

HELENSBURGH SHOPFRONT ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVE - UPDATE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to update Members on progress with the Helensburgh Shopfront Enhancement Initiative following approval of 20 Stage 2 Applications in October 2014 and to consider, following requests from businesses to be able to apply for funding, as to whether the Initiative can be reopened to new applicants ahead of members' decision on the 14 October to hold the remaining funds until an evaluation of the approved 2014 Grants is undertaken.

1.1 It is recommended that Members:

- Note the contents of the paper;
- Consider the re-opening of Shopfront Grant Initiative from the 1 March to the 30 June 2016 in advance of an evaluation of the approved 2014 Grant awards.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 On the 14 October 2014, the Helensburgh and Lomond Area Committee approved twenty Stage 2 Applications for funding from the Helensburgh Shopfront Enhancement Initiative funded from the S75 Waitrose development. This report updates members on the status of the approved applications.
- 2.2 Following request from businesses, the report also seeks members' view on whether to reopen the Initiative to new applicants ahead of members' decision on the 14 October to hold the remaining funds until an evaluation of the approved 2014 Grants is undertaken.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that Members:
- Note the contents of the paper;
 - Consider the re-opening of Shopfront Grant Initiative from the 1 March to the 30 June 2016 in advance of an evaluation of the approved 2014 Grant awards.

4.0 DETAILS

- 4.1 Thirty-three applications were successful at Stage 1 of the Helensburgh Shopfront Enhancement Initiative, total funding available £140,000, of these 21 applicants went on to submit Stage 2 Applications by the deadline of the 29 August 2014.
- 4.2 Additional support to assist their progression to Stage 2, as previously recommended, was provided to 3 applicants that failed at Stage 1, only 1 applicant took up this offer and successfully completed Stages 1 and 2.
- 4.3 An individually tailored letter was issued to all successful Stage 1 applicants on 4 June 2014 enclosing Guidance Notes and inviting them to attend a pre-booked 'help surgery' at the 1 East Princes Street offices on 25 and 26 June 2014. Unfortunately, take up was extremely poor and the consultant was required to make individual visits to premises on these days. Continued concerns about the lack of take up prompted the issue of a second 'reminder' letter on the 31 July 2014. This was again followed by door to door follow up visits on the 7 and 8 August 2014.

4.4 In addition to the 21 Stage 2 applicants received (and taking account of the 2, Stage 1 fails, 13 successful Stage 1 applicants made no return. This accounts for all 36 Stage 1 Awards. 21 applications were assessed in accordance with the Guidance Notes and agreed selection criteria. Of the 21 applications 1 applicant had already undertaken the work and was therefore ineligible, all the remaining 20 applications went on to meet the selection criteria of Stage 2 and were awarded Grants following member approval of the following recommendations on the 14 October 2014:

It is recommended that Members approve:

- *the 12 applications who satisfied the selection criteria;*
- *the 8 applications, subject to the applicants clarifying their planning status or supplying additional quotes; and*
- *that the balance of funds in the Section 75 is held until a post evaluation of the above Grant Awards is undertaken.*

4.5 From the 20 Stage 2 Grant Awards, 12 have now fully completed works and submitted grant claim payments which are currently being processed. 4 are on site 3 have yet to commence works. Helensburgh Cycles the 1 remaining Grant Award have indicated, they will not now progress with works. See **Appendix 1 – Status of Applications**

4.6 It has been previously recommended that any unspent S75 Helensburgh Shopfront Enhancement Initiative balance remains in the Section 75 Council funds until an independent post evaluation impact assessment is undertaken in the second quarter of 2016. However the Regeneration Project Manager has received several requests from business as to whether the Helensburgh Shopfront Enhancement Initiative can be reopened to new applications ahead of the independent evaluation to enable their shopfronts to be enhanced for summer 2016.

4.7 As outlined in **Table 1** below there remains approximately £56k of uncommitted S75 funding for the Helensburgh Shopfront Enhancement Initiative and given the positive impact the shopfront enhancement is having on the townscape there is clear merits in reopening the Initiative to new applications for a limited period starting from the 1 March to the 30 June with the Stage 1 and Stage 2 process now combined.

4.8 Table 1:

Stage 2 Summary Table	
Stage 2 Grant Applications (20)	£72,784.00
Design fees	£11,000.00
Total	£83,784.00
Grant funds available	£140,000.00
Balance remaining in the S75 fund	£56,215.00

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1.1 The Helensburgh Shopfront Enhancement Initiative is beginning to make a positive contribution to the vitality of Helensburgh Town Centre which continues to benefit

from the newly enhanced public realm works that have delivered a much improved townscape. It is important to continue to encourage further investment by local businesses in the town centre and their respective premises through this initiative and this report therefore seeks the members' views on the re-opening of the Shopfront Initiative ahead of the independent evaluation of 2014 Shopfront Grant Awards in summer/autumn 2016.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

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| 6.1 | Policy | The delivery of this project fits with the Council's Corporate Plan, Single Outcome Agreement, Economic Development Action Plan and approved Local Development Plan key actions and policy for safeguarding our built heritage and town centre regeneration. |
| 6.2 | Financial | Grants funded through the S75 monies allocation to enhance Shopfronts in the town centre. |
| 6.3 | Legal | Any issues will be dealt with through the Conditions of Grant Contract. |
| 6.4 | HR | The Helensburgh Project Manager will have overall responsibility for managing the Shopfronts initiative supported by external consultants as required. |
| 6.5 | Equalities | None |
| 6.6 | Risks | Financial – the S75 grant is not fully utilised; Quality – the work undertaken is not of acceptable standard. The Conditions of Grant will mitigate against the quality risk, the financial risk is negligible given the time frame for allocating funds. |
| 6.7 | Customer Services | None |

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Status of Applications