

**REPORT FROM:** Housing, Health and Economic Development

**TO:** Barrowford and Western Parishes Committee

**DATE:** 10<sup>th</sup> May 2018

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## **Barrowford Premises Improvement Grants: 2018/19**

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To request the Committee allocate funding for the Barrowford Premises Improvement Grants Scheme in 2018/19 financial year.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) That the Committee agree to a funding allocation of £4,500 (Capital programme bid).
- (2) That the Committee lowers the maximum grant to £1500 from £3000.
- (3) It is requested that the Barrowford and Western Parishes Committee nominates two Members to a Premises Improvement Grant Panel.

### **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) To allow the Premises Improvement Grant programme to be re-established in Barrowford.
- (2) To ensure that as many businesses as possible can be assisted.
- (3) To allow Members to have involvement in the grant process.

### **ISSUE**

#### Premises Improvement Grant scheme: Background

- 1) All businesses within the Barrowford town centre boundary were previously eligible for a Premises Improvement Grant. The grant programme aims to improve the overall appearance of the town centre by assisting businesses to improve premises and encourage the use of vacant properties. The grants scheme is a tool used to encourage private investment in town centre buildings; the outcome of this investment is an aesthetic improvement to the town centre and in turn increases retail and public confidence in the

area. The grants can encourage the use of vacant buildings as they can reduce the overall cost of changing the exterior of the building to suit the needs of the incoming business

- 2) All business premises within the defined town centre boundary were eligible for a 50% grant up to a maximum of £3000, for improvements to their premises. Premises Improvement Grants are promoted, targeted and administered by Economic Development staff. The Economic Development Team supports the applicants throughout the application process.
- 3) It is suggested that the maximum allowable grant be lowered to £1,500 to allow a larger number of businesses to benefit.
- 4) In 2017/18 financial year the BWP Committee did not allocate any funding to this programme and therefore no businesses were assisted

#### Previous Premises Improvement Grants

- 5) In 2016/17 the following businesses were assisted:
  - a. Kimora, 108 Gisburn Road. This existing business has received a grant of £508.69, the funding was used to replace the existing shopfront signage, replace the cover and lettering on the shops sun canopy and repaint the existing wooden shopfront.
  - b. The Lounge, 79-81 Gisburn Road. The property was vacant and underwent extensive renovations and opened as a new business in Barrowford. The Lounge was allocated funding of £3,000
  - c. Scruples, 85-87 Gisburn Road. A grant of £3,000 has been allocated to this long standing business that has been based in Barrowford for a long number of years. The grant funding was used to replace the existing wooden windows, with new timber frames and also to replace the existing external signage to the building.

#### Impact

- 6) As a result of these previously assisted businesses 15 new jobs were created and one new business was created, as well as one vacant premise given a new lease of life.
- 7) In the period 2015-17 the number of vacant premises in Barrowford has doubled from 4 to 8 vacant premises. This trend if not halted will have serious repercussions for the town. Reviving Premises Improvement Grants will help play its part in keeping existing businesses in the town, as well as help in filling these vacant premises.
- 8) Having financial assistance available to businesses can be a contributing factor when making a decision on their business location. This could have a positive impact on vacancy rates in a town and help fill the current vacant properties.
- 9) The requested allocation could assist three businesses with a maximum grant allowance of £1,500, or potentially a larger number of businesses if the overall project costs were lower than the maximum allowed.

#### **IMPLICATIONS**

**Policy:** None arising directly from this report

**Financial:** As outlined in the report.

**Legal:** None arising directly from this report

**Risk Management:** None arising directly from this report

**Health and Safety:** None arising directly from this report

**Sustainability:** Successful delivery of this scheme will enhance the image and appearance of Barrowford town centre and in turn encourage the use of local town centres

**Community Safety:** None arising directly from this report

**Equality and Diversity:** Grants are accessible to all businesses within the town centre.