

**BOLSOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE ON 13<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2026**

**EXTENSION OF THE BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAMME 2026/27**

**REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR GROWTH**

<b>Classification</b>	This report is Public
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Interim Strategic Director for Economic Growth Head of Business Growth

**PURPOSE/SUMMARY OF REPORT**

**To approve a two-year extension to the Business Support Programme from 2026/27 and agree to commit £200,000 from the transformation reserve for continuation of current business support activities.**

**REPORT DETAILS**

**1. Background**

- 1.1 In April 2022, the UK Government launched the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which provided £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment through to March 2025. Through the UKSPF allocation 2022 – 2025 Bolsover District Council received **£1,963,993**.
- 1.2 In April 2025 it was announced that UKSPF funding would be extended, and an additional allocation of **£803,023** for the 12-month period April 2025 – March 2026 was received by Bolsover District Council.

- 1.3 There were three investment priorities that the UKSPF funding aimed to address:

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>Summary of objectives</b>
<b>Community and Place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening our social fabric and fostering a sense of local pride and belonging.</li> <li>• To build resilient and safe neighbourhoods.</li> </ul>
<b>Supporting Local Business</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating jobs and boosting community cohesion by supporting local businesses.</li> <li>• Promoting networking and collaboration and stimulating innovation and growth.</li> <li>• Targeted support to help businesses grow - e.g. innovation, productivity, energy efficiency, low carbon and exporting.</li> </ul>
<b>People and Skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boosting core skills and support adults to progress in work.</li> <li>• Supporting disadvantaged people to access the skills they need.</li> <li>• Funding local skills needs and supplementing local adult skills provision.</li> <li>• Reducing levels of economic inactivity and supporting those furthest from the labour market.</li> </ul>

- 1.4 Over the past three years (March 2023 - March 2026) the Business Growth Team have been delivering successful grant schemes through UKSPF funding and

have also commissioned projects to meet the objectives of the above priorities, including three business support programmes:

- Hyper Local Business Support – delivered by Clowne Enterprise
- Business Detox and Female Business Owners Monthly Training and Networking Events - delivered by Filter Free Business
- Creative Women’s Network - delivered by PlatformThirty1

- 1.5 A critical success factor of the business support programmes was that the Team realised that support for businesses based in the district needed to be localised - taking place at District and not County or Regional level, as it would have been unlikely that Bolsover businesses would travel further afield. Despite business support programmes being provided by East Midlands Chamber, which is based in Chesterfield, there had been consistently low take up rates. Conversations with businesses revealed that informal local networking and support events in the district was their preference.
- 1.6 All three of these programmes have been extremely successful and have met or exceeded the majority of their outputs and outcomes. However, despite the announcement that UKSPF allocation expenditure could be extended until the end of September 2026, no further grant funding has been allocated and therefore the current business support programmes in place are all set to end on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2026.

## **2. Business support beyond 2026/27**

- 2.1 The Government has confirmed no further funding for UKSPF will be available after 31 March 2026, and any future local economic development funding would be distributed through the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA).
- 2.2 However, EMCCA have confirmed that they will not be making any local economic development grant funding in the foreseeable future. Whilst they are commissioning some services to commence in 2026/27 (Growth Hub, Start Up, and High Growth), EMCCA will not be providing grant funding for micro, small, or medium sized businesses.
- 2.3 The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported that in 2020 the number of start-up businesses in Bolsover was 240, however the number of business closures was 210. Of the 2,305 businesses in the District (ONS UK Business Count 2021) the number of micro businesses (employing 0-9 employees) in the District stood at 2,010 or 87.2%. A further 220 businesses or 9.5% employed 10-49. It is these businesses that the business support programmes aimed to engage with to offer a wide variety of support to ensure their survival and growth.
- 2.4 All three of these programmes have been extremely successful, and have met or exceeded the majority of their outputs and outcomes:

### **Hyper Local Business Support**

- 2.5 Over the past three years this programme has delivered free bespoke 1-2-1 business support and mentoring to pre-start, start-up and existing Bolsover businesses enabling them to undertake a wide variety of exercises including:

- Creating business plans
- Producing profit & loss and cash flow forecasts
- Creating an income and expenditure spreadsheet
- Putting together an appropriate and realistic pricing policy
- Applying for the appropriate insurances and required certifications
- Successfully accessing UKSPF funded grants
- Successfully accessing other grant programmes
- Attendance at free workshops including:
  - Building a Brand
  - Cyber Security
  - Email marketing
  - Digital Foundations for Growth
  - Automation Made Simple
  - Growing your Business through Recruitment
  - The use of Artificial Intelligence in growing a business
  - SEO and getting a business found online
  - Dealing with tax returns
  - A full day workshop covering different dimensions of growing a business successfully

2.6 Feedback from businesses on this programme include:

*“There is still a long way to go in developing and growing all of my different services. The help that I get, especially through the one-to-one coaching sessions, is invaluable in keeping me on track. Paul helps me to put my thoughts and ideas into order and translate them into plans that will work. In particular he is able to help me write promotional materials that convey my ideas to potential customers in a clear and inviting way – focusing on the benefits to them. By working together with him I am able to organise and prioritise the actions that I need to keep moving forwards”.*

*“I’ve worked in this industry for many years, so I know what needs to be done, but taking on the responsibility for growing and developing my own business like this has been a new challenge. Working with Clowne Enterprise and the Business in Bolsover programme has provided me with additional knowledge, with confidence and with the reassurance that I have needed to stay on top of that challenge”.*

*“Great support, in person, online, emails. Always been able to accommodate me. A fountain of knowledge and people to network for me. Not just about business advice but self-belief, confidence. Jo pushed me when I needed to be pushed. Very approachable, confidential”.*

Website for reference: [www.clowne-enterprise.org.uk](http://www.clowne-enterprise.org.uk)

2.7 Outputs and Outcomes from April 2023 - March 2025:

Hyper Local Business Support							
OUTPUTS	Target	Actual				Total to date	% Delivered
		Apr 23-Sep 23	Oct 23 - Mar 24	Apr 24 - Sep 24	Oct 24 - Mar 25		
Number of businesses receiving non-financial support (numerical value)	96	42	44	30	14	130	135%
Number of potential entrepreneurs provided assistance to be business ready (numerical value)	48	21	29	27	24	101	210%

Hyper Local Business Support							
OUTCOMES	Target	Actual				Total to date	% Delivered
		Apr 23-Sep 23	Oct 23 - Mar 24	Apr 24 - Sep 24	Oct 24 - Mar 25		
Jobs created (numerical value)	12	8	12	19	20	59	492%
Jobs safeguarded (numerical value)	48	1	3	2	2	8	17%
Number of new businesses created (numerical value)	12	7	10	9	14	40	333%
Number of businesses introducing new products to the firm (numerical value)	6	6	6	8	12	32	533%
Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technologies or processes (numerical value)	15	0	0	3	3	6	40%
Number of businesses with improved productivity (numerical value)	48	1	3	5	3	12	25%
Number of businesses engaged in new markets (numerical value)	17	3	5	8	7	23	135%

2.8 Outputs and Outcomes from April 2025 – December 2025 (forecast to March 2026)

Hyper Local Business Support	Main UKSPF Subtheme – Enterprise culture and start up support Secondary UKSPF Subtheme – Advice & Support to Business							
	Outputs	Target	Actual				Total to date	% Delivered
Apr 25 - Jun 25			Jul 25 - Sep 25	Oct 25 - Dec 25	Jan 26- Mar 26			
No. of enterprises receiving non-financial support	24	31	10	2		43	179%	4
No. of potential entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready	12	18	6	1		25	208%	2

Hyper Local Business Support	Main UKSPF Subtheme – Enterprise culture and start up support Secondary UKSPF Subtheme – Advice & Support to Business								
	Outcomes	Target	Actual	Apr 25 - Jun 25	Jul 25 - Sep 25	Oct 25 - Dec 25	Jan 25 - Mar 25	Total to date	% Delivered
Jobs created as a result of support									
Jobs safeguarded as a result of support	2	0	1	0			1	50%	0
No. of new enterprises created as a result of support	6	3	6	2			11	183%	1
No. of enterprises adopting new or improved products or services	3	1	3	1			5	167%	1

<b>No. of enterprises adopting new to the firm technologies or processes</b>	2	0	1	1		<b>2</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>No. of enterprises engaged in new markets</b>	8	0	4	0		<b>4</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>No. of enterprises with improved productivity</b>	4	2	1	0		<b>3</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>1</b>

### **Business Detox and Female Business Owners Monthly Training and Networking Events**

- 2.9 These two events offer free support to businesses across the Bolsover district. Filter Free Business Ltd administer the scheduling and management of the events, together with on-line and social media promotional support. They have created and continue to update content on the Business in Bolsover website: [www.businessinbolsover.com](http://www.businessinbolsover.com)
- 2.10 Both events held on a monthly basis are constantly oversubscribed and in the past three years have contributed to the founding, success and growth of many small businesses based in the Bolsover District.
- 2.11 Members of the Business Growth Team attend the monthly events and have witnessed business owners becoming more confident and comfortable following their continued attendance due to the informal friendly and supportive atmosphere.
- 2.12 The businesses are able to take advantage of support **that is unique to Bolsover District**. Numerous attendees have been successful in accessing UKSPF funded grants delivered by the Business Growth Team in years 1 & 2 of the UKSPF funding, with others accessing energy audits and Net Zero Growth Grants funded by UKSPF which the Business Growth Team continue to deliver. A presentation by Derbyshire County Council on apprenticeships resulted in one business recruiting five apprentices for their business.
- 2.13 Businesses are encouraged to inter-trade, which has proved popular and successful. The organiser has however prevented attendees from accessing this element of the provision; to prevent the meetings becoming a marketplace only. Attendees are also encouraged, but not pressured, into presenting at an event. It gives them the opportunity to explain about their business and the services and/or products on offer. This has seen business owners gaining confidence, delivering a presentation which they never thought they would be able to do and also securing orders/work from other attendees.
- 2.14 The meetings have also provided an opportunity for other business support providers and grant programme managers (such as the Vision Derbyshire start up business grants) to access a ready audience, which they struggle to find in other local authority areas.

2.15 Comments from businesses include:

*“The event host had a wealth of knowledge, and I left the event feeling very clear about the subject”.*  
*“I never really knew what social media algorithms were, or how they worked but I came away with a better understanding of them”.*  
*“The networking events opened doors I didn’t even know existed - I’ve secured clients directly because of contacts I made here”.*  
*“It’s not just been about business growth; it’s also about my personal confidence as a teacher and business owner”.*

2.16 Below is an insight of how popular the two events have been - outputs from April 2025 – December 2025 (forecast to March 2026).

Business in Bolsover	Main UKSPF Subtheme – Advice & Support to Business Secondary UKSPF Subtheme – Enterprise culture and start up support							
	Target	Actual				Total to date	% Delivered	Forecast
Outputs		Apr 25 - Jun 25	Jul 25 - Sep 25	Oct 25 - Dec 25	Jan 25 – Mar 26			1/1/26 - 31/3/26
No. of enterprises receiving non-financial support	40	132	101	104		337	843%	100
Number of local events or activities supported	10	6	4	5		15	150%	6

**Creative Women’s Network**

2.17 Platform Thirty1 were commissioned to deliver support to creative businesses from the arts, culture, and visitor economy sectors. The monthly network meets the first Wednesday of every month at Pleasley Vale Mills. Events are extremely popular and oversubscribed. Presentations have included:

- Social media presence
- Utilising local assets with creativity
- Forming connections
- Techniques to visually enhance your business

2.18 As with the Business Detox and Female Owners Networking and Training Events, attendees are able to inter-trade and offer support and advice to each other. Comments from attendees include:

*“The network has helped me gain confidence in my abilities. It has taught me practical lessons in photography, writing, and relaxation in regard to work. It has*

*provided me with business opportunities through networking and events. I love being around women who are also creative”.*

*“I originally attended the event with a view to making connections with other local creatives. Originally this was in order to find freelance and collaboration opportunities, as well as ways to sell my art. Now it is more for the support from the group. It can be very lonely as an artist and finding freelance work is very difficult and selling art even harder, so this network group is vital for maintaining momentum”.*

*“This is a great group of people with a variety of skillsets in the creative industries. It’s been enjoyable to feel part of something rather than a lone artist. The other women have been very supportive on a personal level. I have also made contacts that will lead to future work”.*

2.19 Below is an insight of how popular the event has been - outputs from April 2025 – December 2025 (forecast to March 2026).

Creative Women's Network	Main UKSPF Subtheme – Advice & Support to Business Secondary UKSPF Subtheme – Enterprise culture and start up support							
	Outputs	Target	Actual				Total to date	% Delivered
Apr 25 - Jun 25			Jul 25 - Sep 25	Oct 25 - Dec 25	Jan 26 - Mar 26			
No. of enterprises receiving non-financial support	40	35	34	43		112	280%	30
No. of local events or activities supported	10	3	3	3		9	90%	3

### **3. Reasons for Recommendation**

3.1 Given all three business support programmes have been able to evidence their value over the past 3 years it is considered that for them to not be able to continue due to the lack of funding would be detrimental to so many of the Bolsover businesses that have taken advantage of all the support delivered by each programme.

3.2 The cost of delivering the programmes for the year April 2025 – March 2026 was £96,000:

Hyper Local Business Support - £50,000

Business Detox and Female Business Owners Events - £34,000

Creative Women’s Network - £12,000

3.3 It is therefore requested that a funding budget of £200,000 is established using transformation reserves to enable the business support programmes to be

continued for a period of up to two years, commencing in April 2026. This would see the business support programmes continue to be made available to local businesses in Bolsover until the end of March 2028, by which time there is likely to be more certainty on the grant support available through EMCCA and as any new unitary authority across Derbyshire enters vesting day.

#### **4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 4.1 An alternative option is to do nothing and allow current business support programmes to come to an end as of the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2026. However this has been rejected as this may see some businesses reduce activity or stagnate, potentially impacting on future employment opportunities for residents and reducing the attractiveness of businesses remaining in the district.
- 4.2 A further alternative is to only offer sufficient funding to extend the business support programme for 12 months (£100,000), however it is preferable that funding is extended to 24 months to take the programme up to the potential vesting day of a new unitary authority.

#### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

To approve a two-year extension to the Business Support Programme from 2026/27 and agree to commit £200,000 from the transformation reserve for continuation of current business support activities.

Approved by Councillor Tom Munro, Portfolio Holder for Growth

#### **IMPLICATIONS:**

<b><u>Finance and Risk</u></b> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Details:</b> There is sufficient balance in the transformation reserve to cover this expenditure.		
On behalf of the Section 151 Officer		
<b><u>Legal (including Data Protection)</u></b> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Details:</b> Section 137 of the Local Government Act 197 enable s a local authority to incur expenditure which in their opinion is in the interests of, and will bring direct benefit to, their area or any part of it or all or some of its inhabitants.		
On behalf of the Solicitor to the Council		
<b><u>Staffing</u></b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Details:</b> There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report.		
On behalf of the Head of Paid Service		

**Environment**      Yes       No

**Details:**  
N/A

**DECISION INFORMATION:**

**Please indicate which threshold applies:**

**Is the decision a Key Decision?**

A Key Decision is an Executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more wards in the District or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds:

Yes       No

**Revenue (a)** Results in the Council making Revenue Savings of £75,000 or more or **(b)** Results in the Council incurring Revenue Expenditure of £75,000 or more.

(a)       (b)

**Capital (a)** Results in the Council making Capital Income of £150,000 or more or **(b)** Results in the Council incurring Capital Expenditure of £150,000 or more.

(a)       (b)

**District Wards Significantly Affected:**

*(to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the District)*

Please state below which wards are affected or tick **All** if all wards are affected:

All

**Is the decision subject to Call-In?**

*(Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)*

Yes       No

**Consultation carried out:**

*(this is any consultation carried out prior to the report being presented for approval)*

Yes       No

Leader     Deputy Leader     Executive     SLT

Relevant Service Manager     Members     Public

Other

**Links to Council Ambition: Customers, Economy, Environment, Housing**

**Economy**

**DOCUMENT INFORMATION:**

<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>

<b>Background Papers</b>
None.