

MICROBUSINESS GRANT SCHEME

REPORT OF: Economic Development Officer
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Wards Affected: All

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to present 5 microbusiness grant applications for consideration by the Cabinet Grants Panel.

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 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| BB Vintage Clothes Ltd | New staff member | £2,000 | £2,000 |
| Buchan Rum Architects | IT equipment | £2,000 | £2,000 |
| Journey in Essence | New laptop | £914 | £914 |
| The Perrymount Ltd | New service | £2,000 | £2,000 |
| Treehoppers Forest Kindergarten | Apprentice | £1,500 | £1,500 |
| Total | | £8,414 | £8,414 |

3. Of the applications set out in the above table, the application from The Perrymount Ltd has been re-submitted, after the original application had lapsed, following a failure to provide information requested by the panel. That information has now been provided.

Recommendation

Members of the Panel are requested to:

- ***Consider and decide upon the recommendations for each of the above applications, summaries of which are attached in Appendix A of this report.***

Background

4. This is the final meeting of the Cabinet Grants Panel at which bids for funds from the 2018/19 Micro Business Grant Scheme will be considered. There have been a total of 46 applications for the scheme. Of these, 35 businesses have been awarded grant funding.
5. In the previous report, officers noted that the online application portal had closed. The applications presented in this report are the result of direct contact with businesses that inquired into the scheme, following the closure, in order to offer them a chance to apply for the remaining funding.

6. Following this meeting of the panel, there will still be a small amount of grant funding remaining. Officers have identified ways in which this funding can be spent to support businesses. This would involve either opening the application portal to allow for another business to apply, or to take a more direct approach and offer the funding to those businesses that have already been awarded a grant, to help develop their projects further.

Assessment and Policy Context

7. The applications received have been considered by the Council's Economic Development Officers, William Hawkins and the Council's Regeneration and Economy Programme Manager, Mark Healy. A summary of the assessment 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 micro-businesses and have provided the relevant information to support their application. All applicants will be subject to a due diligence review before the panel meets, in order to confirm the validity of their business and the information presented in their application.

Financial Implications

9. The microbusiness grants are funded through an allocation from the WSCC business rates pool, with £500,000 to be divided proportionally between districts. A total of £72,000 is allocated to Mid Sussex District.
10. The current fund stands at:

| Scheme | Original fund | Funds approved so far | Funds requested in this paper | Balance (if all bids in this paper are approved) |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Micro Business Grant Scheme | £72,000.00 | £61,599 | £8,414 | £1,987 |

11. During the scheme, some of the businesses which applied noted they are not VAT registered. The aforementioned due diligence reviews will confirm whether the businesses presented in this report are registered. A verbal update will be given to the panel during the meeting.

Risk Management Implications

12. 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.
13. 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

14. As part of the due diligence process, all of the businesses whose bids are included in this report have been assessed to be in compliance with the requisite policies/legislation.

Legal Implications

15. 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

16. Grant applications and associated documentation for the Microbusiness Grant Scheme are held in the Economic Development Team.