

INDEPENDENT RETAILERS GRANT SCHEME – PROPOSED GRANT AWARDS

REPORT OF Contact Officer	Divisional Leader for Planning and Economy William Hawkins, Economic Development Officer William.hawkins@midsussex.gov.uk (01444 477322)
Wards Affected	ALL
Key decision	No

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to present applications for the Independent Retailers Grant Scheme for consideration by the Cabinet Grants Panel.

Summary

2. A summary of the applications to be considered together with officer recommendations on grant award, is set out in Table 1.

Table 1 – List of all retailers applying for award of grant

Organisation	Location	Purpose for which award is sought	Award Requested	Award Suggested
Baan Thai 2 Ltd	Burgess Hill	Storefront improvements and digital	£1,300.00	£1,300.00
Ounce Stores Ltd	Lindfield	Storefront improvements, interior improvements and digital	£4,000.00	£1,704.00
Lindfield Eyecare Ltd	Lindfield	Storefront repair	£2,475.00	£2,475.00
Dudley House Trust	Handcross	Storefront improvements, interior improvements and digital	£2,212.45	£2,212.45
The Rocking Horse Emporium	Burgess Hill	Storefront improvements, interior improvements and digital	£2,444.00	£2,058.00
Fun Pots Ltd	Haywards Heath	Interior improvements and digital	£2,852.00	£2,852.00
Sweetsk8	Burgess Hill	Storefront improvements, interior improvements, and pop-up shop	£2,800.00	£2,800.00
Digital Café	Burgess Hill	Storefront repair and interior improvements	£4,000.00	£3,750.00
The Ashman Hairdressing Company Ltd t/a Hair Essentials	Burgess Hill	Interior improvements	£3,000.00	£3,000.00
Bella June flowers	Hassocks	Storefront improvements and interior improvements	£4,000.00	£4,000.00
Moreno & Young	Haywards Heath	New equipment and digital	£3,423.00	£3,423.00
The Mercantile Adventurers	Burgess Hill	Storefront improvement	£3,870.00	£3,870.00
Lost Pier Brewing Ltd	Burgess Hill	Exterior shelter	£4,000.00	£4,000.00

Reflex @42	Hassocks	Storefront repair	£4,000.00	£4,000.00
Pictures Prints Framing (PPF Art) Ltd	Burgess Hill	Storefront improvements, interior improvements and digital	£4,000.00	£4,000.00
Acorn Sales and Lettings	Haywards Heath	Interior improvements and digital	£4,000.00	£4,000.00
Couture & Tiaras	Burgess Hill	Storefront improvements and interior improvements	£4,000.00	£4,000.00
Soror	Burgess Hill	Storefront signage	£1,925.00	£1,925.00
Lindfield Coffee Works	Lindfield	Interior improvements and digital	£2,812.00	£2,812.00
My Enhance Ltd	East Grinstead	Storefront repair	£4,000.00	£4,000.00
A-L Nails Salon	Haywards Heath	Storefront signage	£2,000.00	£1,500.00
Aroma Cafe & Kitchen	Hassocks	Storefront repair	£3,000.00	£3,000.00
Mia Hara Ltd T/A Happy Feet Boutique	Haywards Heath	Storefront improvements, interior improvements and digital	£2,370.00	£2,370.00
Total			£72,484.64	£69,052.64

1. Each application has been assessed using an agreed matrix. A summary of the applicants is provided at **Appendix A** and the criteria used at **Appendix B**. All bids submitted meet grant eligibility criteria.
2. Officers are seeking clarification on the applications received from Ounce Stores Ltd as some elements of the application are not deemed eligible, and from A L Nails salon on their proposed match-funding contribution. This report currently recommends a lower grant value for these applications. A verbal update will be provided at the meeting.
3. Lower grant values are recommended to The Rocking Horse Emporium and the Digital Café to accord with grant match funding requirements (25%).

Recommendation

Members of the Panel are requested to

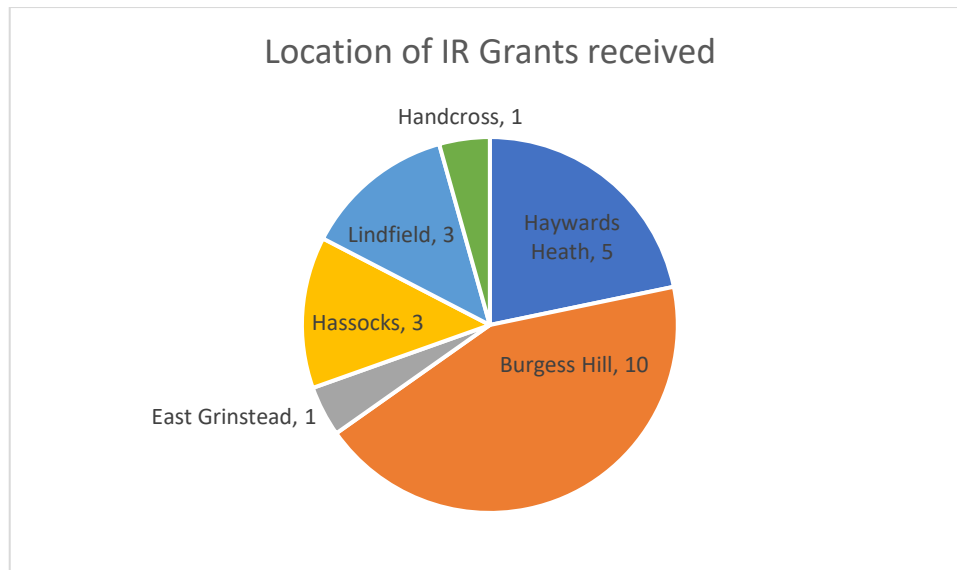
- a) **Consider and agree the funding requests for all applications set out in Table 1, noting the verbal update required to be made to this Committee set out in paragraph 2.**
- b) **Consider and agree the proposed communications plan outlined in the report.**

Background

4. This is the first meeting of the Cabinet Grants Panel to consider the 2021/22 Independent Retailers Grant Scheme.
5. The Independent Retailers Grant Scheme is a County-wide scheme funded through the Economic Recovery Fund (ERF), previously known as the West Sussex Local Enterprise and Apprenticeship Platform (LEAP), funded from retained business rates.
6. A total of £500,000 was allocated to the West Sussex districts and boroughs, with £80,000 allocated to Mid Sussex. This funding was allocated to offer training and grants to independent retailers.

7. The districts and boroughs undertook joint procurement for a training provider, to provide a wide range of online training courses to all independent retailers across West Sussex, via the West Sussex Retail Hub platform. Mid Sussex contributed £7,000 towards this initiative.
8. The remaining £73,000 of funding has been allocated toward delivering grants of up to £4,000 (25% match funded) to independent retailers to deliver projects that improve the following:
 - Visual appearance of shop units (external and internal)
 - Enhance the interior environment and / or shopping experience
 - Contribute to improve business operation and competitiveness.
9. In addition, smaller grants of up to £500 were available for businesses taking up temporary popup shop opportunities.
10. It is a requirement of the fund, that each applicant engages with the training modules provided on the West Sussex Retail Hub platform.
11. The 2020/21 Store Front Grant Scheme focused principally on exterior storefront improvement. This 2021/22 allocation has been expanded to cover a wider range of retail activity and projects, to provide further reaching assistance to independent retailers.
12. **Appendix A** provides further details on the applicants that have applied for the scheme.
13. Each application has been scored in accordance with the matrix in **Appendix B**, noting the extent to which each applicant meets the stated (relevant) criteria.
14. Figure 1 provides a geographical breakdown of the applications received. A total of 23 grants have been submitted. Most of the bids are from retailers in the three towns (16 bids in total).
15. Most of the bids for Burgess Hill are in and around the town centre. As the scheme aims to improve the external appearance of shop units, the award of grant will contribute towards improving the appearance of this location, alongside providing better trading conditions.

Figure 1



Assessment of applications

16. Each application has been assessed using an agreed matrix. A summary is provided at **Appendix A**.
17. All bids submitted meet eligibility criteria and are properly constituted independent retailers (with less than 5 stores) located in Mid Sussex.
18. All bids submitted are of a sufficient standard of detail to recommend approval with the exception of the applications received from Ounce Stores Ltd as some elements of the application are not deemed eligible, and from A L Nails salon as clarification is required on their proposed match-funding contribution. This report currently recommends a lower grant value for these applications. A verbal update will be provided at the meeting.
19. Lower grant values are recommended to The Rocking Horse Emporium and the Digital Café to accord with grant match funding requirements (25%).
20. Officers will ensure all applicants complete online training as required by the scheme before grant is formally awarded. This currently applies to 5 applicants.

Communication Plan

21. To share and promote the success of the scheme and the valuable support it will provide for independent retailers and in improving the trading environment, officers intend to promote the scheme, and the funding awarded, primarily via a press release and social media posts and an article in Mid Sussex Matters. Officers will look to include a quote from Cabinet Member for the Economy alongside feedback received from businesses awarded the funding, to highlight individual successes.

Financial Implications

22. The Independent Retailer Grant is funded through from the WSCC Economic Recovery Fund with £80,000 awarded to Mid Sussex. £73,000 of funding has been allocated toward delivering grants.

23. The Independent Retailers Grant Scheme stands as follows:

Fund as at 21 02 2022	Funds approved so far	Award proposed in this paper	Balance (if all bids in this paper are approved)
£73,000.00	£0.00	£69,052.64	£3,947.36

24. Officers are seeking to allocate this funding prior to March 31, 2022, and are holding discussions with the other West Sussex districts and boroughs over any funding that is not allocated or subsequently claimed. There is a possibility that any remaining funding can be passed into existing grant schemes, such as the Micro Business Grant, as they stem from the same funding source. It is of note that independent retailers can also apply for funding through the Micro Business Grant Scheme.

Risk Management Implications

25. The main associated risk to 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.
26. To minimise risk to funding such as this, as per previous grant award schemes, all grant schemes led by the Economic Development Team are paid in arrears on receipt of invoices or other such evidence. The payment-on-invoice approach is one key means on reducing risk to the fund and ensuring that grant payments support delivery. As noted in paragraph 22, officers will also explore potential uses for any unclaimed funding.
27. Where applications reference physical works to properties, applicants will be required to ensure that the project has all the necessary permissions in place (including planning, building regulations, licensing and from landlords), prior to completion.

Sustainability Implications

28. None.

Legal Implications

29. 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 the incurring of expenditure, giving financial assistance to any person (or organisation) and entering into arrangements or agreements with any person.

Background Papers

30. Grant applications and associated documentation for the Independent Retailers Grant Scheme are held by the MSDC Economic Development Team.