

Blaby District Council

Cabinet Executive

Date of Meeting	23 February 2026
Title of Report	Blaby Business Grant Scheme This is a Key Decision and is on the Forward Plan.
Lead Member	Cllr. Nick Chapman - Health, Community and Economic Development
Report Author	Executive Director - Place
Strategic Themes	Growing and supporting our economy

1. What is this report about?

- 1.1 Blaby District has a strong local economy. However, access to grants for micro local enterprises to grow their businesses are not readily available through regional and national schemes.
- 1.2 This report outlines a proposed new Business Grant scheme, accessible only to micro enterprises in the district.

2. Recommendation(s) to Cabinet Executive

- 2.1 Approve the establishment of a Blaby Business Grant scheme for a pilot period of 1 year.
- 2.2 Delegate the decision to continue the scheme into year 2 and beyond, in line with year 1 funding allocations, to the Executive Director Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health, Community and Economic Development.

3. Reason for Decisions Recommended

- 3.1 The Blaby Business Grant scheme will enable micro businesses within the District to access small scale funds that will help their businesses to grow, contributing to the Blaby Plan objective of growing and supporting our economy.

4. Matters to consider

- 4.1 Background
Blaby District has a strong economy, with a significant proportion of successful large enterprises based or operating from the district. However, most local businesses are micro enterprises. These businesses often do not

have the resources to access some of the business support they need to grow their enterprises.

Across the District around 90% of firms are micro businesses, that employ between 1-10 people. This often means staff are focussed on delivering the day to day services their customers demand. As a consequence, they either don't have the capacity or knowledge to apply for business support which could help them grow their enterprises.

The Community, Business, Work and Skills team have had recent success supporting several medium to large sized enterprises in the district to secure significant national grants and loans. This has led to these businesses being able to expand their premises, employ more staff and increase their supply chain orders with other local businesses.

However most external grant opportunities are aimed at medium to large businesses and start at £50k+, with long and complicated application processes.

The recently established Blaby District Business Board, which is a representative group of businesses within the District, have confirmed micro businesses struggle to access grant schemes. This can be because they are either unaware of the scheme, don't have the knowledge to apply or the funding they require does not meet the thresholds of national schemes. The business board confirmed that micro businesses want simple, local and practical help.

Within this broader context, the proposal for a Blaby Business Grant scheme has been developed.

4.2 Proposal(s)

The Blaby Business Grant scheme will offer small grants to micro businesses. The grant will be used for a range of improvements that will enable the businesses to grow. These include:

- Improving productivity.
- Developing digital tools
- Expand premises to support growth
- Decarbonising operations
- Reducing operating costs
- Improving the look of shop fronts.

As this is the first time Blaby District Council has established a business grant scheme, the scheme will operate as a pilot for the first year. A decision to continue with the scheme will be made subject to reported improvements from participating businesses.

A total of £25,000 will be allocated to the scheme. This will be allocated across two primary application routes. These are the:

1. Business Growth and Decarbonisation Grant (£20,000)
2. Shop Front Improvements Grant (£5,000)

A grants panel will be established, Chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Health, Community and Economic Development. The panel will review grant applications and make the final decision on which businesses should receive the grant. The panel will also receive updates on successful grant applications, providing a route for monitoring and assessing the impact of the funding.

Successful applications will be expected to adhere to a set of conditions. These conditions include:

- One grant per business with BDC able to manage awards across pots based on eligible demand and budget
- Open to businesses trading from premises in Blaby District with fewer than 10 FTE and turnover or balance sheet total no more than £2m and not previously funded under this scheme
- Tenants must provide written landlord approval with at least 1 year lease remaining for Shop Front Improvements and 3 years for Business Growth and Decarbonisation plus evidence of trading premises
- Applications should not be made where other funding sources, from either public or private sector bodies, have already been identified.
- Exclusions apply for national chains, pawn brokers, adult shops, betting shops and any business operations that do not align with Blaby District Council's health and wellbeing priorities, such as shops principally selling cigarettes, vapes and/or alcohol.
- Applications from businesses that are insolvent or subject to striking off will not be accepted.
- Assessments based on fit with objectives, outcomes, value for money, deliverability, quality of proposal and quotes, permissions and additionality with prioritisation if oversubscribed
- Match funding is 50% for Business Growth and Decarbonisation and none for Shop Front Improvements with payment normally in arrears on completion with invoices and audit evidence retained.

A summary of the conditions can be found in appendix A.

The Business Grant Scheme will aim to achieve improvements for businesses that enable them to grow and sustain their enterprises. With the focus on micro enterprises, the scheme will also support the parts of the economy that employ most people in the District.

The scheme aligns with the objectives of the Blaby District Economic Development Framework by supporting business growth, increasing skills, and ensuring economic sustainability. The scheme will also deliver visible improvements through the shop front grant offer.

As well aiming to deliver a scheme that businesses have asked for, it will create a legacy that strengthens economic resilience and local pride.

4.3 Relevant Consultations

Engagement with the Blaby Business Board, a sectoral representative body, has identified a gap for micro businesses being able to access business growth grants. The Business Boards input has helped inform and shape the Business Grant Scheme

4.4 Significant Issues

No significant issues to report.

4.5 In preparing this report, the author has considered issues related to Human Rights, Legal Matters, Human Resources, Equalities, Public Health Inequalities and there are no areas of concern.

5. Environmental impact

5.1 One of the grant options available to businesses includes the Decarbonisation Grant. This grant provides businesses with the opportunity to invest in energy efficiency and low carbon upgrades to buildings, equipment and systems that reduce operating costs, whilst also reducing carbon emissions. This will contribute towards Blaby District Council's priority for the District to be Net Zero by 2050.

5.2 No Net Zero and Climate Impact Assessment (NZCIA) is required for this report.

6. What will it cost and are there opportunities for savings?

6.1 The Business Grant Scheme will initially be a pilot. The fund will be from existing budgets and does not require new Council investment. The fund will total £25,000 and be allocated based on the criteria outlined above. The grants will be administered by the Grants panel, which includes Elected Members and Officers. Subject to the successful outcome of the pilot, options to extend the scheme to future years will be explored. This may require a request for additional funds, subject to identified demand.

	2026/27	2027/28
Revenue	£0	N/A
Capital	£25,000	£0

If approval is granted, the above costs will be added into the Capital Programme in 2026/27.

7. What are the risks and how can they be reduced?

7.1

Current Risk	Actions to reduce the risks
Limited engagement from businesses and therefore below expected impact.	Working with the Blaby Business Board and Business Breakfast group, promote the grant and explore ways to ensure take up and impact are strong.
Over engagement from businesses meaning there is too much demand for the grant fund available.	The development of robust conditions will be used to ensure those businesses that will benefit the most can access the grant fund.

8. Other options considered

8.1 The alternative option is to not proceed with the establishment of the Business Grant. This would reduce the potential to help micro businesses to grow in Blaby District. Following the pilot of the grant in year 1, investment in future years will be considered.

9. Appendix

9.1 Appendix A – Business Grant Scheme Conditions

10. Background paper(s)

10.1 N/A

11. Report author's contact details

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