

NEW TIVERTON SHOPFRONT ENHANCEMENT SCHEME

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Richard Chesterton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration
Responsible Officer: Richard Marsh, Director of Place

Reason for Report: The purpose of this report is to inform Members about the new Tiverton Shopfront Enhancement Scheme launching in October / November 2022 and to request approval for the revised Scheme.

Recommendation: That the new Tiverton Shopfront Enhancement Scheme be approved and three Tiverton Ward Members be nominated to be part of the Funding Panel for the Scheme.

Financial Implications: There are no significant financial implications of continuing the Scheme as there is £31,314.50 funding committed and earmarked from the S106 Agreement with Lidl towards a shopfront enhancement scheme in Tiverton. There is a staffing resource requirement to administer the scheme which will be met through existing provision.

Budget and Policy Framework: S106 funding is often negotiated as part of agreements for new retail developments that might have an effect on the town centre. The Mid Devon Economy Strategy includes the objectives of “towns and villages are vibrant, prosperous and have a positive atmosphere”; the shop front enhancement scheme will help to maintain the competitiveness of retailers within the town centre. It will also help achieve key outcomes for Place as outlined in the Economy Strategy.

Legal Implications: The previous schemes have received approval from Legal Services and the revisions to this Scheme are minor changes that do not alter the main criteria and are in line with recommended best practice. Therefore, it is not considered that there are not any significant legal implications of continuing the Scheme.

Risk Assessment: It is not envisaged that there are any significant risks with regard to continuing with this scheme. There is a risk that by not continuing with the shopfront enhancement scheme that the appearance of Tiverton town centre could be compromised and this in turn could affect the success of the local economy. The S106 money must be spent or contractually committed within ten years of receipt. The funding was received in 2021, so with nine years remaining, there is a low risk of the funding being returned. However, delays in delivering the scheme may have a negative impact on the Council's reputation.

Equality Impact Assessment: The grant guidelines and criteria protect applicants and the Council by ensuring a consistent and fair approach to all applications based purely on the strength of the Scheme rather than anything relating to the applicant.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: This supports the Corporate Plan priority of ‘Economy’, in particular: “Identify strategic and tactical interventions to create economic and community confidence and pride in the places we live. This includes a continued focus on Town Centre Regeneration”.

Impact on Climate Change: No direct impacts anticipated.

1.0 Introduction/Background

- 1.1 It is recognised that the visual attractiveness of a town centre is an important element in consumers' choices about where to shop and spend leisure time. The state of repair and decorative condition of shopfronts is an important element of this visual impact and therefore a major contributor to a town's vitality and economic success.
- 1.2 Over the past few years, the Council has administered several shopfront enhancement schemes across the District: in Crediton (2002-2005) as part of a Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme, in Cullompton (2011-present) as part of a scheme to support the regeneration in the town centre and more recently as part of the Heritage Action Zone project, and in Tiverton (2015-2020) as part of the High Street Innovation Fund. Tiverton's previous scheme ended when the funding was fully awarded in 2020. A report came to Economy PDG in January 2019 supporting the reinstatement of shopfront enhancement schemes for the three main market towns in the District. We have a current Scheme running in Cullompton, we will launch the Scheme in Tiverton later this year and assuming the Shared Prosperity Fund Bid is approved there are plans to also launch a Scheme in Crediton.
- 1.3 The Growth, Economy and Delivery Team recognises the value of shopfront enhancement schemes in maintaining the visual attractiveness of town centres, supporting the preservation of conservation areas and as a means of engaging with business owners and encouraging them to update and redecorate their properties at a time when they are potentially experiencing financial difficulties and therefore less likely to invest in their properties. With businesses still recovering from the impact of the pandemic, the economic challenges facing retailers are increased further with the recent inflation rises and the subsequent cut on spending due to customers having less disposable income. Therefore, it is even more opportune to launch this scheme to support our businesses.
- 1.4 We have secured allocated funding in the S106 Agreement with Lidl to run a new Shopfront Enhancement Scheme in Tiverton and are ready to launch this new Scheme in October / November 2022 under the umbrella of the Love Your Town Centre Funding scheme and run it until March 2025.

2.0 Scheme Process and Criteria

- 2.1 Using experience and feedback from the previous schemes, we have updated the criteria for Tiverton Shopfront Enhancement Scheme to bring it in line with other similar grants and practice under the Love Your Town Centre Scheme. The main criteria points are highlighted below:

- The scheme will offer a single grant of up to £2,500 with the requirement for 50% match-funding of the total project costs.
 - There will be an open-application style approach with no set deadlines throughout the year, meaning applications will be determined on their own eligibility and merit on a first-come, first-served basis. This is in anticipation of heavier demand in year one and ensuring we can maximise the benefit of the scheme quickly and support as many businesses as possible at the time of their need. However, as the Scheme is intended to run for three years, we will cap the Scheme initially to £15,000 in year one and then review the cap for year two.
 - Particularly in response to previous requests from businesses and feedback from Members, we are extending the Scheme to allow applications from upper-floor/basement businesses to improve their signage and visibility from the front of the building. Therefore, instead of just 'shopfronts', the Scheme will now support enhancement work for anything that faces the street as long as it has a street-level repair need and relates to the commercial usage of the building. In some cases, the rear of buildings are the sides that face the street, therefore applications will be determined on a case-by-case basis against this criteria.
- 2.2 The launch of the Scheme will follow a Communication Plan to ensure that the businesses within the Town Centre boundary are informed.
- 2.3 As with the previous Scheme, a Funding Panel will be set up consisting of the Scheme Administrator (the Growth and Regeneration Officer for Tiverton), a Conservation Officer (or other suitable representative) and three Tiverton Ward Members. The role of the Panel is to ensure that decisions are made in accordance with the criteria and to act as ambassadors for the Scheme in Tiverton.
- 2.4 Following the end of each financial year, a summary report outlining how the funding has been used will be presented to the Economy PDG for their information.
- 2.5 The Growth, Economy and Delivery Team is therefore seeking approval for the new Scheme and the nomination of three Member representatives to sit on the Panel.

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Circulation of the Report: Cabinet Member seen and approved [yes/no – name of Cabinet Member], Cabinet, Leadership Team seen and approved [yes/no]

List of Background Papers:

- New Tiverton Shopfront Enhancement Scheme Criteria
- Tiverton Town Centre Boundary Map