

Chichester District Council

THE CABINET

8 December 2020

Independent Retail Support Programme

1. Contacts

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2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Cabinet approves the Retail Support Grant Scheme and provision of Retail Training for independent retailers as set out in sections 4.1 to 4.3 of the report funded by £80,000 allocated from the Pooled Business Rates Fund.**
- 2.2 Cabinet approves delegated authority to the Divisional Manager of Property & Growth to approve the retail support grants.**

3. Background

- 3.1 In 2018 the council launched the Shop Front Grant and Provision of Retail Training scheme which was funded by the Pooled Business rates fund with CDC as the lead authority for the scheme which was offered by 5 districts and boroughs in West Sussex.
- 3.2 The scheme has been very well received by the businesses who have been supported through the programme. An external, well respected, training company has been appointed to conduct the training and extremely positive feedback has been received from attendees of the workshops.
- 3.3 After attending the training, businesses were then eligible to apply for a Shop Front Grant, requiring them to fund 25% of the total project cost. The grants are not available to fund spend incurred by businesses retrospectively.
- 3.4 A suite of 6 workshops were delivered in each of Chichester, East Wittering, Midhurst, Petworth and Selsey. An additional extra set of workshops was delivered in Chichester to reflect the size of the centre.
- 3.5 In addition to the originally planned workshops, we delivered four further workshops to offer more detailed training on social media to cover content creation, planning and strategy. These were offered following feedback from delegates that it was this area on which they needed more help.

- 3.6 This gives a total of 40 workshops delivered between April 2018 and October 2019. The workshops have been supplemented with one to one sessions.
- 3.7 To date, a total of 71 individual businesses across the district have been supported by the training.
- 3.8 To date, a total of 44 businesses have had Shop Front Grants approved.
- 3.9 The Shop Front Grants had a mixed take up. As of October 2020 there was £33,250 remaining in this fund. Reasons for this are that due to the retail climate changing so quickly, businesses were identifying other projects for investment such as websites and Epos systems and indeed the training helped them to identify areas of improvement for the business. Due to the rules of the scheme, only exterior shop front works were covered by the grants
- 3.10 The shift to online sales and away from bricks and mortar has been accelerated by the Covid emergency. Our independent retailers have worked hard to survive and now need support to identify how best to adapt going forward. The Covid-19 lockdown and restrictions have made people more aware of local shopping so there is an opportunity to build on this raised awareness by helping our independent retailers to capitalise on this interest.

4 Proposal

- 4.1 A fully funded bespoke retail training will be offered to independent business in the District's 'high streets' – to include Chichester, East Wittering, Midhurst, Petworth and Selsey.
- 4.2 The training will include facilitated retail workshops and individual training, which will comprise a mixture of online and in person delivery. These workshops will be focussed on generating ideas for businesses to increase sales and on the developmental challenges businesses will face due to the general shift to online sales. There will be focus on use of digital platforms for sales and to drive footfall.
- 4.3 Independent retail businesses in premises in the designated areas will be able to apply for grants towards the cost of projects to develop their business. The grant available will be up to 75% of eligible costs, subject to a maximum contribution of £4,000 but it is anticipated that the average grant amount would be £2,000, based on applications previously received.

5 Outcomes to be Achieved

- 5.1 To deliver a minimum of 14 workshops; to provide training support to a minimum of 40 businesses and to allocate a minimum of 13 retail support grants, plus encouraging investment by independent retailers.
- 5.2 The application forms will ask applicants to state their intended outcomes, jobs created, business turnover, profit enhancements, etc. The Council will then carry out a post-project evaluation to measure the outcomes.

6 Alternatives Considered

6.1 Do nothing. With funding available this is not considered appropriate.

7 Resource and Legal Implications

- 7.1 The total budget of £80,000 will be funded from the Pooled Business Rates Fund. CDC will receive the funding in advance of the commencement of the schemes. The bid to Pooled Business Rates Fund has allocated half the funds to grants therefore £40,000 of our budget will be for grants and the remaining budget will be for the training support. These grants will be match funded and the split will be 75% grant, 25% from the business. This will mean that at least £13,000 will be invested as match funding by independent retailers securing grants.
- 7.2 The scheme will be administered by the Economic Development Service and no additional resources are required.
- 7.3 The Independent Retail Support Programme is being coordinated county-wide by the Council's Economic Development Service.

8 Community Impact and Corporate Risks

- 8.1 The scheme supports the objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan, Economic Development Strategy and the Economy Recovery Plan. The provision of retail training and retail support grants also supports the Visions for Chichester City Centre, Petworth, Selsey and Midhurst. .

9 Other Implications

	Yes	No
Crime and Disorder		✓
Climate Change		✓
Human Rights and Equality Impact		✓
Safeguarding		✓
Other		✓

10 Appendix

None

11 Background Papers

None