

Retail Support Initiative Grant Application – Wincanton and Wincanton ‘Top Up’ (Executive Decision)

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Purpose of the Report

For Members to consider the Retail Support Initiative (RSI) grant request detailed below.

Public Interest

Supporting and helping to improve the retail offer in the towns and villages across Area East.

Recommendation:

To consider an award of up to £1840 as a 50% contribution to The Red Lion, 3 Market Place, Wincanton, towards pub front improvements and signage:

- £1,500 from the Community Development budget revenue element ring-fenced for the RSI
- £340 from the Community Development budget, Wincanton top-up, revenue element ring-fenced for the RSI

All awards to be subject to the following standard conditions:

- (a) The grant award may be used by SSDC for promotional/publicity purposes
- (b) Grants are paid for approved works/purchases on production of receipted invoices and subject to a visual inspection to confirm completion
- (c) Awards are subject to feedback being supplied within 12 months
- (d) Applicants will normally be expected to draw down the grant within 6 months of the offer
- (e) That appropriate consents are obtained
- (f) Works requiring listed building/planning consents or building regulations will be required to be signed off by the appropriate officer prior to the release of funds
- (g) If, within 3 years of a grant award, the business ceases to trade, the District Council reserves the right to reclaim the grant on the following basis: year one – 100%; year 2 – 75%, year 3 – 45%

Background

This application is being considered under the scheme's operating criteria agreed in July 2014, a copy of which is attached at Appendix 1.

At the November meeting Members deferred their decision on this grant request and asked Officers to check with Legal if a charge on the property would be appropriate and whether the owner (who is not the grant applicant) would be willing to accept a charge. This is a relatively low amount on which to consider a charge - a verbal update on the owner's willingness to accept this will be provided at the meeting. Since the November meeting we have also had confirmation (in writing) that the property is no longer on the market.

Current application

This is the first application to be considered for this property on the Market Place, Wincanton. As it is an application for Wincanton an additional 'top up' is available to further assist closed units in the town. On this occasion some of the additional 'Top up' has been requested to greatly improve the pub front and to further enhance the Market Place. The application meets the criteria of both the basic RSI and the Wincanton 'top-up' scheme.

The amount requested is £1,840.

Grant details

The Red Lion is a prominent building on the Market Place, which has been closed more than open over the last 5 years. The premises have fallen into disrepair and the frontage is looking tired and needs to be enhanced to encourage visitors. The applicant's aim is to create a friendly public house with a variety of entertainment and charity events, to support the local community and charities, creating a relaxed environment for local people and visitors to the town.

Shop front improvements, to include pub signage, new outside lighting and prepare and paint windows, front door, guttering and down pipes:

- Total Project Cost – £3,680
- Amount requested – £1,840

Other funding: the remaining funding for this project will come from the applicant's own savings. The applicant has a 3 year lease of the premises, which includes a 6 month notice period that can be triggered at any time. The assessment score is 56 out of a max of 100. This figure exceeds the minimum level score (50) required for grant assistance to be considered.

Observations: a prominent unit in Wincanton Market Place in need of redecoration to improve exterior and to give the property a new identity. No business has traded from the premises since last summer. The recommended grant award of £1,840 includes £340 from the Wincanton 'top up' scheme

Financial Implications

If Members choose to award this grant, the unallocated budget for Retail Support Initiative will be as follows:

	Revenue element	Capital	Wincanton 'top-up'
Unallocated budget 2016/17	£6,204.40	£1,212	£9,424

Corporate Priority Implications

The awarding of grants meets the following corporate aims:
To increase economic vitality and prosperity

Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications

This project does not cause any changes to carbon emissions.

Equality and Diversity Implications

Background Papers: None

Appendix 1

Retail Support Initiative

Operating criteria

Percentage contributions cannot exceed 50% of costs and no retrospective applications are eligible (i.e. in respect of works which have already been commissioned/started).

Applications over £1,000 will be considered by Area East Committee on a monthly basis since the Community Regeneration Sub-Committee quarterly meetings ceased. Amounts up to £1,000 may be considered at any time as a delegated grant in consultation with the Chairman and Ward Member(s).

Grant levels

Maximum 50% of project costs as follows:

Eligible costs

- Shop-front improvements, if they enhance the High Street
- Business rates assistance – a contribution to the amount payable for new businesses (which do not compete with another business) in their first 2 years of trading
- Exceptional projects which add to the viability of towns/villages

Process

Applications for Grants are accessed and recommendations made on the basis of a fully completed application form and two 'like for like' quotes. Self-help/DIY schemes may complete the application form and supply a project budget with supporting information.

All grant recipients must accept that the grant may be used for publicity purposes by the District Council. Payment of the grant is done retrospectively, for a completed programme of works on the basis of receipted invoices. Exceptionally officers, in consultation with the Chairman, may release partial payments where there is clear justification for doing so.

The District Council will continue to claw back grants from businesses which cease trading on the following basis: 100% in year one, 75% in year two, 45% in year three.

The existing assessment and current scoring mechanism favours businesses:

- employing more than 2 people
- in prominent places
- key rural stores/Post Offices
- retailers

The award is subject to the following standard conditions:

- The grant award may be used by SSDC for promotional/publicity purposes;
- Grants are paid for approved works/purchases on production of receipted invoices;
- Awards are subject to a summary of the benefit of the scheme being supplied;
- Applicants will normally be expected to draw down the grant within 6 months of the offer and if not will have to inform us of the reason(s) for the delay. If there is a valid reason, officers can provide a 6 month extension, but beyond this the grant would either be withdrawn or referred Area East Committee to be re-affirmed;
- That appropriate consents are obtained - works requiring listed building/planning consents or building regulation consent will be required to be signed off by the appropriate officer prior to the release of funds