

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Mid Sussex District Council
Cabinet Grants Panel held on Tuesday 17 January 2017
from 5.00 p.m. to 5.37 p.m.**

Present: Councillors: Jonathan Ash-Edwards (Chairman)
Norman Webster (Vice-Chairman)

Gary Marsh

1. SUBSTITUTES

None.

2. APOLOGIES

None.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

4. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 12 October 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

6. REPRESENTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

None

7. MICROBUSINESS GRANT SCHEME

The Programme Manager for the Burgess Hill Growth Area introduced the report which presented seven Microbusiness Grants. It was noted that this is the first meeting of the Cabinet Grants Panel to consider the new Microbusiness Grant Scheme. The programme was initiated by West Sussex County Council, utilising the West Sussex business rates pool of £500,000. The Programme Manager highlighted that the grant publicity stated that the Council would be awarded £83,000 based on the £500,000 pool being divided equally between districts. As Adur and Worthing subsequently wished to be considered as two separate Councils, the allocation has reduced to £71,428. The Programme Manager put forward a suggestion that the Panel may wish to consider topping up the fund to £83,000 if the programme generates a lot of interest.

All applications have been assessed against the criteria of delivering wider outreach, assisting with the delivery of new business lines, enabling more employees to be taken on, and delivery of community benefit. Each business also has to pass due diligence checks carried out by the Business Liaison Officer. This includes confirmation they are a bona fide business, the validity of the project funding, that

they comply with the grant criteria, and that they have adequate policy documentation and public liability insurance.

The Microbusiness grants which are recommended for consideration and approval by the Panel are set out below:-

Microbusiness Grants

Organisation	Purpose for which award is sought	Award Requested	Award Suggested
Aureo Group	Website design and build	£2000	£2000
Veterinary insights	Recruitment costs of marketing manager	£2000	£2000
Adams Garden Machinery	Apprentice	£1500	£1500
Words Guy	New Magazine	£2000	£2000
THR consulting	Website design and build	£959	£959
Sussex Uniforms	Website design & apprentice	£3500	£3500
Harmony at Home	Customer service equipment	£2000	£2000
Total		£13,959	£13,959

The Panel supported the concept of increasing the fund, should the grant scheme prove successful. It was agreed that this would be reviewed later in the year. The Panel also proposed that there should be publicity around the money awarded, in order to encourage further applications. It was confirmed that a feature would run in the next edition of Mid Sussex Matters, and other publicity will be explored.

The Programme Manager introduced the application by Aureo Group which seeks funds to deliver an extended digital strategy and launch a new website. It was confirmed that they are an enthusiastic fast growing company with a product in a competitive market. The company also has a strong ethos of charitable giving. The Panel noted that although they do not meet the criteria of assisting with the delivery of new business lines at this stage, it is likely that any thriving business will eventually do so and therefore the Panel was happy to approve.

Regarding the proposal from Veterinary Insights, the request for funds to recruit a marketing manager will allow the business to attract more customers and enhance the performance of veterinary practices, therefore enhancing the community. To clarify the focus of the grant, the funds would be towards recruitment cost and the provision of a laptop. The company does not have adequate health and safety regulations as yet, but it is situated in the BasePoint Centre which does have regulations in place to cover its businesses. The Panel were happy that this provided adequate cover, and would apply to any other companies based there who may seek a Microbusiness grant.

The Panel welcomed application from Adams Garden Machinery, particularly noting the fact that an apprentice was being sought. The Panel queried whether a training provider had been found, and at what stage the funds would be awarded if the company struggles to recruit. It was confirmed that the company had approached local colleges to seek applicants for the apprenticeship and to tie in with a course run at the facility. The Panel recommended that they approach Crawley College which offers more vocational courses. The funds would be payable once the apprentice had been hired. All funds for the grant scheme in general have to be committed by

September 2017.

Regarding the application from Words Guy to deliver a community focused magazine for Haywards Heath, the Panel queried how revenue would be generated, and what content the magazine would cover. It was confirmed that the main revenue would be generated from advertising. The applicant is also providing match funding of £2000 for the launch, should the grant be approved. He is a professional journalist who already produces Bolnore News which has proved successful. He is looking to replicate this in the wider context of Haywards Heath, with non-political, community focussed articles rather than purely a list of events.

The Panel were happy to agree the grant for THR Consulting Ltd. They acknowledged that the company had a good business model but was struggling to get new business. An improved website would enable the company to attract a wider customer base and benefit the local businesses that they use to provide services; therefore the Panel was happy to support the application.

The Panel were also happy to agree the grant to Sussex Uniforms. Acknowledging that the grant would lift the company out of the status of being a microbusiness in the future, they were pleased to see the progression of a local company as it has found new premises, and are expanding by acquisition of another firm. The combination of launching a new website and training an apprentice to maintain the content was felt to be a worthwhile proposal for the Panel to support.

The Panel also considered the application from Harmony at Home. They acknowledged that it was a strong and well-run company, and were happy to agree the grant as it would not only provide the new customer service desk and IT equipment, but it would also allow for the creation of a training manual which would have benefits to future apprentices as they could gain a Customer Services NVQ qualification.

RESOLVED

That:-

1. a Microbusiness Grant of £2,000 be awarded to Aureo Group to support the design and build of a new website.
2. a Microbusiness Grant of £2,000 be awarded to Veterinary Insights to support the recruitment of a new dedicated marketing manager.
3. a Microbusiness Grant of £1,500 be awarded to Adams Garden Machinery to assist with the employment of an apprentice.
4. a Microbusiness Grant of £2,000 be awarded to Words Guy to support the launch of a community-focused magazine in Haywards Heath.
5. a Microbusiness Grant of £959 be awarded to THR Consulting to support the delivery of a new website.
6. a Microbusiness Grant of £3,500 be awarded to Sussex Uniforms to support the delivery of a new website and recruitment of the associated apprentice.

7. a Microbusiness Grant of £2,000 be awarded to Harmony at Home to support the purchase of a customer service desk along with the associated office and IT equipment.

Chairman.