

MICROBUSINESS GRANT SCHEME

REPORT OF **Divisional Leader for Planning and Economy**
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Wards Affected **All**
Key decision **No**

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to present seven micro business grant applications totalling £12,527 for consideration by the Cabinet Grants Panel.

Summary

2. A summary of the applications to be considered and the recommendations from the Economic Development Team on the level of grant to be awarded to each organisation are set out in Table 1:

Table 1 – list of all business applying for award of grant

Organisation	Location	Purpose for which award is sought	Award Requested	Award Suggested
Lemonade Print Group Ltd	Burgess Hill	New website and marketing	£2,000	£2,000
Squires Planning Ltd	Copthorne	New equipment and marketing	£2,000	£2,000
Once upon a Boutique	Burgess Hill	New equipment and marketing	£2,000	£2,000
Compost Club Ltd	Hassocks	New business unit	£2,000	£2,000
Create Space Studios	Hurstpierpoint	Training, signage and temporary staff	£1,277	£1,277
The Window Shutter Company	Haywards Heath	Website development and video creation	£2,000	£2,000
The Sussex Social Ltd	Haywards Heath	Website development and virtual assistant	£1,250	£1,250
Total			£12,527	£12,527

3. Each application has been assessed using an agreed matrix.
4. A summary of the applicants is provided at **Appendix A** and the criteria used at **Appendix B**. All bids submitted meet grant eligibility criteria.

Recommendation

The Cabinets Grants Panel are recommended to consider and agree the funding request for each of the applications in Table 1, summaries of which are attached in Appendix A of this report.

Background

5. This is the first meeting of the Cabinet Grants Panel to consider the 2022/23 Micro Business Grant Scheme. This is a County-wide scheme funded through the Economic Recovery Fund (ERF), via the West Sussex Local Enterprise and Apprenticeship Platform (LEAP), generated through retained business rates.
6. As with previous rounds of this scheme, a total of £500,000 has been allocated to the seven districts and boroughs within West Sussex, with £71,428.57 allocated to Mid Sussex.

7. Grants of up to £2,000 are available to assist micro businesses with projects that will help them grow or up to £1,500 to help with the costs of taking on an apprentice.
8. The scheme was not run in 2021/22 due to the change in funding source and subsequent delay in application from the joint West Sussex districts and boroughs as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
9. Previously officers have implemented a system for returning applications, whereby businesses who have received a grant for two consecutive years must ensure a 'gap year' before being eligible again. This has been amended for the current round of the scheme to reflect the year's break noted in paragraph 5. Instead return applicants will be highlighted to the panel for their consideration.

Assessment and Policy Context

10. The applications received have been assessed using an agreed matrix. A summary of the assessment of each application is included within **Appendix A**.
11. Each application has been scored in accordance with the matrix in **Appendix B**, noting the extent to which each applicant meets the (only relevant) criteria. Applicants are required to demonstrate that their projects meet one of the following criteria:
 - Reach new customers
 - Increase the number of employees
 - Introduce new products and services
 - Improve business premises
 - Improve business productivity.
12. All of the bids included in the paper have met the basic eligibility criteria for the grant scheme. All are properly constituted businesses with fewer than 10 employees and are located in the district.

Financial Implications

13. The micro business grants are funded through an allocation from the WSCC ERF business rates pool, with £500,000 to be allocated between seven district and boroughs.
14. The current Micro Business Grant fund stands at:

Fund as at 20 06 2022	Funds approved so far	Funds requested in this paper	Balance (if all bids in this paper are approved)
£71,428.57	£0	£12,527	£58,901.57

Risk Management Implications

15. 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.
16. To minimise this risk all grant schemes led by the Economic Development Team are paid in arrears on receipt of invoices or other such evidence.
17. For apprenticeship grants the management of this risk requires the business to provide evidence that the apprentice noted in the application has formally started before funding is released.

18. 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 payment.

Legal Implications

19. 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.

Sustainability Implications

20. The provision of the Micro Business Grants scheme directly supports the delivery of the Council's Sustainable Economy Strategy and associated UK sustainable development goals. Specifically, Objective 5 of the Sustainable Economy Strategy: **Encourage business start-ups, improve business survival rates and growth** and the following UN Sustainability Goals; **Goal 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth; Goal 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; Goal 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production and Goal 13 – Climate Action.**

Background Papers

21. Grant applications and associated documentation for the Micro Business Grant Scheme are held in the Economic Development Team.