

MICROBUSINESS GRANT SCHEME 2022/23

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Wards Affected: All
Key decision: No

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to ask the Cabinet Grants Panel to consider six micro business grant applications totalling £11,921.

Summary

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

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

| Organisation | Location | Purpose for which award is sought | Award Requested | Award Suggested |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Angie's Nails and Beauty | Haywards Heath | Apprentice | £1,500 | £1,500 |
| Men do Pilates | Hurstpier-point | Website development and marketing | £2,000 | £2,000 |
| Sussex Facilities Management Ltd | Burgess Hill | Marketing | £908 | £908 |
| Cerowski Architects Ltd | East Grinstead | Purchase of new equipment | £1,654 | £1,654 |
| Seasons Art Class Haywards Heath | Haywards Heath | Marketing | £1,360 | £1,360 |
| Ouh La La | Haywards Heath | Renovation of new store | £2,000 | £2,000 |
| Clearthink Counselling | Hassocks | Purchase of new equipment | £499 | £499 |
| Pera Midtown | Burgess Hill | Marketing | £2,000 | £2,000 |
| Total | | | £11,921 | £11,921 |

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 to assess the bids is at **Appendix B**. All bids submitted meet the eligibility criteria.

Recommendation

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

Background

5. This is the fourth 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. A total of £500,000 was allocated to the seven districts and boroughs in West Sussex, with £71,428.57 allocated to Mid Sussex.
7. Grants of up to £2,000 are available to assist micro businesses (defined as businesses with fewer than 10 employees) with projects that will help them grow or up to £1,500 to help with the costs of taking on an apprentice.
8. 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 relaxed for the current round of the scheme to reflect the fact that the scheme did not operate in 2021/22. Instead return applicants are highlighted to the panel for their consideration within Appendix A.

Assessment and Policy Context

9. The applications received have been assessed using an agreed matrix. A summary of the assessment of each application is included within **Appendix A**.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. Appendix B highlights a low-scoring application from 'Pera Midtown', this is due to a lack of information provided to support their application. Officers are in contact with the business requesting additional information and will provide a verbal update should this information be provided. If additional information is not received officers recommend that this application is not considered for funding in this round of applications.

Financial Implications

13. 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 | £27,309 | £11,921 | £32,198.57 |

Risk Management Implications

14. 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.

15. To minimise this risk all grant schemes led by the Economy and Sustainability Team are paid in arrears on receipt of invoices or other such evidence.
16. 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.
17. 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

18. 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

19. The provision of the Micro Business Grants scheme directly supports the delivery of the Council's Sustainable Economy Strategy and associated UN 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

20. Grant applications and associated documentation for the Micro Business Grant Scheme are held in the Economy and Sustainability Team.