

Retail Support Initiative – (Executive Decision)

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Nick Weeks
Service Manager: Tim Cook – Locality Team Manager
Lead Officer: Terena Isaacs – Community Support Assistant
Pam Williams – Neighbourhood Development Officer
Contact Details: terena.isaacs@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462248
pam.williams@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01963 435020

Purpose of the Report

For Members to consider an alteration to the Retail Support Initiative (RSI) operating criteria and the grant request detailed below

Public Interest

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

Recommendations:

1. To approve an award, under the current operating criteria, of up to £1,500 as a 50% contribution to: A Bishop Electricals, 4 High Street, Castle Cary towards shop front improvements, which includes repainting render, wooden windows and railings, from the Community Development budget revenue element ring-fenced for the RSI
2. To approve an amendment to the operating criteria agreed in May 2018 so that, except in exceptional circumstances, a 5-year period should lapse between applications relating to the same premises from the same proprietor

Background

This application is being considered under the scheme's operating criteria agreed in May 2018, a copy of which is attached at Appendix 1. Although this was agreed very recently, the application detailed in the report has highlighted an issue with our present policy which allows for repeat applications within 2 years. I therefore recommend a change to the policy so that no repeat applications, in respect of the same premises, in the same proprietorship can be made within 5 years, unless under exceptional circumstances.

Current Application

The grant application is for a prominent property on Castle Cary High Street – it is one of the first shops which you see as you enter the town. The application meets the RSI criteria.

Grant details

A Bishop Electricals is a long standing business in Castle Cary and has been in receipt of the RSI grant on 2 previous occasions. The first grant was on their previous shop, which was situated at the bottom of the town at the Triangle. In 2015 the proprietor invested in a new property on the High Street, which was in need of renovation and an RSI grant was approved by delegation at that time. The proprietor wants to keep the building in a good state of repair as it is one of the town's first shops on the High Street. At first sight the building looks in good condition but on closer inspection it would benefit from redecoration.

Shop front improvements:

- Total Project Cost – £3,000
- Amount requested – £1,500

Other funding – the remaining funding for this project will come from the business' own fund.

Assessment score is 83 out of a max of 100 – this figure exceeds the minimum level score (50) required for grant assistance to be considered.

All awards to be subject to the following standard conditions:

- (a) The grant award may be used by SSSDC for promotional/publicity purposes
- (b) Grants are paid for approved works/purchases on production of receipted invoices
- (c) Awards are subject to an interim report (within 9 months) and final report being submitted
- (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%

Financial Implications

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

	Revenue Element	Capital
Unallocated budget 2018/19 as at May 2018	£7,625	£1,212

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

None

Background Papers: AEC agenda and minutes May 2018

Appendix 1

Retail Support Initiative Proposed operating criteria 2018/19

Percentage contributions cannot exceed 50% of costs and **no** retrospective applications are eligible (ie: in respect of works that have already been commissioned/started).

Applications over £1,000 will be considered by Area East Committee on a monthly basis. Amounts of up to £1,000 may be considered at any time as a delegated grant in consultation with the Chairman & Ward Member(s).

Area-wide grant levels: £1,500 to a maximum 50% of project costs as follows:

Eligible costs:

- Shopfront 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

Wincanton top-up:

In addition to the area-wide scheme, the 'top-up' scheme for Wincanton also offers:

- Maximum grant £1,000 for businesses wishing to move into one of the eligible units in the town **which have been empty for at least 6 months prior to receiving an application**

The following units are now occupied/undergoing refurbishment; one has taken advantage of the Wincanton 'top up' scheme:

3 Market Place – formerly The Red Lion
13 Market Place – formerly Boots Chemist
1-3 High Street – formerly Brocks
Unit corner of Carrington Way
6 High Street – formerly Chicken Grill/Yummy Yummy

Grants are only available to proprietors/owners with one business/premises and will not exceed 50% of project cost.

Process:

Applications for grants are assessed and recommendations made on the basis of a fully completed application form and 2 '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 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 to Area East Committee to be reaffirmed
 - 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
 - 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%
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