

**REPORT FROM: PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
REGULATORY SERVICES MANAGER**

TO: BARROWFORD AND WESTERN PARISHES COMMITTEE

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BARROWFORD PREMISES IMPROVEMENT GRANTS: 2021/22 SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update the Committee on the progress made on the Barrowford Premises Improvement Grants Scheme in 2021/22 financial year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the Committee notes the summary of the Premises Improvement Grants Scheme.
- (2) That the Committee agrees to slipping the funding allocation of £3000 for the 2021/22 year into the 2022/23 financial year. (Separate Capital Programme bid)
- (3) That the Committee agree to nominate 2 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 in the 2021/22 financial year.
- (2) To allow the Premises Improvement Grants programme to continue.
- (3) To allow Grant Panel Members to be decided by the Members of the Committee.

ISSUE

Premises Improvement Grants Scheme: Background

- 1) 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. All businesses within the Barrowford town centre boundary were visited and leafleted to make them aware of the assistance the Council can give, in particular how they could benefit from a Premises

Improvement Grant. Unfortunately, though many businesses showed interest, no one applied.

Despite that 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) Premises Improvement Grants are promoted, targeted and administered by Economic Development staff. The Economic Development Team supports the applicants throughout the application process.
- 3) 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.

Premises Improvement Grants 2021/22

- 1) It is requested that the budget of £3000 from 2021/22 be continued by slipping the existing budget into the Premises Improvement Grant for Barrowford for the 2022/23 financial year.
- 2) There were no grants paid out last year. We had 3 grant enquiries in 2021/22 but the applications were not completed due to various reasons of the applicants at the time in addition to the impact of Covid. We currently have 2 enquiries for Barrowford.
- 3) All towns will continue to be targeted though our digital newsletter in a forthcoming promotion and the Economic Development team intend to have a renewed effort in promoting the Grant Scheme in Barrowford.
- 4) 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 as we anticipate business to feel confident opening up properly now and with the current economic climate to support them as much as we can.

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.

APPENDICES: None.

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS: None.