

STOREFRONT GRANT SCHEME

REPORT OF: Economic Development Officer
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Wards Affected: East Grinstead

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to present the first applications for the Storefront Improvement Grant Scheme

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
David Foreman Carpets Ltd	Redecoration and new signage	£1,950	£1,950
Decorus London Ltd	Redecoration and repairs	£2,000	£2,000
Total			£3,950

Recommendation

Members of the Panel are requested to:

- ***Consider and decide upon the recommendations for each of the above grants. Summaries grant applications are attached in Appendix A of this report***
- ***Consider and decide an approach to allocate expected unspent funding arising from the scheme.***

Background

3. In 2018 the Council received funding from the West Sussex County Council (WSCC) Strategic Investment Fund in order to facilitate a program of training and support for independent retail businesses. This scheme took the form of primarily training workshops which assisted retailers in refining their retail offer through improvements to aspects of their retail offer such as visual merchandising and retail marketing. This training was very well received by the retail community.
4. The second part of the scheme, and the basis for this report, entails supporting independent retailers through the provision of grants in order to improve the physical appearance of their high street stores. These projects can range from redecoration to new or replacement physical features such as signage and awnings. An approach was agreed with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth to focus this funding into the town of East Grinstead.
5. Officers, with support from local ward members, identified five retailers who wish to take part in the scheme, this report outlines the first of these retailers to complete and

submit their applications. Officers are working with the remaining retailers to ensure the submission of their applications.

6. Should the five proposed retailers' applications be successful, officers expect between £6,000 - £7,000 of the original funding to remain unallocated. Officers also invite the panel's view on the following options about how best this funding can be utilised:
 - To offer additional funding to those retailers who have already submitted their applications on further storefront improvements
 - To offer funding to other retailers situated in East Grinstead Town Centre
 - To explore whether the unallocated funding can be rolled over to the next funding round for the scheme.

Assessment and Policy Context

7. The grants in this report have been considered by the Council's Economic Development Officer, William Hawkins and the Council's Regeneration and Economy Programme Manager, Mark Healy. The proposal to focus the grants in East Grinstead was agreed with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, at the time, Councillor Jonathan Ash-Edwards. A summary 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 independent retail businesses within the town of East Grinstead and provided the relevant information to support their application.

Financial Implications

9. The Storefront Grants are funded through an allocation from the WSCC Strategic Infrastructure Fund, with £204,000 to be divided proportionally between districts. A total of £21,000 was 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>)
Storefront Grant Scheme	£21,000	£ 0	£3,950	£17,050

Risk Management Implications

11. 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.

12. 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

13. All of the businesses whose bids are included in this report were assessed to be in compliance with the requisite policies/legislation.

Legal Implications

14. 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

15. Grant applications and associated documentation for the Storefront Grant Scheme are held in the Economic Development Team.