

REPORT FROM: PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
REGULATORY SERVICES MANAGER

TO: NELSON, BRIERFIELD AND REEDLEY COMMITTEE

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PREMISES IMPROVEMENT GRANTS: UPDATE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update the Committee on the progress made on the Nelson and Brierfield premises improvement grants Scheme in 2021/22 financial year, and request an additional funding allocation to allow the programme to continue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the Committee notes the summary of the premises improvement grant scheme.
- (2) That the Committee agree to carrying forward slippage for Nelson and Brierfield of the remaining £47,169 from the 2021/22 year into 2022/23.

The original balance for 2021/22 was £34,069 with a further £20,000 committed into the grant scheme on 7/6/2021.
- (3) That the Committee assess the impact of the Grants Approved in regards to the enhancement and value to Nelson Town Centre.
- (4) That the Committee agree to nominate two Grant Panel members for the year.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) To allow Members of the Committee to see the outcomes of the premises improvement grants scheme so far in the 2021/22 financial year.
- (2) To allow the Premises Improvement Grant programme to fund future projects. To allow for all existing approved grants to be given to businesses within a reasonable timeframe. To allow all approved grants spend to be carried over into 2022/23.
- (3) To allow members opportunity to seriously discuss the quality of the grants approved and their impact on Nelson Town Centre.

(4) To allow Grant Panel members to be decided by the Members of the Committee.

ISSUE

Premises Improvement grant scheme: Background

1. All businesses within the Nelson and Brierfield town centre boundaries are 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 take up 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 are eligible for a 50% grant up to a maximum of £3000, for improvements to their premises. Premises improvement grants are administered by Economic Development staff. The Economic Development Team supports the applicant throughout the application process.

Premises improvement grants summary - Nelson

3. For Nelson in this financial year (2021/22) a budget of £37,049 was allocated, with £20,000 then added at a later date in June 2021, making a total of £57,049. We have paid several grants in the last financial year totalling £9,900, to Nelson DryCleaning, Myan Properties and Evergreen Investments Ltd.
We ask that the remaining slippage of £47,169 be carried over as we have some outstanding applications that although not allocated are at the application stage. A review of spend since 2017 indicates that pre-2020 (pre-covid) on average spend on both towns has been around £29,000. This would average 10 applications
We would expect that as we reach more normality that there would be an increase in applicants again from those wishing to invest in their properties and spend over both towns would start to go upwards. We would request that although the £47,169 seems high at present, ongoing applicants need to be paid out of this money once the work is completed (currently 3 outstanding approximately £9,000) and there is enough for new applicants bearing in mind the budget is covering 2 towns. We would anticipate 8 for Nelson and 2/3 for Brierfield based on an average of pre-Covid activity.
4. There continues to be strong interest and demand from businesses in Nelson for these grants.
5. The quality of Nelson Town Centre shop fronts has been eroded over the years. We are of the opinion that the quality of project being submitted by applicants is poor. The purpose of the Premises Improvement Grant Scheme is to enhance the Town Centre, we see no considerable enhancement in the applications we receive and are then in turn approved by the Grant Panel.
6. We do ask that all applicants go through the Planning Process to ensure a certain level of design, quality value and enhancement is achieved, but this cannot work on its own. We ask that the Committee assess the Criteria for the Scheme in Nelson to help improve the quality of the shop fronts and give more consideration to the quality of the shop fronts in deciding grant applications.

Premises improvement grants summary - Brierfield

7. It is requested that the Committee allocates sufficient funding in order to make decisions throughout the year to approve funding for premises improvement grants. The slippage request of £47,169 applies to Nelson & Brierfield Town Centres and we would request that the Committee acknowledges that some of the £47,169 will be allocated to Brierfield and to take note of the points raised in paragraph 3 above regarding spending across both Towns.
6. For the 2021/22 grant year no grants were paid out. However by continuing the funding into the 2022/23 financial year we would hope to facilitate a possible 3 enquiries based on previous years' experience. We currently have 1 enquiry for Brierfield
7. All towns will continue to be targeted though our digital newsletter in promotions and the Economic Development team have received enquiries across Pendle.
8. In light of the impact of Covid-19 we would request that the money is continued to be allocated to help Economic Development Team support our town centre shops.

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 Colne 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.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None