



**Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council**

CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS

Labour Market Partnership
Working Together



2025-26 Business Start Up Seed Fund Bursary

Guidance Notes

Please note this is a rolling call for applications and will remain open until the budget is expended.

Assessment Panel Meetings will be held regularly, and applications will be assessed on a first come first served basis, until all funding is allocated.

Council Reserve the right to close the fund at short notice when the budget is allocated.

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1. Introduction.

The Business Start Up Seed Fund Bursary has been developed to help residents in the borough start new businesses with a bursary of up to £1,000 to purchase up to 8 essential items they need to help get their business started.

This bursary is aimed at all people aged 18 and over, who are not working, are underemployed, or at risk of redundancy (evidence will be required), permanently resident within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area and with a legal right to work in the UK.

You may find it helpful to discuss your application with a member of the LMP team before submitting:

Please contact the Labour Market Partnership Team on:

Email: LMP@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk Phone: 028 7034 7034

1.1 Purpose of grant programme.

Causeway Coast and Glens Labour Market Partnership (LMP) is a DfC funded programme established to address key challenges in the local labour market. The programme aims to improve employability outcomes and labour market conditions locally by delivering a tailor-made action plan reflecting local conditions and needs.

Please note the purpose of the Business Start Up Seed Fund Bursary of up to £1,000 is to support those who are facing financial barriers to starting up a business.

1.2 Strategic fit.

The fund links to Council's Community Plan under the following themes:

Community Planning Outcomes: All people of Causeway Coast and Glens will contribute to and benefit from a thriving economy built on a culture of growth, entrepreneurship, innovation, and learning.

The Causeway Coast & Glens area provides opportunities for all to contribute to and engage in a more prosperous and fair economy.

If your application is successful, you will be contractually obliged to provide information to Council's Labour Market Partnership Team and the Grants and Funding Unit. This will include monitoring progress and expenditure incurred, discussing challenges or obstacles and fulfilling the reporting requirements stipulated in the Letter of Offer. Please do not apply if you cannot fulfil these requirements.

Monitoring will be completed with grant recipients by Causeway Coast and Glens Labour Market Partnership after 6 and 12 months following receiving grant approval.

1.3 Level of grant award.

The Business Start Up Seed Fund Bursary can provide funding of up to £1,000. This is 100% funded and match funding is not a requirement. Funding is capped at 8 items.

Two quotes for each requested item must be provided during your application.

Funding will be allocated based on the cheaper quote.

Please ensure the quotes include all costs, including VAT and delivery costs, where applicable. If VAT and delivery charges are not included in your grant application quote, these cannot be added at a later date.

Quotes should be submitted on a word document with an image and text including price to the penny per item (see Appendix 2) or alternatively through screenshots that show where the item is from, the price (+VAT if applicable) plus the delivery costs to your location.

If quoting in a foreign currency, please complete an accurate currency conversion. If quoting a special offer, please note this will be the amount awarded.

Bursaries will be released up front; however, all successful applicants will be required to submit monitoring documents along with evidence of expenditure. Any underspend will be paid back to Council. **Candidates are reminded to retain all electronic receipts / card payment receipts for items acquired.**

This is a competitive process, and all bursary awards will be determined on the basis of merit. Each application is assessed, scored and ranked in order of their score.

Applicants are advised that those who have been successful in securing Council funding in the past will not automatically be guaranteed funding in the future.

Council reserves the right to reduce the amount of funding awarded if:

- the item is not considered to be relevant for the business
- the item is not eligible for funding (as listed in sections 1.7 and 1.8 of this document)
- the amount applied for does not represent value for money or
- if there are insufficient funds available to meet the request.

For example, if you apply for £1,000 and one of the items that costs £200 is deemed ineligible the Letter of Offer will be reduced to £800 taking into account the ineligible item.

If the total costs of the items that you request funding for does not total £1,000 you will only be funded for the total of the items requested (based on the cheaper quote).

Please Note: Successful applicants will have to provide all evidence requested once the project expenditure is complete.

All grant monies must be spent by Friday 1st May 2026 at 12.00pm noon.

All Claim return documents must be returned to

Grants@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk before Friday 15th May 2026 at 12.00pm noon.

If you are unsure what documents, you need to return please contact the LMP on LMP@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk.

Successful applicants will also have to retain documentation and evidence for a period of 5 years.

1.4 General principles.

In line with Council's Grant Funding Policy, the overarching principle for all Council grant funding is that of meeting local needs which have been identified and prioritised by Council or by others and acknowledged by Council. Any activity that cannot be shown to meet the following basic requirements will not be provided with funding:

- Have a clearly identified need i.e., the application addresses barriers to growth which the business faces.
- Can deliver outcomes which meet this need.
- In the case of this funding, the applicant must demonstrate that their business is credible and viable. This must be reflected in the application and accompanying 12-month financial forecasts. If the financial forecast shows that other funding is needed, this will need to be detailed in the grant application.*
- Reflect the statutory remit of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council aligning with the Council's Corporate Plan, the relevant Service Plan and meets the specific criteria of the fund.
- Applicants must demonstrate their commitment to promoting Good Relations and Equality of Opportunity.
- In the interests of transparency, equality and accountability, all eligible applicants will have a right of appeal should their application be rejected.

*if you require assistance with completing a 12 month financial forecast please let the LMP team know via email on LMP@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk

1.5 Who can apply?

The initial criteria for applications are as follows:

- Individuals aged 18 and over.
- Permanent resident in the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.
- Individuals with a 12-month financial forecast for their business
- Eligible to work in the UK.

These criteria are mandatory, and an application will not proceed without them.

1.6 What can be funded?

Examples of expenditure that can be funded through this grant include:

- Capital equipment that directly links to your business.
- Marketing costs, print, signage, graphics, logo, hosting, website fees.
- Rent of dedicated business premises in the Causeway Coast and Glens Council area (not deposits which are refundable).
- Direct running costs of your business such as phone, internet, heat, light and insurance.
- All associated costs of relevant training including teaching, awarding body costs and exam fees (please alternatively consider the Personal Learning Account £500 bursary, set to reopen in April 2026).

Please note, if an item is ineligible under our funding requirements, it will not receive funding, and the amount will be taken off your grant request amount.

If you are unsure on what items qualify, please contact an LMP officer to advise.

1.7 Who and what cannot be funded?

This funding programme will not award grants to the following:

- Individuals whose primary residential address is outside the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area.
- Anyone under the age of 18.
- Individuals who are currently in employment or self-employment (unless underemployed, part-time employed under 16 hours a week, facing redundancy or your contract is coming to an end. Evidence will be required).
- Individuals without a legal right to work in the UK.
- Individuals who have received the LMP Business Seed Fund Grant previously.
- Social enterprise, charities or businesses with charitable fundraising as their main focus.
- Political organisations.
- Businesses trading and established before 1st April 2025.
- Becoming a partner in an established business.
- Any business where there are legal, licencing, ethical or reputational considerations – e.g. gambling, money lending, adult entertainment, tobacco products or cannabis products not authorised as medicines, debt factoring, hire purchase financing; pyramid schemes; projects which have as their object the promotion of political or religious views; illegal or immoral activities.
- Any other business that the Council may from time to time deem to be ineligible.

• 1.8 Additional Exclusions.

The purpose of this funding is to support the purchase of **essential** items needed to help get the business started. In general, the following will not be eligible for funding: -

- Items not essential for the business to start.
- Items which are not exclusively for the business and can be used for personal use.
- Retrospective expenditure where services/items have already been obtained and paid.
- Applications received after the closing date as specified.
- Costs that are not auditable e.g., cash payments.
- Building costs, capital improvements or refurbishments of any domestic property.
- Consumable items e.g. stationery, printer ink.
- On-going licence fees.

- Loan repayments.
- Second-hand equipment including refurbished equipment that does not have at least 12 months of warranty.
- General maintenance or refurbishment works.
- Servicing of existing equipment.
- Costs towards banking charges and / or repayment of debt.
- Costs that can be claimed back from elsewhere e.g. VAT.
- Items that can be funded from other sources, including training or courses currently funded elsewhere.
- Recreational items not linked to starting a business or self-employment.
- Activities which are party-political in intention, use or presentation.
- Salary, wages and PAYE costs for the proprietor and also for staff.
- Alcohol, gratuities, gifts and prizes.
- Purchase of stock for general trading purposes.
- Items or services purchased from direct family members.

You cannot be in receipt of more than 1 grant from Council for the same project. (e.g. Go Succeed or Rural Development)

2.0 How to answer the questions.

Applications for financial assistance from Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council for the Business Start Up Seed Fund Bursary 2025-26 should be submitted online at <https://grants.ccgbcapps.com/>

You will be sent a private link from the LMP Team to access the grant application on the grant portal.

Guidance on completing the application online is provided via the web-site link. You will need to set up an account with the grants portal to apply.

All sections must be completed as fully and concisely as possible. Once complete ensure you click 'submit'. You will receive an email to say that your application has been submitted.

Please note maximum word limits per question.

2.1 What questions will I have to answer?

You will be required to fill in a number of sections. This includes your personal information and contact details, information about your new business, information about what items you will buy with the Seed Fund Bursary. You will also have to answer 3 questions about you and your business which are scored.

A. Personal and contact details.

This will include your personal details and contact information, including name and date of birth, address, phone number, email address etc. You will also have to upload proof of address so we can verify that you live in Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council area. This will be used to assess eligibility.

B. Information about your new business.

You will be required to provide information about your new business. These questions must be answered for your application to proceed. These questions are not scored, however, not answering these questions will result in a FAIL and your application will not proceed to Application Assessment / Scoring. Questions will include:

- Where will your business operate from?
- What products and services will your business offer?
- What your prices will be and how does this compare to the market?
- Who are your main competitors?
- What are your businesses key costs?
- Uploading your 12 months Financial Forecasts which demonstrates the sustainability of your business*

Not answering these questions will result in a FAIL and your application will not proceed to Application Assessment / Scoring.

* The financial forecast must show the business is viable and does not have a funding shortfall or have any other funding requirements. It must also show the business will help the applicant change their circumstances to become self-employed and register for Self-Assessment with HMRC.

C. Information about what items you will buy with the Seed Fund Bursary.

You will also be asked to detail what items you want the Seed Fund Bursary for. This will include information about the product / service, why you need it, and what the cost will be. You will be required to provide evidence of 2 quotes and prices for each item detailed.

If an item is deemed ineligible, not essential, or not necessary then it may not be approved.

The product / service specification on each quote must be similar (for example 2 desks the same size, or two printers with similar features). Failure to upload quotes that are comparable, accurate or appropriate may result in the item not being approved. Please ensure that all quotes are clear and easy to understand.

The maximum number of different items that you can get funding for is 8.

If a quote you obtain is part of a special offer or promotional price, please ensure that this deal will still be available when you purchase the items or for at least one month after you submit your application.

Also ensure that costs such as delivery and VAT are considered and included.

Items must not be purchased or paid for in any way before receiving and accepting your letter of offer. This includes deposits. Only expenditure incurred after the letter of offer has been accepted can be claimed.

D. Scored Questions:

Finally, you will be required to answer the following questions. **These will be scored!** (Section 3 has more details on the scoring and weighting.)

1. Please tell us how your experience, skills, hobbies, interests and work history will help you start your business.
2. What do you think your businesses key strengths are?
3. The first three months are critical for a new business, please detail how you are going to get new customers to get your business marketed and off the ground.

3.0 How we assess and score your application.

Every application that is received will be assessed for the following:

- To ensure that the individual is eligible to apply to this particular grant programme.
- For reassurance of each applicant's capability to get their business successfully started.
- How essential the requested items are to help get their business started.

An acknowledgement receipt will be electronically issued to you once your submission has been received.

The Funding Unit will assess your application for eligibility. If your application is eligible to apply for grant aid for the Business Start Up Seed Fund Bursary, it will be forwarded to the relevant service area for a full assessment and scoring against the stated criteria.

3.1 Eligibility Assessment

The assessments in respect of Part 1 of the application form are awarded a pass or fail eligibility rating. If the applicant, based on the information supplied, can satisfy the Council of their eligibility to draw down the grant, they will progress to the next part of the process, which is Assessment and Scoring. (Eligibility criteria is detailed in Section 1 and Section 2 of this document).

3.2 What if an application is not eligible?

If your application is not eligible, you will be notified, and the reasons will be outlined to you. Your application will not proceed to assessment and scoring. If you are not eligible for funding through the Seed Fund, you may wish to contact Council's Labour Market Partnership Team who can help signpost to other sources of support.

3.3 Assessment and Scoring

If an applicant, based on the information supplied, is able to satisfy the Council of their eligibility for the Business Start Up Seed Fund Bursary they will be scored on the answers provided to the below questions in Table 1 below and these will be according to established assessment criteria shown in Table 2 below.

All questions will be scored out of 5 and weighting will be applied as detailed below:

Table 1

	Question	Score out of a possible 5	Weighting	Possible Score
1.	Please tell us how your experience, skills, hobbies, interests and work history will help you start your business.	0-5	X6	30
2.	What do you think your businesses key strengths are?	0-5	X6	30
3.	The first three months are critical for a new business, please detail how you are going to get new customers to get your business marketed and off the ground.	0-5	X8	40
	Maximum Score			100

Please note, your total score must be 65 / 100 (65%) or above for your application to proceed. Considering the scoring criteria above in Table 1 you will be required to score **at least 4 out of 5 in one of the answers.** Table 2 below explains how scoring and marks are allocated.

When answering the questions on the application, please ensure the answer provided relates directly back to the question asked fully and accurately. Please provide as much relevant information and evidence as possible, and list as many relevant examples as you have / believe necessary.

When answering the questions, please ensure that you fully explain and elaborate upon all answers. Simply writing yes or no to any of the above 3 answers will result in a very low score.

This is a competitive process, and the more relevant detail provided on the application form, the more information the scoring panel will have to assess your answers.

If the fund becomes oversubscribed, Council will close the call and applications will be scored according to Council processes and procedures.

Applications will be ranked according to their score. If oversubscribed an application ranked low may still not receive funding, even is scoring 65% or over.

Table 2

0 - Unacceptable	Nil or inadequate response. Fails to address the question or demonstrate an ability to meet the requirement.
1 - Very Poor	Response is partially relevant but generally very poor. The response addresses some elements of the requirement but contains insufficient/limited detail or explanation to demonstrate how the requirement will be fulfilled. An unacceptable response with serious reservations.
2 - Poor	Response is partially relevant but generally poor. The response addresses some elements of the requirement but contains insufficient/limited detail or explanation to demonstrate how the requirement will be fulfilled. A response with reservations.
3 - Average	Response is relevant and average. The response addresses a broad understanding of the requirement but may lack details on how the requirement will be fulfilled in certain areas.
4 - Good	Response is relevant and good. The response is sufficiently detailed to demonstrate a good understanding and provides details on how the requirements will be fulfilled. Good supporting evidence supplied.
5 - Excellent	Response is completely relevant and excellent overall. The response is comprehensive, unambiguous and demonstrates a thorough understanding of the requirement and provides details of how the requirement will be met in full.

3.4 What happens if an application is successful?

If an application is successful, Council will issue an electronic Letter of Offer which is a legal agreement with the applicant to deliver on the proposals outlined in their application form. Signed Letters of Offer must be returned within 14 days of receipt. **Please check your emails, including spam and junk folders, and your grant portal account which you used to apply for the fund to check if you have received an electronic Letter of Offer.**

If successful, applicants can avail of support that will explain the processes and procedures that relate to programme monitoring, submitting a financial claim, requesting a change to

programme, promoting Council's support for the programme, monitoring and evaluation requirements and the process of verification.

Grants will be released upfront once you have accepted your Letter of Offer. The process will be detailed in your Letter of Offer.

Applicants are required to submit a financial claim once they spend their grant.

Please read your Letter of Offer before accepting as this document details how you make a claim, and the supporting documentation and evidence required.

Please note, any claims or monitoring not returned may be subject to council clawing back the funding provided.

All grant monies must be spent by Friday 1st May 2026 at 12.00pm noon.

All Claim return documents must be returned to Grants@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk before Friday 15th May 2026 at 12.00pm noon.

If you are unsure what documents, you need to return please contact the LMP on LMP@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk.

3.5 What happens if an application is unsuccessful?

If an application is not successful, officers from the Council will be available to go through the application and provide practical developmental support to address areas of concern.

An Appeals Process / Review Procedure is also available if an application is unsuccessful. The purpose of this is to ensure that the decisions taken and procedures followed for individual applications are applied fairly and consistently.

The Review will provide an independent process through which an applicant will have the opportunity to demonstrate to the Review Panel that either:

- the outcome was unreasonable ***or***
- that the proper procedures were not followed

Appeals on any other grounds will not be considered.

3.6 Grant Application Assessment Schedule

The Business Start Up Seed Fund Bursary will be open for applications in December 2026 and the private link will be sent to those who have expressed an interest in the programme and attended a grant workshop.

Please note this is a rolling call for applications and will remain open until the budget is expended.

No late applications will be accepted under any circumstances, and all required supporting documentation must be supplied by the closing date and time or the application will not be considered.

Assessment Panel Meetings will be held regularly and applications will be assessed on a first come first served basis, until all funding is allocated.

We encourage candidates to apply as soon as they have the information and evidence required for a full application.

3.7 Application Process

All applications for financial assistance from Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council for The Business Start Up Seed Fund Bursary 2025/26 should be submitted online via Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's online Funding Hub at: <https://grants.ccqbcapps.com/>

It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure that their application is submitted prior to the advertised time and date of closing. Applications received after the closing time/date will not be considered for funding. No exceptions will be made and there is no recourse to appeal.

We encourage candidates to apply as soon as they have the information and evidence required for a full application.

Appendix 1

Data Protection Act

- We will use the information you give us on the application form during assessment and for the life of any grant we award you to administer and analyse grants and for our own research.
- We may give copies of this information to individuals and organisations we consult when assessing applications, when monitoring grants and evaluating the way our funding programmes work and the effect they have. These organisations may include accountants, external evaluators and other organisations or groups involved in delivering the project.
 - We may also share information with other government departments, organisations providing match funding and other organisations and individuals with a legitimate interest in applications and grants, or for the prevention or detection of fraud.
- We might use the data you provide for our own research. We recognise the need to maintain the confidentiality of vulnerable groups and their details will not be made public in any way, except as required by law.

Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives members of the public the right to request any information that we hold, subject to certain exemption that may apply. This includes information received from third parties, such as, although not limited to, grant applicants, grant holders and contractors. If information is requested under the Freedom of information Act we will release it, subject to exemptions; although we may consult with you first. If you think that information you are providing may be exempt from release if requested, you should let us know when you apply. For further information please visit the Information Commissioner's Office at www.ico.gov.uk

Appendix 2

Quote Template Seed Fund 25 26

Item 1 quote 1 (Cheapest Quote and preferred quote here)

Item and Price £000.00

Webpage link:

INSERT IMAGE HERE WHICH CLEARLY DISPLAYS ITEM AND PRICE

INSERT IMAGE HERE IF ANOTHER SCREENSHOT IS NEEDED TO SHOW ITEM PLUS DELIVERY FEES AND VAT (OPTIONAL IF NOT CLEAR IN FIRST IMAGE).

Item 1 quote 2 (More expensive or second quote)

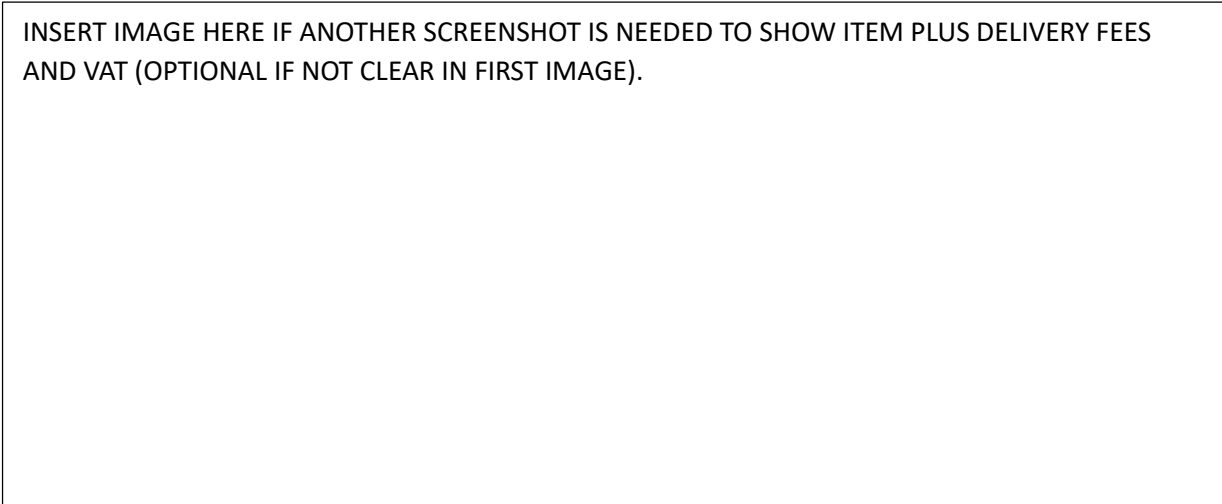
Item and Price £000.00

Webpage link:

INSERT IMAGE HERE WHICH CLEARLY DISPLAYS ITEM AND PRICE



INSERT IMAGE HERE IF ANOTHER SCREENSHOT IS NEEDED TO SHOW ITEM PLUS DELIVERY FEES AND VAT (OPTIONAL IF NOT CLEAR IN FIRST IMAGE).



Item 2 quote 1 (Cheapest Quote and preferred quote here)

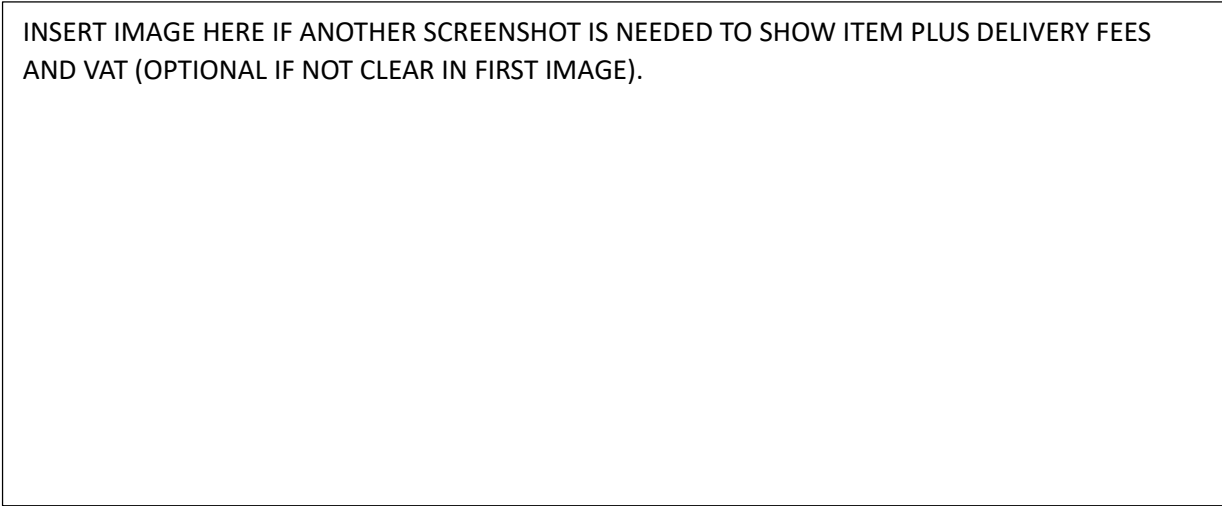
Item and Price £000.00

Webpage link:

INSERT IMAGE HERE WHICH CLEARLY DISPLAYS ITEM AND PRICE



INSERT IMAGE HERE IF ANOTHER SCREENSHOT IS NEEDED TO SHOW ITEM PLUS DELIVERY FEES AND VAT (OPTIONAL IF NOT CLEAR IN FIRST IMAGE).



Item 2 quote 2 (More expensive or second quote)

Item and Price £000.00

Webpage link:

INSERT IMAGE HERE WHICH CLEARLY DISPLAYS ITEM AND PRICE

INSERT IMAGE HERE IF ANOTHER SCREENSHOT IS NEEDED TO SHOW ITEM PLUS DELIVERY FEES AND VAT (OPTIONAL IF NOT CLEAR IN FIRST IMAGE).