

END OF GRANT REPORT – MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL'S COVID-19 RECOVERY GRANT SCHEME 2020/22 - BUSINESS GRANT AWARDS

REPORT OF: Divisional Leader for Planning and Economy
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Wards Affected:
Key Decision No

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the outcomes and impacts of grants awarded to businesses from the Covid-19 Recovery Grant Scheme 2020/22, in line with the commitment made in the Corporate Grant Schemes Review; and provide detail on the proposed communication plan on scheme outcomes.
2. The paper sets out a summary of the grant scheme including the number of businesses supported, type of projects funded, benefits and examples of success stories shared by applicants.
3. Covid-19 Recovery Grants awarded to community organisations will be reported separately to this Committee, by the Community Services Team.

Recommendations

4. Members of the panel are requested to:
 - a) **Note the review of the Grant Scheme and feedback received from awarded applicants:**
 - b) **Consider and agree the proposed communications plan outlined in the report.**

Background

5. Mid Sussex District Council allocated £300,000 of its own revenue funds in 2020, to support community organisations and businesses to adapt operations due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
6. The purpose of the grant was to support applicants with recovery; enable businesses to reopen and operate safely; and encourage businesses to diversify their products and services.
7. Summary of key points:
 - a) In total 42 businesses have been supported by MSDC's Covid-19 Recovery Grant Scheme, with funding totalling £159,188, detailed in **Appendix A**.
 - b) The funding available has successfully supported organisations to respond to and recover from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - c) The funding supported businesses across the district with 50% located in the town centres and 50% from the surrounding villages.
 - d) Average grant award was £3,790

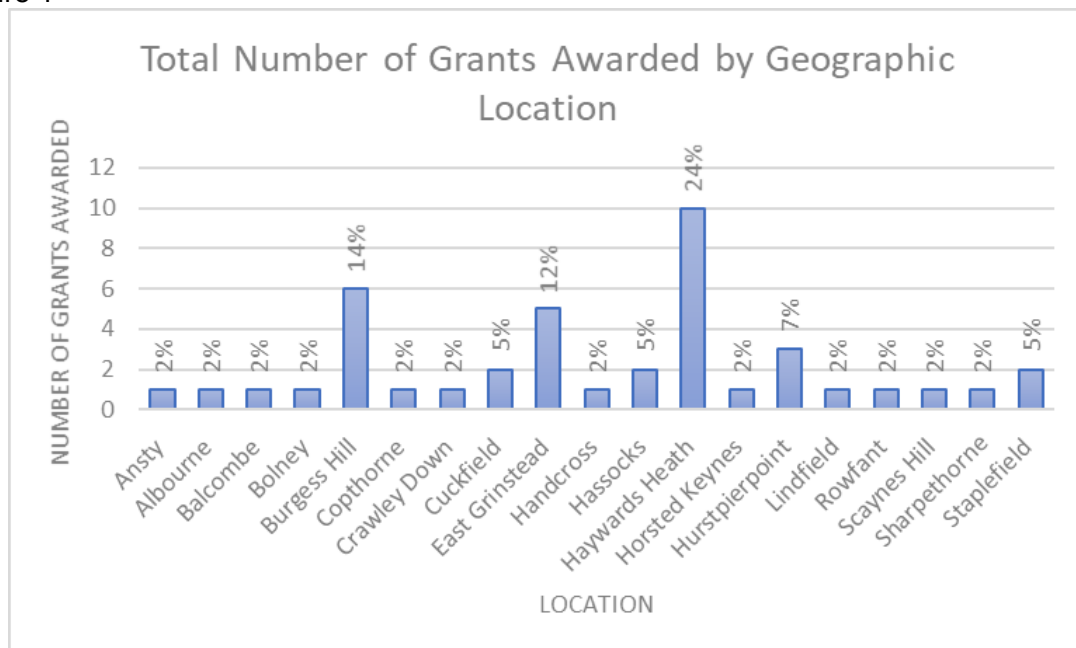
- e) In most cases businesses used the grant funding to diversify and adapt their product or service offer, demonstrating the resilience, entrepreneurship and commitment of local businesses.
- f) Projects supported have been varied from new equipment, products and service innovations to website development, marketing and training.
- g) Benefits reported include diversification of products and services, increased revenue, facilitated home working or creating a safe environment for staff and customers, business survival and growth including in four instances, being able to recruit more staff.
- h) The scheme was oversubscribed with the number of applicants exceeding the funding available.
- i) This funding support along with the government grant funding available during the pandemic has been a lifeline for many businesses and enabled businesses to continue to trade, adapt and grow.

Summary of the Covid-19 Recovery Grant Scheme 2020/22

Geographic Spread Across the District

- 8. Businesses supported with grant funding were spread across the district. The total number of **grants awarded** by geographic location is set out in Figure 1. In summary 10 (23%) are from Haywards Heath, 6 (14%) from Burgess Hill, 5 (12%) from East Grinstead, 3 (7%) from Hurstpierpoint, and 2 (4%) from Hassocks, Cuckfield and Staplefield, with single applications from a broad range of other locations.
- 9. Around 50% of the businesses awarded funding are located in the three towns and the remaining 50% from district's villages.

Figure 1



Purpose of the Grant

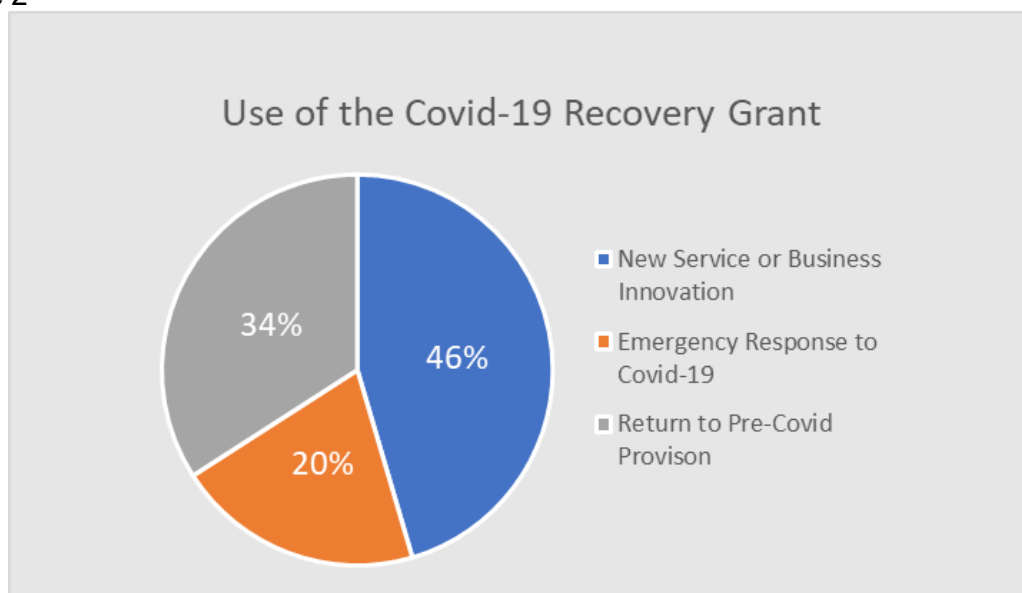
10. The Covid-19 Recovery Grant scheme provided support to local businesses and organisations to respond to and recover from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

11. Applications were invited for costs and/or projects, relating to the following:

- Emergency Response - Additional costs, above and beyond normal running costs, whilst operating under legal restrictions because of Covid-19 which prevents normal service delivery; for example, maintaining contact with clients and customers and delivering Covid-19 support e.g. to vulnerable and shielded groups.
- Return to Pre-Covid Provision - Additional costs associated with reopening and return to Business as Usual in a Covid-19 safe way; for example, new equipment, staff training, physical works to create a Covid-19 secure working environment.
- New Service or Business Innovation - Adapting the business or organisation to new delivery or service provision; for example, a shift to new digital provision or other innovative ways of working.

12. Of the 42 Covid-19 Recovery Grants awarded, 20 were used to develop a new service or business innovation, demonstrating the intentions of applicants to invest and prepare for the future in light of the pandemic; 15 were used to return to pre-Covid provision and 9 were used as an emergency response, as shown in Figure 2.

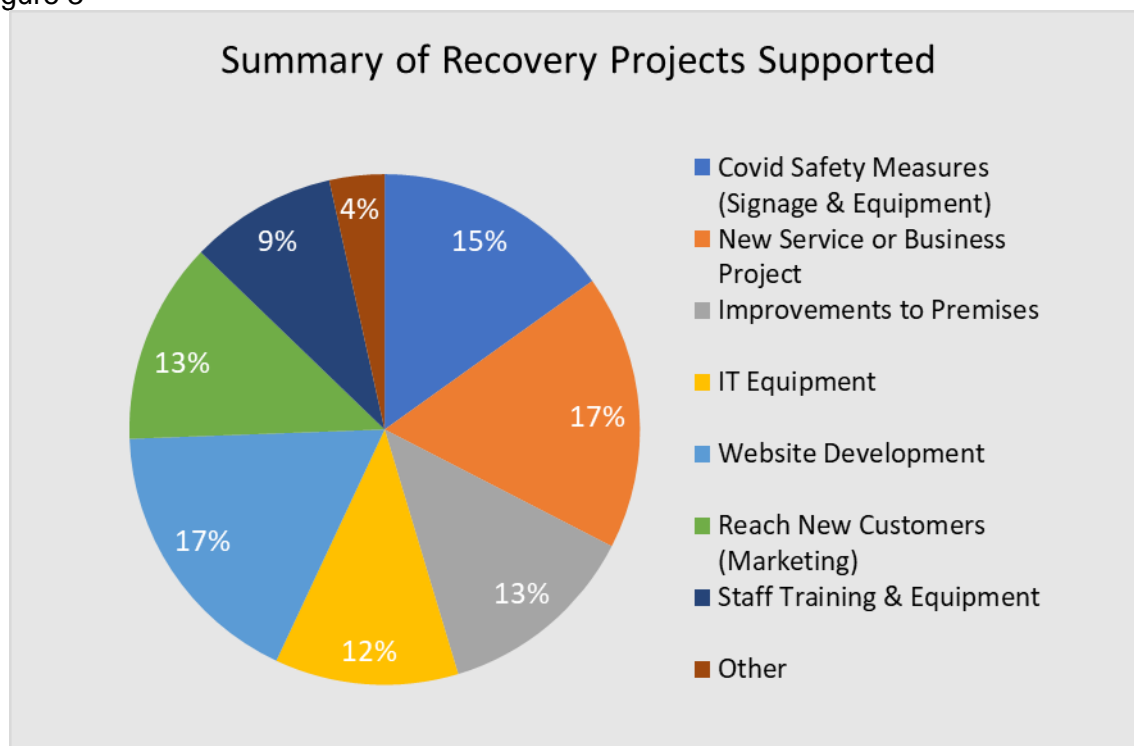
Figure 2



Overview of Projects Supported

13. The scheme supported a wide range of recovery projects. An overview of the types of projects supported is summarised in Figure 3.

Figure 3



Note: in some instances, projects supported related to more than one type of activity.

Ways in which the Scheme has Benefitted Businesses

14. The Covid-19 Recovery Grant Scheme has successfully supported a wide number and variety of projects. Applicants reported positively that these projects enabled their businesses to benefit in a variety of ways, summarised below.

- Diversifying products / services to increase revenue (23 responses)
- Facilitate home working or creating a safe environment for staff and customers to allow operations to continue (16 responses)
- Ongoing viability of the business and in a number of cases growth (9 responses)
- Enabled businesses to recruit more staff (4 responses).

15. Officers engaged with applicants following the completion of their projects to obtain feedback and an understanding of the impact the grant funding had had on their business. A full list of all businesses awarded grant funding is available at **Appendix A**.

16. Below are examples of how businesses reported they benefitted from the scheme:

- **The Fresh Fish Shop Ltd** - The Fresh Fish Shop Ltd serves fresh fish and shellfish over the counter in Haywards Heath. The business was awarded a grant of £2,000 towards the cost of e-commerce and marketing activity.

Manging Director, Sebastian, provided us feedback on the grant: *“The Fresh Fish Shop has been a familiar sight in Haywards Heath for over 30 years. During the pandemic we wanted to ensure we could continue to serve the local community from our shop and offer a comprehensive online ordering and home delivery service for those who were self-isolating, shielding, or simply looking for a safer, convenient way of shopping for food. The development of our e-commerce site has introduced a new way of supplying our products to the local community, as well as highlighting the quality, sustainability and availability of Sussex seafood to consumers nationwide.”*

- **Mid Sussex Osteopaths** is a healthcare business providing assessment and treatment of musculoskeletal conditions such as back and neck pain. The business was awarded £2,500.00 towards the cost of staff training to offer new services, marketing and outreach work.

Business owner, Adam, provided the following feedback: *“It has helped push a lot of marketing forward which has accelerated our return to a reasonable level of service. It has also helped us reach out to the community more effectively and helped boost our skill set to offer more to the public.”*

- **The Hub Kids Club Ltd** – The Hub Kids Club Ltd is a day nursery located in Haywards Heath. The business was awarded a grant of £2,000.00 towards the costs of additional play resources and iPads to minimise sharing across bubbles.

Director, Gemma, provided the following feedback: *“This grant enabled us to continue to provide a childcare service to the families in our community safely, without impacting on the quality and variety of activities on offer.”*

- **The Jonathan Lea Network** – The Jonathan Lea network are a firm of solicitors who specialise in advising entrepreneurs, senior managers and investors in respect of their legal needs. The business was awarded a grant of £4,675 towards the cost of IT equipment to support remote working and training of the paralegals.

Office Manager, Katie, provided the following feedback: *“This grant came at just the right time as we wanted to commit to employing two new paralegals and this helped us financially with providing them with a flexible workstation and the facilities to provide training. These two team members have become valuable members of the JLN team which has improved our ability to offer a greater service to our clients.”*

- **Hassocks Eyecare Centre** – Hassocks Eyecare Centre is an optician offering eye examinations, contact lens fittings supply of prescription spectacles, emergency eye care and audiology services. The business was awarded a grant of £2,000.00 towards the cost of an automatic motorised door opening mechanism for the front door to improve safety and access to the premises.

Director, Vicki, provided the following feedback: *“The support gave us, as directors, some hope that we might stay in business and thankfully for our industry we re-opened in June 2020 and have been open ever since. The modifications required to open safely were funded by this grant”.*

- **MNH Sustainable Cabin Services** – MNH Sustainable Cabin Services is a family-owned business which services the airline industry with packing and logistics. The business was awarded a grant of £5,000 to purchase specialist units to measure levels of particles present on onboard products and upgrade their IT system to allow for home working.

The Marketing Director, Emma, provided the following feedback: *“Without a doubt the grant we have received has helped our business to adapt in order to survive the pandemic. Without the grants we would not have had the cashflow to change our business models, processes and IT systems to enable home working and to get us through the pandemic. Our revenue was stopped overnight when the travel sector was shut down, so the grants have been a lifeline.”*

- **Flinders Coffee Ltd** – Flinders Coffee Ltd is located in Haywards Heath. The business was awarded £5,000.00 towards the cost of new seating booths to aid social distancing, a website to enable pre-ordering/delivery and a counter fridge to improve takeaway service.

Business owner, Katrina, provided the following feedback: “It has allowed us to make necessary changes to improve surroundings, increase product offer and ensure a safer environment for staff and customers.”

Communications Plan

17. To share and promote the success of the scheme and the valuable support it provided for businesses, Officers propose the following communication activity; press release, 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 Implication

18. Of the £159,188 total funding awarded to businesses, £139,546 has been claimed so far. Of the 42 businesses awarded grant funding, 39 have spent their grant in full or in part. Businesses are able to submit invoices up until the end of the 2021/22 financial year.

Sustainability Implications

19. None.

Appendices:

Appendix A – List of all businesses awarded grant funding