

6. MICROBUSINESS GRANT SCHEME

REPORT OF: Economic Development Officer
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Wards Affected: All

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to present 10 microbusiness grant applications for consideration by the Cabinet Grants Panel.

Summary

2. A summary of the applications to be considered, together with officer recommendations for the level of financial assistance to be awarded is set out in the table below:

Organisation	Purpose for which award is sought	Award requested	Award suggested
Building Blocks Therapy	Development of services	£1,150	£1,150
Farm, Field and Forest Ltd	Equipment installation	£2,000	£2,000
Green Goddess	New product development	£2,000	£2,000
Kinesica Ltd	Website and branding	£1,000	£1,000
OCH Solutions Ltd	Website improvements	£2,000	£2,000
The Perrymount Ltd	New service	£2,000	£2,000
Potential Personal Training	Building improvements	£1,500	£1,500
RLS Recruitment Solutions	New website	£2,000	£2,000
Scofi Plumbing	Apprentice	£1,500	£1,500
Slake Café Ltd	Building renovation	£2,000	£2,000
Total		£17,150	£17,150

3. Of the applications set out in the above table, two were first presented to the Panel at its meeting on 16 August (The Perrymount Ltd and Potential Personal Training). At the Panel's request, those applications will be presented again with additional information to provide a more complete view of each business and to enable a more informed decision to be taken for each.
4. The additional information requested principally consists of more detail about the financial stability and sustainability of both businesses and more about the methods through which revenue will be generated for The Perrymount Ltd. Officers are presently working with the business to compile that information which will be provided to the Panel ahead of the meeting.

Recommendation

Members of the Panel are requested to:

- ***Consider and decide upon the recommendations for each of the above applications, summaries of which are attached in Appendix A of this report.***

Background

5. This is the fourth meeting of the Cabinet Grants Panel at which bids for funds from the 2018/19 Micro Business Grant Scheme will be considered. There have been a total of 41 applications for the scheme. Following this meeting, all of the applications received will have been reviewed by the Panel.
6. Taken together the 41 bids accounted for all of the £72,000 funding available for the scheme for 2017/18. With that in mind the on-line funding application portal was closed to further applications once the last of those 41 bids had been received. However, two of the bids presented to the Panel on 16 August were not approved. Therefore the funding that had been tentatively allocated to those bids is now available for re-allocation to other businesses. Officers are now working to contact businesses who had enquired about the scheme following its closure and will invite them to bid for the available funding (just under £4,385). Those bids will then be brought forward to the next Cabinet Grants Panel meeting.

Assessment and Policy Context

7. The applications received have been considered by the Council's Economic Development Officers, William Hawkins and Kim Christmas and the Council's Regeneration and Economy Programme Manager, Mark Healy. A summary of the assessment of each application is included within the individual project reports in Appendix A.
8. All the businesses included in this paper have met the basic criteria and specific grant criteria; that is they are properly constituted micro-businesses and have provided the relevant information to support their application. All applicants have been subject to a due diligence review including a site visit with just two exceptions: Kinesica Ltd and Farm Field and Forest Ltd. These due diligence reviews had not taken place at the time of writing of this paper but are scheduled to take place before the Cabinet Grants Panel meets on 3 September. A verbal update on the outcome of the reviews for these two businesses will be provided at the Cabinet Grants Panel meeting.

Financial Implications

9. The microbusiness grants are funded through an allocation from the WSCC business rates pool, with £500,000 to be divided proportionally between districts. A total of £72,000 is allocated to Mid Sussex District.
10. The current fund stands at:

Scheme	Original fund	Funds approved so far	Funds requested in this paper	Balance (<i>if all bids in this paper are approved</i>)
Micro Business Grant Scheme	£72,000.00	£ 50,465.17	£17,150.00	£4,384.83

11. As some of the applicants listed have noted they are not VAT registered, it is requested that the grant awarded includes the VAT on items/services purchased. Written confirmation of each applicant's VAT status will be requested before this is confirmed. Applicants in question are: Building Blocks Therapy, Green Goddess,

OCH Solutions Ltd and Slake Café due diligence reviews will confirm if this is the case for Kinesica Ltd and Farm, Field and Forest Ltd.

Risk Management Implications

12. The main risk associated with the successful implementation of the decisions arising from this report is the inability of the funded organisations to carry out the services, activities or equipment purchase for which funding had been awarded.
13. To minimise this risk, the decision has been taken to only pay out the grants following proof, from the applicant, that the project in question has begun, or equipment has been purchased. This could be in the form of receipts, invoices and other related documents

Equality implications

14. As part of the due diligence process, all of the businesses whose bids are included in this report have been assessed to be in compliance with the requisite policies/legislation.

Legal Implications

15. The Council is not obliged to provide grant funding, but by virtue of section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, it is able to do anything which it considers is likely to achieve the promotion of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of its area. This includes incurring expenditure, giving financial assistance to any person (or organisation) and entering into arrangements or agreements with any person.

Background Papers

16. Grant applications and associated documentation for the Microbusiness Grant Scheme are held in the Economic Development Team.