

## **Briefing on Inaugural Area East Regeneration Board**

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### **Purpose of the Report**

A short briefing on the main items discussed at the first Board meeting held on 22 March 2016 and attended by the Chairman and ADM

1. The first meeting discussed the draft terms of reference. It was agreed that the Area East Board should meet three times per year not two as originally proposed
2. There was an update on the 10 infrastructure projects across the district prioritised by DX Committee in October 2014. In terms of employment land at Castle Cary, Wincanton and in other market towns/ rural settlements, SSDC submitted funding bids to Growth Deal Three in September 2015 and the outcome is awaited. SSDC will purchase suitable land if necessary
3. A303 – the preliminary consultation on the road improvements, which includes dualling of Sparkford - Ilchester, took place in February and formal consultations by Highways England are due later in 2016. Close links will be maintained with Highways England and the consultants. It is expected that construction will begin in 2020
4. Superfast Broadband – Connecting Devon & Somerset ( CDS) are on track to be able to offer this to 90% of premises by the end of 2016. The tender to tackle the final 10% of premises, not reached by fibre broadband, The Superfast Extension Programme, has been delayed until October 2016. The intention is to extend coverage to at least 95% of premises by end 2017. This is likely to be offered through a combination of wireless, satellite and fibre methods and 10 telecoms companies are in contention. CDS are hoping for a partnership arrangement to cover as many premises as possible. In the meantime a voucher scheme has been launched to assist individual premises with <2mbps to improve their speed.
5. Inward Investment - A revamped Into Somerset Inward Investment programme was launched in October 2015. The new website can be viewed at [www.intosomerset.co.uk](http://www.intosomerset.co.uk) . The new system includes a property search function and an ability for partners to log and organise inward investment enquiries at the district level. This data will be used to improve the service. The strengthened ED team is working more proactively on these enquiries, including a business ambassador service and promoting opportunities through media/ social media.
6. The Heart of the SW LEP is setting up a Growth Hub to provide a one stop advice and support shop for businesses. Peninsular Enterprise has been awarded part of this work and the other component has yet to be contracted. For details see [www.heartofswgrowthhub.co.uk](http://www.heartofswgrowthhub.co.uk)
7. Areas will be able to take projects to the strategic Infrastructure Board that meets bi-monthly. Area East is invited to take forward brief outlines of economic projects for further consideration. In addition a local business breakfast was discussed. A topic could be to link employers with education providers.

## Appendix 1

### Empty Shops November 2015

| Wincanton   | Castle Cary   | Bruton   |
|---|---|--|
| 4 Church Street<br>7 church Street<br>1 Market Place<br>3 Market Place<br>5 Market place<br>Applegarth Mall<br>24 High Street<br>36 High Street<br>47 High Street | 2 Market Place<br>Fore Street<br>Cavendish House, Fore St<br>Feature Stone, Station Rd<br>The Triangle<br>The Farthings | 6 High Street<br>78 High Street<br>91 High Street<br>Bruton House, High St |

## Appendix 2

### Operating criteria 2015/16

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 £1000 will be considered by Area East Committee on a monthly basis. Amounts up to £1000 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:

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 two years of trading  
Exceptional projects which add to 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 7\* units currently empty in the town, these are listed at Appendix 2 **or**
- Maximum £300 available to new **and** existing businesses for business improvements and marketing initiatives. For new businesses this could be used towards stock too.

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

\*Eligible empty units in Wincanton at July 2014:

3 Market Place – The Red Lion  
6 High Street – Digital Error  
24 High Street – formerly Green Dragon  
36 High Street – formerly Alldays  
13 Market Street – formerly Boots Chemist#  
1-3 High St – formerly Brocks#  
6 High Street – formerly Chicken Grill/Yummy Yummy#

# now occupied/partly occupied

### **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 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 six 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;
- If, within three 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 two – 75%, year three – 45%.

**Retail Support Initiative Grant Assessment Form****Date of Assessment:** xx xx 2015**Name of Business:** xx**Date of Application:** xx xx 2015**Project:** xxxxxx**Amount requested:** £xx**Total Project Cost:** £xx**Amount requested (as percentage of the total project cost):** xxxx

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Application details completed               |  |
| Quotes and other information supplied       |  |
| Tenure acceptable                           |  |
| Delegated decision                          |  |
| Training need identified                    |  |
| Consents obtained (specify what/when)       |  |
| Grant                                       |  |
| Other issues – parking, access, loading etc |  |

*(Above section to be completed prior to assessment commencing)***Assessment 1-5 (five being highest/best)**

| <b>Business activity</b>                                       | <b>Score</b> | <b>Comment</b> |
|--|--------------|----------------|
| Period trading (1-5 years)                                     |              |                |
| Business organisation  |              |                |
| Experience of running a business                               |              |                |
| Applicant has clearly identified 'success measures'/milestones |              |                |
| Duplication with existing retail ( <i>scaled, 5=none</i> )     |              |                |
| Financial predictions realistic                                |              |                |
| Premises definition *  |              |                |
| 2 + employees (< or 2 = 3, >2 = 5)                             |              |                |
| Subtotal   |              |                |

| <b>Location</b>                         | <b>Score</b> | <b>Comment</b> |
|---|--------------|----------------|
| Local benefit/appeal                    |              |                |
| Niche product attracting people to town |              |                |
| Unit turnover (low turnover = 5)        |              |                |
| Unit profile                            |              |                |
| Significant shop front improvement      |              |                |
| Supports wider community activity       |              |                |
| Key rural store (0 or 3)                |              |                |
| Subtotal                                |              |                |

