reduce funding for Covid response.
- 4.6 Members must be mindful that this fund would be available solely to householders, and not to businesses impacted.
- 5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
- 5.1 There are financial implications included in the main body of this report, namely the potential reduction in funding for Covid-19 response. Human resource implications of advising members of the public regarding provision of funding is proposed to be met within existing resources. The draft amendment to the policy as outlined includes assessors who are not employed directly by the Council.

- 5.2 The purpose of the DCC fund is to ensure that people and families whose economic circumstances are most impacted by Covid-19 can be supported through the pandemic and helped to regain their financial independence.
- 5.3 North Devon Council have received Covid-19 Hardship Support funding of £131,581 from DCC, for which DCC confirmed: “For this portion, your own local policy can determine eligibility in order to respond to local circumstances. So it is at your discretion to use some for hardship caused by flooding and in view of these exceptional circumstances, DCC would support use of the funds for this purpose.”
- 5.4 Of the above funding received, the Council has spent around £39,000 to date; leaving a current balance of £92,000 remaining. The funding is for Covid-19 Hardship Support and members need to be mindful and consider as part of their decision making, the ongoing support needed to individuals and families whose economic circumstances are most impacted through the coming months of the ongoing pandemic.

6 CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Article or Appendix and paragraph	Referred or delegated power?
Part 3, Annexe 1.1 (d)	Delegated

7 STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

- 7.1 This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:
NDC Covid-19 Hardship Policy

The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report.

9 STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

- 9.1 The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and officers.

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Date: 23/09/2020