

## Media Release

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### Council offers support for businesses

**Kaipara businesses that have been struggling as a result of Covid-19 could benefit from a \$640,000 support fund approved by Kaipara District Council today.**

Sue Davidson, General Manager of Sustainable Growth and Investment, says the Council is doing what it can to help those in genuine need and keep businesses operating.

The Council had commissioned Infometrics to forecast the likely impact of Covid-19 lockdown on our ratepayers. Their information showed the most vulnerable businesses were in the construction, hospitality and retail sectors. Research conducted by the Kaipara Mayor's Taskforce for Economic Support and Recovery with 437 Kaipara businesses and residents indicated Kaipara-led sources of support would be helpful at this time.

The package targets those industries that have been hardest hit by the lockdown by offsetting some of the council fees and costs businesses may struggle with. Feedback from the community showed strong support for the package.

"We're trying to make it easier for businesses to open up again and get operating," says Ms Davidson. "We can't offer cash, but we can help reduce some of their council-related business expenses."

Businesses in the hospitality industry, or that require health, food or alcohol licences to operate, could be eligible for a hardship grant of up to \$1,500 to be applied against their licence fees. Many businesses could also be eligible for grant of up to \$500, to be offset against their rates.

"The Council hopes landlords will apply for the grant on behalf of their tenants and commit to passing it on."

The package also extends to community and sports groups and camping grounds on Council land, who could be eligible for a grant to offset their rates or council leases.

Some feedback received suggested the package be extended to individuals that are struggling.

"We rely on people to pay their rates where they can but, as a reminder, if individuals or businesses are struggling and call us, we can discuss options for a payment plan."

Ms Davidson says it's important for people to call as soon as they can to enable penalties to be remitted.

Mayor Dr Jason Smith says Elected Members were delighted that the Council had put this package together and supported it wholeheartedly with a unanimous vote.

“Businesses are the lifeblood of a vibrant community. We know it has been very difficult for many of our businesses and we want to support them where we can,” says Mayor Smith.

Mayor Smith says the council would not need to increase rates for the coming year to fund this package.

“Lower interest rates, and reduced work due to Covid-19 means we are able to fund it within this year’s budget.”

Applications are now invited from those businesses, community and sporting groups that may qualify for grants. Find out more at [kaipara.govt.nz/covidsupport](https://kaipara.govt.nz/covidsupport)

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