

Item 4

COUNCIL MATTERS MAY 2021 - ideas for grant application		
	Original estimated budget	Proposed expenditure
Wayfinding design and consultation right through to siting of new signage	15000	15000
Wayfinding/trail/signage improvements implementation	25000	35000
Extension of Town Centre planting/general planting and improvements	4250	7000
Grant to Chamber of Commerce for 2021 Christmas lights and repair to rigging points	2000	5000
Totnes Civic Square Christmas lights and Christmas Tree	3000	3000
Christmas Festival Nights (inc professional support)	6500	10000
Halloween/Autumn Town event/Trail	1500	3000
Visit Totnes PR Campaign nationally - guide	5800	6000
Visit Totnes Promotional Totnes Video	5000	10000
Increased Bob the Bus usage during peak visitor season	0	6000
	68050	100000

Improving the Business Environment Fund- A Town Centre Approach

SHDC Prospectus and Guidance Note

Background

South Hams District Council (SHDC) has been administering business support grants on behalf of the Department for Business Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The vast majority of the money that the Council has received is required to go direct to businesses to support them through the various lockdown phases.

A minority of the funding through what is known as the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) has a discretionary element to it. BEIS set out in their guidance that whilst it is expected that most of the ARG funding should go direct to businesses, an element of it can go towards “wider business support”.

The full guidance can be read here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/971482/additional-restrictions-grant-la-guidance.pdf

Section 20 states:

Local Authorities can use ARG funding for business support activities. This may primarily take the form of discretionary grants, but Local Authorities could also use this funding for wider business support activities.

And Section 32 adds some clarity to that:

ARG funding should not be used as a wage support mechanism, for capital projects that do not provide direct business support, or to fund projects whereby Local Authorities are the recipients.

FAQs issued in mid-April clarified (Q29) that *Other business support measures that allow businesses to be the direct recipients of ARG funding* was an appropriate use of the ARG. The following BEIS restrictions on the ARG will apply to this fund, and in this context “Local Authority” will mean Town Council:

Local Authorities should not use ARG for the following:

- *Infrastructure projects.*
- *Funding whereby the Local Authority is the direct recipient (with the exception of funding staff employed for the sole purpose of providing business support).*
- *Diverting funds from businesses to meet other costs, for example covering market stall pitch costs instead of directly funding the market trader.*
- *As a wage support mechanism.*
- *ARG funds should not be used to acquire, upgrade or maintain physical assets and should instead be spent to support businesses in line with the principles listed under Q29.*

SHDC took the decision at its full Council meeting, 25th March 2021 to make £50k of funding available on a matched basis to each of the 5 key Towns in the District; Ivybridge, Totnes,

Dartmouth, Salcombe and Kingsbridge to support their businesses environment. The funding is to come from the ARG money set aside for wider business support.

This prospectus and guidance notes sets out the framework for that process and the requirements to access funding.

Objectives of the Fund

To:

- 1) Make funding available at a Town Level such that local decisions can be made by those who understand their local business environment, so as to maximise prosperity in 2021.
- 2) Promote pride of place activity that can demonstrate a direct benefit to businesses through improved footfall, tourism and commerce.
- 3) Attract bids that build on local strengths and/or address local weaknesses that will promote enterprise and a thriving sense of place
- 4) Not be overly prescriptive in its requirements, so long as bids can demonstrate a proposal that will deliver measures leading to direct support to businesses.

Guidance for investment

What are SHDC looking for?

SHDC has no desire to be overly prescriptive in the administration of this fund and wished to be able to make the funding available to all of the Town Councils so that they can get on and deliver interventions that will make a positive, measurable and swift difference in the towns, whilst adhering to the guidance set out by BEIS and included within this prospectus.

For example, bids may be centred on:

- new business activity or improving existing ventures, such as markets, events and street activity
- pride of place and the physical environment in which business and tourism occurs, where financial support goes direct to businesses;
- Robert Jenrick's clear position that all Councils should do what they can to support outdoor dining and commerce;
- Something completely different and unique to the place promoting it

What form should the bid take?

There is no required form, but each bid should clearly set out the following:

- What the measure or proposal is
- What the proposal will cost and how those costs have been derived
- How it will provide a direct benefit to businesses
- Who will implement it
- Who will manage it (if required)
- When it will be implemented
- Evidence of local support from the business community
- What value to the business community the proposal will bring (a light touch business case)
- How the matched funding requirement will be met

When do the proposals need to be implemented?

There is a strong desire to deliver tangible improvements as soon as possible this summer, such that the maximum benefit is felt during the early stages of the recovery. It is however recognised that

some proposals may take longer than others and funding may need to be raised for the matched element. The end date to spend the money will be the end of March 2022.

Who should make the bid?

Bids should be led by the Town Councils, but it is expected that any bid would be endorsed and supported by the local business community / FSB / Chamber / TIC (as appropriate). It is anticipated that such groups would be able to add real value to the evidence base to support the bid as well as the anticipated improvement it will bring. The support of local District Councillors is also important and should be evidenced within the bid.

Bid Administration

Timeline

The deadline for receipt of bids from Town Councils is the 30th June 2021. SHDC will confirm the successful outcome applicants by 14th July. Money will be transferred within three days of being notified of success.

What constitutes matched funding?

The fund requires applicants to match on a £1:£1 basis up to the maximum £50k award. The matched funding could come from any source, (crowd funding, Town Council reserves, 3rd party matched funding) so long as the bid can demonstrate that the Town Council can rely on it at the time of bid submission.

In the case of 3rd party matched funding a written undertaking by the third party would need to be included within the bid and for crowd funding or similar, an undertaking by the Town Council to step in should the funding not be raised and underwrite any shortfall would be required. This is to ensure that the measures set out in any bid can and do get implemented.

Who will evaluate the bid?

Officers of the Council will undertake the administration and evaluation of the bid against the criteria set out in the *guidance for investment* section and make a recommendation for each bid. The Director for Place and Enterprise will then consult the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Enterprise to reach an outcome.

How will bids be submitted?

Bids should be sent electronically to the following email address:

Townfund@swdevon.gov.uk

Bids should be in a PDF format.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Whilst not intended to be onerous, it is important that a transparent monitoring and evaluation protocol is created for each bid. As such, it is a requirement for each successful Town Council to provide quarterly monitoring reports for their proposals. These should include as a minimum:

- Overview and progress to date
- Risks
- Benefits
- Open book accounting

Further clarifications

It is proposed to run a webinar for all the Town Councils in the coming weeks, date to be confirmed to allow an opportunity to ask questions in a secure and friendly environment.