

REPORT TO INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE – 12 MARCH 2020

AMENDMENT TO SUPPORT FOR ABERDEENSHIRE BUSINESS SCHEME

1 Reason for Report / Summary

- 1.1 Consider and approve an amendment to the Support for Aberdeenshire Business (SAB) scheme, to allow the inclusion of the Town Centre Retail Support project and proposed grant funding in SAB.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve an amendment to the Support for Aberdeenshire Business Scheme (SAB), to allow the inclusion of the Town Centre Retail Support project.**
- 2.2 If the recommendation in 2.1 is approved, approve a contribution of £22,500 from Aberdeenshire Council for grant funding of businesses completing the Town Centre Retail Support project.**
- 2.3 Instruct the Head of Economic Development and Protective Services to submit an evaluation report to the relevant Area Committee on the outcomes of each of the town projects and a summary to this Committee as a bulletin.**

3 Purpose and Decision Making Route

- 3.1 Aberdeenshire Council successfully applied for £48,474 LEADER funding for a Town Centre Retail Support project, via the South Aberdeenshire Local Action Group (SALAG).
- 3.2 In January 2020, SALAG awarded a contract for specialist consultancy services to 'The Retailer', to deliver bespoke one to one support and advice to town centre businesses in Huntly, Banchory and Stonehaven.
- 3.3 The three towns were selected due to their position as key towns identified in the Local Development Plan, the increasing numbers of vacant retail units and the number of independent retail and hospitality businesses trading within them.
- 3.4 The towns offer a selection of independent stores along with traditional shops and multiples. In recent times footfall has declined due to a number of factors, such as the rise in online shopping and the general downturn of retailers in rural town centres. These factors have resulted in a difficult trading environment for retailers.

- 3.5 Consultants will offer bespoke one-to-one consultation over several months with up to 15 businesses in each of the three towns. In addition, the consultant will work with the Business Association in each town to support them, build capacity and develop collaboration among businesses. This project will help businesses adapt to town centre changes and will assist business growth and sustainability. In turn, it is anticipated that the investment will help the vitality of each town centre.
- 3.6 It is proposed that once a business has received the consultancy support and has an agreed development plan in place, it can apply for a grant from Aberdeenshire Council of up to £500, to help implement actions raised in the development plan.
- 3.7 In addition to supporting businesses included in the project, a series of networking workshops will be open to any retailer and be topic specific e.g. Visual Merchandising.
- 3.8 Apart from staff time, there will be no cost to the business of receiving the support, which will be available between April and September 2020.
- 3.9 The project aims to:
- Understand the present picture of the retail sector in the three towns
 - Support businesses to tackle the challenges and barriers they face
 - Offer bespoke training and advice to businesses
 - Increase footfall into the town centres
 - Strengthen the capacity of the business associations in each town
 - Increase the digital presence within the business community
 - Signpost businesses and associations to external funding and supporting agencies.
- 3.10 The project supports the Aberdeenshire Council Town Centre First Principle which commits to ‘a collaborative approach which understands and underpins the long-term plan for each town centre’.
- 3.11 The project was marketed extensively in the three towns. Each business eligible for support was notified and the opportunity was marketed extensively via the press and social media. Information evenings have been held in each of the towns and the level of interest has been encouraging.
- 3.12 An evaluation of the project will be produced by September 2020 and reported to the relevant Area Committees with a summary bulletin provided to this Committee.

4 Discussion

- 4.1 It is proposed that once a business has received the consultancy support and has an agreed development plan in place, it can apply for a grant from Aberdeenshire Council of up to £500, to help implement actions raised in the development plan.

- 4.2 It is proposed that Aberdeenshire Council will fund the £500 follow up grant from the existing SAB budget. The grant will be match funded by the business.
- 4.3 The SAB Scheme has been operating since 1998 and was last amended by this Committee in June 2017. More information on the scheme can be found [here](#).
- 4.4 Currently retail businesses within towns are excluded from receiving SAB help. Retailers outwith towns can be supported through the Rural Shop Scheme, which is an element of SAB.
- 4.5 Approval from this Committee is required to include the Town Centre Retail Support Scheme as part of SAB to allow the follow up grant to be paid, as the benefitting retailers are all situated within towns.
- 4.6 It is proposed the grant will be awarded as follows:

	2020/2021 Aberdeenshire Council Contribution	Total
15 x Stonehaven retailers	Up to £500 per retailer	Up to £7,500
15 x Huntly retailers	Up to £500 per retailer	Up to £7,500
15 x Banchory retailers	Up to £500 per retailer	Up to £7,500
Total Cost		Up to £22,500

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 5.1 The report helps deliver against Aberdeenshire Council Priority 1 – support a strong, sustainable, diverse and successful economy.
- 5.2 The report helps deliver against the Regional Economic Strategy and The Aberdeenshire Council Economic Development Action Plan 2017-2021.
- 5.3 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial	x		
Staffing	x		
Equalities		x	
Fairer Scotland Duty		x	
Town Centre First	x		
Sustainability		x	

Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing		x	
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5.4 There are financial implications as the proposed grant will be funded from the existing SAB budget. This will reduce the budget available to fund other successful SAB applications.

5.5 Administration of the grant will be undertaken by existing Economic Development Staff.

5.6 An equality impact assessment is not required because the recommended actions don't have a differential impact on people with protected characteristics.

5.7 The Project should have a positive impact of the town centres in Huntly, Stonehaven and Banchory. A Town Centre First Impact Assessment attached as is included as Appendix I.

5.8 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a [Corporate Level](#).

- Budget Pressures
- Working with other organisations (e.g. supply chains, outsourcing, partnership working and commercialisation)
- Reputation management

5.9 The following risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a [Strategic Level](#):

- Balancing the Books
- Economic Development

6 Scheme of Governance

6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

6.2 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section F1.1b of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as this relates to policy issues and resource matters relating to Economic Development.

Stephen Archer
Director of Infrastructure Services

APPENDIX I

TOWN CENTRE FIRST IMPACT ASSESSMENT (TCFIA)

Aberdeenshire Council recognises that town centres have an important role to play in the sustainable development of local economies.

The Town Centre First Impact Assessment (TCFIA) allows officers in all services to identify the detrimental and beneficial effects that decisions we take may have on our town centres. It will allow officers to consider any implications that council decisions may have on Aberdeenshire’s key town centres. Examples of this include changes to: the provision of civic and community facilities, employment land, retail, residential buildings, cultural assets, transportation, leisure and tourism.

A Town Centre Ambassador has been nominated within your service, you can locate your Town Centre First Ambassador through the Town Centre First Principle Arcadia pages.

Project Information	
Title of Committee Paper	Amendment to the Support for Aberdeenshire Business Scheme
Service	Infrastructure Services
Department	Economic Development
Author	Alistair Reid
Have you consulted your Town Centre First Ambassador?	Yes

1. Could your Project Paper cause an impact in one (or more) of the identified town centres? – Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Inverurie, Westhill, Stonehaven, Ellon, Portlethen, Banchory, Turriff, Huntly, Banff, Macduff.	
Yes – Stonehaven, Huntly, Banchory	

2. If approved would your project cause an impact (either positive or negative) with regards to the footfall of any of these town centres?	
Yes	

3.	
Please describe the aims of the committee paper?	To approve an amendment to the Support for Aberdeenshire Business (SAB) scheme, to allow the inclusion of the Town Centre Retail Support project and proposed grant funding in SAB.

4. What are the positive and negative impacts?		
Impact	Describe the positive impact?	Describe the negative impact?
Please detail any potential positive and negative impact the project may have on Aberdeenshire's Key Town Centres.	<p>Improve the long term sustainability of retailers participating in the Town Centre Retail Support project</p> <p>Increase footfall into the town centres</p> <p>Strengthen the capacity of the business associations in each town</p>	

5. What mitigating steps will be taken to reduce or remove negative impacts? If none see Q6	
Mitigating Steps	Timescale

6. Set out the justification that the activity can and should go ahead despite the negative impact.

Question 7: Sign off and Authorisation				
	a) Author: I have completed the TCIA impact assessment for this policy/ activity.	Name: Alistair Reid Position: Team Manager Date: 6 February 2020 Signature:		
	b)Consultation with Service Manager	Name: Matthew Lockley Position:Service Manager,		

		Economic Development Date:6 February 2020		
	c)Authorisation by Director or Head of Service	Name: Belinda Miller Position: Head of Service Economic Development and Protective Services Date: 6 February 2020		
	d) Have you consulted with your Town Centre First Ambassador?		Yes	
			No	
	e)TCFIA author sends a copy of the finalised form to: tcfia@aberdeenshire.gov.uk			Date Sent:

