



Oldham
Council

Delegated Report

Award of a Business Improvement Grants in Lees district centre

Portfolio Holder:

Councillor Brownridge, Cabinet member for Co-operatives and Neighbourhoods

Report of: Helen Lockwood, Executive Director Economy, Skills and Neighbourhoods

Report Author: Liz Kershaw, Principal Regeneration Officer
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Reason for Decision

The purpose of the report is to seek approval to award a Business Improvement Grant in Lees district centre.

Recommendations

It is recommended to:

- Approve the award of a Business Improvement Grant to:
 - P. Harrison Architects – in respect of 90a High Street, Lees
- Note that the Grant Review Panel for Lees recommends the grant award as set out in the report.

Award of a Business Improvement Grant in Lees district centre

1 Background

- 1.1 The Council recognises the important role that independent businesses play in sustaining the vibrancy and vitality of our high streets. On the 18th November 2013, Cabinet approved a scheme to provide business support to sustain and grow independent businesses in the Yorkshire Street/Union Street East area of Oldham. This was followed by approval on 21st July 2014, of a second phase of that initiative to introduce the scheme to Shaw and Lees District Centres.
- 1.2 Independent businesses are particularly important to our District Centres where they help to create a strong sense of local identity and customer loyalty and trust. District Centres are often the location for family businesses that have been trading for long periods of time – many of them for a number of decades. Improvements to the exterior of key buildings including fascia's and shop fronts can both uplift an area and the visitor's perception of the District Centre and assist in attracting new independents.
- 1.3 Discretionary grants of 50% of the costs of improvements, up to a maximum of £8,000, are available. These are subject to various conditions including that the owner/business adhered to the objectives set out in the Cabinet report and any local criteria.
- 1.4 In addition, a local grant review panel consisting of the ward members for Saddleworth West and Lees has been set up to review grant applications. The panel provides recommendations as to whether to approve, vary or reject the grant applications with the actual decision to award the grant being made by the relevant Cabinet member.

2 Current Position

2.1 We have received the following Business Improvement Grant application. The application has been considered by the members of the Lees Grant Review Panel by email on 31st July 2017, whereby they recommended approval, as follows:

Applicant	Type of Business	Address	Grant Application	Recommended Grant Award	Total estimated costs of works
Peter Harrison Architects	Architects	90a High Street, Lees	£5,340	£5,340	£10,680
Comments	<p>Peter Harrison Architects was first established in Manchester in 1956 and has been under the control of the current partners since 1996, and moved to these first floor premises in Lees in 2000. The premises are owned by the business with the main entrance off High Street. The premises also overlook the public car parks and open space outside the Library.</p> <p>The works will consist of:</p> <p>Front elevation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New windows and stone cills to first floor windows - Cleaning brickwork - New signage and decoration to front entrance including door/jambes - Roof lights and new guttering <p>Rear elevation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Repair and repaint existing render - New soil pipes - Resealing existing windows - New lighting <p>The applicant is aware that Planning Permission and Building Regulations approval is required and that any grant offered would be subject to this being in place.</p> <p>The applicant has sought three tenders for the work and based on the lowest of the three tenders of £10,680 – is seeking a grant of £5,340 towards to the works.</p> <p>The applicant feels that these works will improve the appearance of their business as well as improve the look on the High Street and help in attracting new customers. The works will improve the image of the business and increase awareness of the practice and this increasing the client base. As workload intensifies there are opportunities to repeat work experience offers and recruit additional members of staff.</p> <p>The business is currently benefitting from Small Business Rate Relief.</p> <p>Panel recommended approval by email on 31/07/2017 for a grant of £5,340 based on the information above and subject to the applicant obtaining planning and building regulations approval.</p>				

3 Options/Alternatives

3.1 The Council could choose the following options;

3.1.1 Do nothing. If the Council chooses to adopt this approach then the Council's regeneration aspirations for Lees District Centre would be delayed. There is potential that the appearance of these premises and Lees District Centre could decline further.

3.1.2 Approve the award of the Business Improvement Grant as summarised in section 2 above. Business Improvement Grant applicants will enter into a contract with the Council, to ensure that works are being undertaken satisfactorily with claw back arrangements for non-compliance. Funding takes place once the contract is completed and the works completed to the satisfaction of the Council.

4 Preferred Option

4.1 Approve the award of the Business Improvement Grant.

5 Consultation

5.1 Consultation has taken place with the ward members on the review panel for Lees, who have recommended approval of the grants.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 Capital

6.1.1 The Shaw & Lees District Centres Business Support (Neighborhood Developments) Project was awarded £200,000 for Business Improvement Grants in the districts of Shaw and Lees, with £100,000 earmarked for each district.

6.1.2 The table below details the full budget and allocations to date for Lees District.

	£
Total Business Improvement Grant – Shaw	100,000
Previous approved grant allocations	(29,450)
Marketing costs	(250)
Total remaining grant to allocate	70,300
Grant Approval Requested – recommendation 2.1	(5,340)
Revised remaining grant allocation if the request is approved	64,960

6.1.3 Please note that of the £29,450 previously allocated for Lees, £28,378 has been drawn down by the successful applications, as the conditions of grant state that the recipient has up to 12 months to draw down the grant following the approved offer.

6.1.4 Marketing costs of £250 have been apportioned equally to both districts prior to any grants being awarded. All costs will be charged to capital code M0550, as both districts are funded through this.

6.1.5 It is important that colleagues in the Economic Development team, with the assistance from Finance, maintain an understanding and record of claims so that an accurate forecast can be completed.

6.1.6 It is unlikely that every grant awarded in 2017/18 will be drawn down in the same financial year as the conditions of the grant allow the recipient up to 12 months to draw down the grant following the approved offer.

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- 6.2 Revenue
- 6.2.1 There are no revenue implications expected with the awarding of these grants. (Jamie Kelly, Accountant)
- 7 **Legal Services Comments**
- 7.1 The grant would be made subject to planning permission and the Council's standard terms for Business Improvement Grants that provide for the grant to be paid after the works have been completed to the satisfaction of the Council's surveyor and have a claw back provision for non-compliance with the grant terms which together with the relatively low amount of the grant make this a low risk transaction. (Elizabeth Cunningham-Doyle)
8. **Co-operative Agenda**
- 8.1 The Council is working in close partnership with the business owners and the Lees Grant Advisory Panel in relation to the Business Improvement Grants Scheme. The Council encourage active participation and contribution from local traders to use this scheme as an opportunity to raise the image and improve the appearance of Lees District Centre.
- 9 **Human Resources Comments**
- 9.1 N/A
- 10 **Risk Assessments**
- 10.1 N/A
- 11 **IT Implications**
- 11.1 N/A
- 12 **Property Implications**
- 12.1 Improvement of privately owned businesses will contribute towards the achievement of a vibrant Lees District Centre. (Cath Conroy)
- 13 **Procurement Implications**
- 13.1 N/A
- 14 **Environmental and Health & Safety Implications**
- 14.1 None
- 15 **Equality, community cohesion and crime implications**
- 15.1 None
- 16 **Equality Impact Assessment Completed?**
- 16.1 No
- 17 **Key Decision**
- 17.1 No
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18 **Key Decision Reference**

18.1 N/A

19 **Background Papers**

19.1 None

20 **Appendices**

20.1 None

<p>Signed: </p> <p>Helen Lockwood, Executive Director Economy, Skills and Neighbourhoods</p>	<p>Dated: 3 August 2017</p>
<p>Signed: </p> <p>Cllr Barbara Brownridge Cabinet member - Neighbourhoods and Co-operatives</p>	<p>Dated: 3 August 2017</p>