

CABINET

13th May 2021

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMY AND REGENERATION

CULLOMPTON HERITAGE ACTION ZONE GRANTS SCHEME

Cabinet Member Cllr Richard Chesterton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration

Responsible Officer Mrs Jenny Clifford, Head of Planning, Economy & Regeneration

Reason for the Report: To consider and delegate decision making responsibility with regard to the Cullompton High Street Heritage Action Zone Grants Scheme to the Head of Planning, Economy & Regeneration.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Cabinet grants delegated authority to make decisions over the award of grants under the Cullompton High Street Heritage Action Zone to the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration.

Financial Implications: Historic England has awarded a High Street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) to Cullompton, following a successful bid by this Council. The administration of the HAZ programme of works rests with this Council through to March 2024 and includes:

- Public realm improvements around the Higher Bullring (with Devon County Council);
- A grants scheme for building repairs and historic reinstatement work;
- A cultural programme of activities in the town centre to align with the town's heritage; and
- A comprehensive update to the Cullompton Conservation Area and Management Plan (CAMP), as well as a new Mid Devon District Council Shopfront Design Guide;
- A package of community engagement activities.

The grants scheme will see property owners and repairing leaseholders invited to apply for building grants to support structural, historic reinstatement and shopfront improvement work in the town centre. Guidance to support the grants scheme is available and the MDDC Cullompton HAZ Project Officer will be able to offer advice and guidance to potential grant applicants, supported by the MDDC Conservation Officer.

The grants scheme funding pot is £550,000 and is intended to support a steady stream of investment into the town during the HAZ funding period through to March 2024.

It is proposed that funding decisions relating to the grant scheme awards is delegated to the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration.

Grant funding proposals in budget and greater than £2,000 will be discussed at the Cullompton Town Centre Regeneration Partnership Group (CTCRPG) which meets approximately every two months, and which includes membership from the Town Council, County Council, community and business interests. This meeting is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration. This Group will put forward their recommendations for funding to the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration.

For grant awards in budget at or below £2,000, the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration will make funding decisions in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration and the Team Leader for Economic Development.

Budget and Policy Framework: The Cullompton High Street HAZ project brings money in the form of a grant from Historic England, match funded with cash and 'in-kind' contributions from MDDC, Devon County Council and Cullompton Town Council.

This grant funding is to be invested in a core area at the centre of the Conservation Area in the form of grants and public realm work.

Legal Implications: The Cullompton HAZ grants scheme will be administered by this Council which also acts as the lead partner and accountable body for the overall programme.

Successful applicants will be required to sign-up to a grant offer letter setting out the terms and conditions of the grant offer. Any breach of these conditions would result in the grant offer being withdrawn, or funds repaid.

Funds would generally be paid to a successful grant recipient on completion of the project and to reimburse payment of contractors / project teams, although payment by milestones may also be available in some instances.

Risk Assessment: The HAZ Grant Scheme will support the economic regeneration and historic preservation of Cullompton's historic Fore Street and wider Conservation Area.

A timely and proportionate approach to decision-making on grant applications received is important in the delivery of the HAZ programme given its tight timeframe. The requirements and parameters of the grants scheme are set out in guidance for applicants. Each successful applicant will be required to sign-up to a grant offer letter setting out the terms and conditions of the grant offer. Any breach of these conditions would result in the grant offer being withdrawn, or funds repaid.

Equality Impact Assessment: No equality issues are identified for this report.

Impact on Climate Change: The Cullompton High Street HAZ Grants Scheme, and associated funding decision-making procedure, is by its nature, neutral on climate

change. However, the heritage context will ensure that existing buildings are repaired and restored.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The Cullompton High Street HAZ Grants Scheme will help delivery of 3 key priorities as relating directly to the Corporate Plan 2020-24 including:

- Homes: to promote the regeneration of the town centre by working with landlords and property developers to improve and increase the supply of quality housing;
- Economy: to identify strategic and tactical interventions to create economic and community confidence and pride in the places we live; and
- Community: to promote new and more integrated approaches to better health and living.

1.0 Introduction: Background

1.1 At the meeting of Cabinet on 7th March 2019 it was resolved that delegated authority be given to the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration and the Cabinet Member for Housing to submit a further Expression of Interest (or equivalent) if the opportunity presented for the regeneration of Cullompton's historic High Street through the Heritage element of the Future High Streets Fund and to determine the financial amount sought under the fund.

1.2 The High Streets Heritage Action Zone programme, which is being delivered by Historic England, is a £95 million programme to unlock the potential of high streets across England, fuelling economic, social and cultural recovery and breathe new life into them for future generations. 68 high streets have been offered funding to give them a new lease of life. The lead partners in each place (mostly local authorities) are working with Historic England to develop and deliver schemes that will transform and restore disused and dilapidated buildings into new homes, shops, work places and community spaces, restoring local historic character and improving public realm.

1.3 The expression of interest for Cullompton was successful and has led to the establishment of a Town Centre Regeneration Partnership Group. This Council acts as the lead partner and accountable body for the programme. The scheme is managed under our financial and legal regulations.

2.0 The grants scheme

2.1 The grants scheme will see town centre property owners and repairing leaseholders invited to apply for building grants to support structural, historic reinstatement and shopfront improvement work. Guidance to support the grants scheme will be made available.

2.2 Grant applications received will be assessed against the following scheme criteria:

- The property must be in need of repair and/or restoration;

- The work must have a positive effect on the wider Cullompton Conservation Area and town centre;
 - The work should improve living or working conditions for existing or new tenants and/or residents;
 - The work should create new, or safeguard existing jobs;
 - The schedule of work should address all eligible work considered necessary;
 - The work should bring back under-utilised or vacant spaces, and/or create new commercial or residential spaces.
- 2.3 The property's status on the 'Building Priority Matrix' will also be reviewed in determining applications, in order that grants are allocated to properties considered most in need, taking into account condition and historic/architectural merit.
- 2.4 Grants to be available under the scheme will be as follows:
- Up to £70,000 Key Building Grants - closed programme, targeted at key projects on the Fore Street as identified through a Building Condition Survey - grant contribution up to 75% (4 available)
 - Up to £28,000 Structural Grants - these are available to owners/repairing leaseholders based on the Fore Street - grant contribution at 70% in year 1, 60% in year 2 and 50% in year 3 (7 available)
 - Up to £14,000 Historic Reinstatement Grants - these are available to owners/repairing leaseholders based on the Fore Street - grant contribution at 70% in year 1, 60% in year 2 (5 available)
 - Up to £2,000 Shopfront Grants - these are available to owners/repairing leaseholders of commercial properties based anywhere in the Conservation Area - grant contribution at 50% (15 available)
- 2.5 The grant scheme available funding and contributions will be reviewed on an ongoing basis by MDDC as the grant scheme rolls out.
- 2.6 The Project Officer and Conservation Officer will appraise applications received against the criteria set out above. For grant funding contributions in excess of £2,000 (i.e. key building, structural and historic reinstatement grants) recommendations for funding will be presented to CTCRPG. Terms of Reference for the Group are appended to this report (**Appendix 1**)
- 2.7 It is expected that the CTCRPG will meet every two months, and as a minimum quarterly. Additional meetings can be convened as necessary.
- 2.8 Grant funding proposals in budget and greater than £2,000 will be discussed at the CTCRPG.
- 2.9 This Group will put forward their recommendations for funding to the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration for a formal decision. This will be in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration

2.10 Grant awards in budget at or below £2,000 will not be considered by the CTCRPG. For these it is proposed that the Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration will make funding decisions in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration and the Team Leader for Economic Development.

2.11 The CTCRPG has the following membership:

- 2 elected members of Mid Devon District Council (inc. Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration, MDDC [Chair]; one Cullompton ward member);
- 2 elected members of Cullompton Town Council;
- 1 elected member of Devon County Council;
- 1 representative of Cullompton Town Team;
- 1 representative of Cullompton Neighbourhood Planning Group;
- 2 representatives of the business community;
- 2 further community representatives.

2.12 Advisory members of the Group include:

- Cullompton Town Council Clerk;
- MDDC Economic Development Team Leader
- MDDC Conservation Officer;
- MDDC Cullompton HAZ Project Officer;
- DCC Highways Officer;
- Historic England.

3.0 Conclusion

3.1 The Cullompton HAZ grants scheme will see property owners and repairing leaseholders invited to apply for building grants to support structural, historic reinstatement and shopfront improvement work in the town centre.

3.2 The grants scheme funding pot is finite and limited, and it hoped that the scheme can support a steady stream of investment into the town during the HAZ funding period through to March 2024.

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Background Papers: Cullompton High Street Heritage Action Zone
webpage:
<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/planning/cullompton-high-street-heritage-action-zone/>

Historic England

<https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/heritage-action-zones/cullompton/>

Cullompton Town Centre Regeneration Partnership
Group Terms of Reference

Circulation of the Report: Cabinet