

REPORT FROM: Planning, Economic Development and Regulatory Services Manager

TO: Colne and District Committee

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Town Centre Premises Improvement Grants

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To report to the committee on the current Town Centre Premises Improvement grants
2. To present alternatives for the future of the grants

Recommendations

That the Committee decide which boundary alternative that they would like to take forward in regards to the grants

Reasons for recommendations

In order that the Colne Town Centre improves and is a lively and attractive place so it thrives economically and socially

1. Overall Position

Town Centre Improvement grants have helped improve all of Pendle's town centres for over 15 years. The rationale is that by helping local businesses and retailers improve their frontages that this improves the appearance of town centres and helps local economic and social life for those towns. It helps in the sustainability of those businesses and often brings vacant and dilapidated properties back to life. A number of Colne's town centre businesses have been helped by the grants over the years including those listed below.

2. Businesses assisted

Several Colne town centre businesses have been assisted by the grants including:

- La Villa Restaurant
- Kip McGrath
- Zara Moon Architects
- Ashville Guesthouse
- Turners
- XLCR
- Tax assist
- Inspired Interiors
- Indigo Financial Advice
- Mr Chips & No 62

3. Current position

Ledger balance £17,910

Approved and allocated grant on Colne Town Hall £2,598.50

Colne Opticians – Not yet approved or allocated, but could proceed £3k

Tower Buildings – not likely to proceed

14 Albert Rd – work already done without the grant

So £5598.50 to be carried over to next finance year

Remaining in the Premises Budget for Colne £12,311.50

4. Location of the businesses assisted

Town Centre Focus

All the businesses assisted over the last five years have been within the designated town centre boundary as defined by the plan attached in APPENDIX 1.

There have only been two exceptions immediately beyond the last five years and those have been

- Food 2 Go in 2017
- Swankies in 2015

Over the last five years the Committee's Grant Panel have been clear that the grants are only to assist **town centre** businesses.

The rationale is that the Council has **limited funding** and it should concentrate any grants toward improvements that will most impact the regeneration of the **town centre itself**.

Alternative options

The Committee may wish to consider the following as alternatives for boundaries to the scheme:

1. The whole of the boundary for Colne. This can be seen by going to: <https://bit.ly/33oNnt1> (the black boundary)

2. The Colne BID boundary – including only businesses within that boundary whether BID registered or not (APPENDIX 2)
3. The existing boundary – ie only town centre businesses are eligible
4. The existing boundary tweaked slightly – additional important sites may be added, for instance those sites on important MAJOR routes into the town centre and/or those considered GATEWAY sites

It is important when considering redefining the boundary that the rationale for drawing that boundary is logical and justifiable

5. Barriers to grant uptake

The officer responsible for the grants over the last five years has identified the following factors that have affected the uptake of the grants in the last five years namely:

- **The Covid pandemic** - Though there have been Covid support grants, over the last two years businesses have had difficulty surviving let alone in investing. The grants require that the businesses pay at least 50% of the cost of improvements. The pandemic also affected the Council's ability to promote the scheme, particularly in staff resource
- **Lack of funds** – even without the pandemic some businesses find it difficult to find the funds to invest in their premises
- **Regulations** – Some businesses have found that the time, effort, and money required to get through some regulatory processes are too much for them. For example most of Colne Town Centre is in a Conservation Area and businesses are strongly recommended to apply for Pre-Application planning advice so that they conform to the regulations in place

Hopefully the pressures caused by the pandemic will become less of an issue going forward but the other issues will still prevail unless they are resolved

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: None arising directly from this report

Financial: As detailed in this report

Legal: PBC Legal team are involved in the appropriate legal actions to secure the totem sign sites

Risk Management: The totem signs have been reported to our insurers

Health and Safety: None arising directly from this report

Sustainability: The totem signs are on a 2 year repair or replace policy initially

Community Safety: None arising directly from this report

Equality and Diversity: None arising directly from this report

APPENDICES: APPENDIX 1 – map of the town centre boundary
APPENDIX 2 – Colne BID boundary

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS