

This report will be made public on 7 June 2022

Report Number **C/22/15**

To: Councillor David Monk, Leader of the Council
Date: 11 June 2022
Status: Non-Key Decision
Corporate Director: Ewan Green, Director of Place

SUBJECT: FOLKESTONE & HYTHE DISTRICT HIGH SREETS FUND

SUMMARY:

This report sets out the detail of applications recommended for approved funding via the Folkestone and Hythe High Street Fund initiative and seeks confirmation for the grant award.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

The Leader is asked to agree to the recommendations of the Decision Panel on grant awards, as set out below, because agreement is needed on these applications to the Folkestone & Hythe District High Streets Fund.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note Report C/22/15.
2. To approve the recommended High Street Fund grant applications as summarised this report.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Cabinet of Folkestone & Hythe District Council approved the mechanism for investing and managing the Folkestone & Hythe District High Streets Fund in September 2019 (Cabinet C/19/21), following agreement to establish this fund in February 2019 (Cabinet C/18/74). This is a £3 million fund earmarked reserves to support high streets across the district “looking to deal with a number of adverse pressures” in the current retail climate.

2. THE FOLKESTONE & HYTHE HIGH STREETS FUND (HSF)

- 2.1. The key uses of the District HSF are to (a) take forward major capital investments opportunities and other initiatives led by F&HDC to help transform Folkestone town centre, the largest town in the district; and to (b) provide contributory funding to external organisations to take forward initiatives to address issues and improve Folkestone and other key High Streets in the district.
- 2.2. Cabinet agreed to £2.2 million of District HSF being allocated to Folkestone town centre and the remaining £800,000 made available to ten other high streets across the district at Cheriton, Sandgate, Hythe, New Romney, Lydd, Hawkinge, Dymchurch, Elham, Lyminge and Sellindge.
- 2.3. The HSF provides grants of between £5,000 and £50,000 towards any individual project, and in normal circumstances this is expected to comprise a maximum of 50% of the total project cost. However, in exceptional circumstances, and at its discretion, the Council may award 100% of the funding for a project.
- 2.4. The types of organisations eligible for grant funding includes:
- Commercial property freehold owners or leaseholders with at least 5 years left on lease when the work is expected to be completed and permission for the works from the freeholder.
 - Town or Parish councils.
 - Other public organisations such as Folkestone Town Team CIC.
- 2.5. The types of projects eligible for grant funding includes, but is not limited to:
- External renovations or improvements to front elevations of buildings (areas visible from the high street), including repairs, repainting of shop fronts in suitable colours, signage, external lighting, or security glazing, repair of external stonework and brickwork and repair and reinstatement of guttering and down-pipes.
 - Internal ground floor fit-outs or conversion to commercial properties.
 - Improvements to the townscape, including the introduction of signage, new route ways, new public realm, such as art works or landscaping.
 - Introduction of technology and new innovative products, to support the development of commercial operations.
 - Initiatives and events to increase the vitality of the High Street.
 - Work towards developing a project to improve the vitality or physical environment of the High Street, as a precursor to a further application to the fund or other funding source.

2.6. The grant scheme was launched on 1st October 2019 and grant applications will be accepted at any time until the closure of the scheme. The scheme is expected to run until either 31st March 2023 or until funds have been allocated.

2.7. Applications received are assessed in the first instance by the Economic Development Team, with decisions on individual applications made by decision panels comprising the Leader of the Council, Councillor David Monk, the Lead Cabinet Member for the District Economy, Councillor David Wimble and a Councillor from the relevant high street ward.

3. APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

3.1. The table below lists the applications to the HSF that have been considered by the relevant decision panels and the following recommendations have been made to the Leader on the HSF grant award. Reasons for the recommendations are also summarised in the table below.

4. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED HIGH STREET FUND GRANTS

Name of applicant	Purpose of Grant	Relevant High Street	Recommended High Streets Fund Grant Award (up to)	Recommendations of the Decision Panel	Comments/ Conditions of grant award including
The Looker Newspaper Ltd	Refurbishment & fit out of new premises	Hythe	58% of total project capital works	£18,711.60	Award excludes any funding towards CCTV, W/C, basin, kitchenette. The Looker Newspaper Ltd is owned by FHDC Councillor David Wimble. This business interest was declared to officers. Panel members were made aware of this.

5. LEGAL, FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

5.1 Legal Officer's comments (NM)

There are no legal implications associated with the recommendations in this report. However, any grants that are made available to third parties by FHDC will need to be legally documented and the legal team can assist with this.

5.2.1 Finance Officer's comments (RH)

Due to previous year's carry forward being utilised for grant spend within 2021/22, the majority of the 2021/22 base budget is to be carried forward for further grants within 2022/23 (approximately £780k).

6. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer:-

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