

Central Bedfordshire Council
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Working in **partnership**

Central Bedfordshire Council

High Street Improvement Scheme

**Guidance Notes & Application Form
For Businesses**

Guidance Notes

Introduction

The High Street Improvement Scheme (HSIS) is a £1m programme delivered by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC). It will revitalise our market towns by providing a range of physical High Street improvements and local business enhancements.

The 'High Street' is very important to the local community; it provides vital goods and services and acts as a hub where people can meet and participate in local life. It does, however, face challenges; these include an increasing number of vacant shops, reduced footfall and tired infrastructure.

The High Street Improvement Scheme is offering business grants to help existing businesses in the high street modernise their business premises and adapt to market changes. The scheme will be delivered in three rounds between July 2016 until March 2018.

CBC is working in collaboration with your Town Council and Retail Revival Ltd (www.retailrevival.org.uk) who will manage and deliver the grant-funding programme at a local level.

For further information please visit: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/market-towns

Business Criteria

Your business will be eligible to apply for a capital improvement grant if it meets the criteria set out below:

Your business must be an 'independent'; you might have other shops and services in your town or other local towns, but you will not be part of a multiple chain of stores. Betting shops are also excluded from this programme.

You must evidence that your business is committed to continue trading in your town for at least three years by providing a copy of your business lease, or if your lease expires sooner please provide a letter of intention to extend.

Grant Criteria

Grants of up to £20,000 (and in exceptional cases up to £50,000) will be available to enable you to:

- Carry out external redecoration to the front of your business
- Improve a privately owned forecourt or threshold facing the high street
- Improve or replace the existing fascia or signage
- Replace windows or window frames and doors
- Highlight ornate building features such as cornicing and other architectural features
- Improve or replace exterior lighting
- Provide new awnings

- Create a new brand identity for signage purposes
- Provide other capital shop front improvements

Design and Installation

In March 2014 Central Bedfordshire Council adopted its Design Guide, which sets out the key principles and standards to ensure the delivery of high quality design in Central Bedfordshire. The guide is supplied with this document.

The Design Guide is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and should be used to guide all types of new development in Central Bedfordshire, including proposals for new shop fronts and new advertisement proposals.

Part 9 of the Design Guide relates to town centre vitality, which includes sections specifically relating to shop fronts. Part 3 relates to the Historic Environment, which includes sections relating to listed buildings and conservation areas.

If you are awarded a grant you will be required to collaborate with an appointed architect and Retail Revival Ltd who will work with you to design and deliver the improvements that need addressing in line with our identity guide and your brand identity. The architect and Retail Revival will have considerable experience of business brand identity and shop front design.

Approach

We have a strategic approach to maximise visual impact; we think this will be best achieved by improving the look of businesses that are located next to each other in the same row or parade or those in key focal points including gateways into the town centre. We would therefore encourage you to discuss this opportunity with neighbouring businesses where possible.

Businesses that do not stand in a parade or at a gateway location are still encouraged to apply. Business that are not on the high street but that are still within the boundary of the defined town centre (not all towns have defined town centres) may also be encouraged to apply but may not be given priority over businesses located in primary shopping streets.

You will need to obtain the written permission of your business landlord (if applicable) before you make a full application for any changes to your building.

Match Funding

You are required to make a 40% contribution to the total cost of works associated with your building, including design and build costs and any planning permission fees. Grants cannot be used retrospectively to fund works that have already been carried out.

Expression of Interest Form

To find out more about the scheme please contact your town council by email or telephone - details can be found at: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/market-towns and they will make an appointment to come and see you.

The town council will check your eligibility and provide an assessment of your needs, making recommendations for your next steps. If they identify that you are eligible to benefit from support they will assist you to complete a simple 'Expression of Interest Form', which needs to be submitted before **Thursday 1st September 2016** (round one), **Tuesday 1st November 2016** (round two) and **Wednesday 1st February 2017** (round three). This is not a guarantee of funding but may take you through to the next stage.

A review panel, comprising representatives from your town council, CBC and Retail Revival will assess the 'Expression of Interest Forms' using an assessment scoring sheet which is attached to this document. Applicants scoring above 75% in this process will then be invited to submit a full application for funding. Applicants will be informed of the outcome by **Friday 16th September 2016** (round one), **Friday 18th November 2016** (round two) and **Friday 17th February 2017** (round three).

Full Application for Funding

If you have been successful in your Expression of Interest, you will be invited to complete a full application for funding, the appointed architect will visit your premises at an agreed time to advise on the scope of works. This will be based on an assessment of need, your aspirations and a review of your expression of interest form. The architect will complete draft drawings to illustrate the project details and estimated cost breakdown for each element.

Retail Revival Ltd will accompany the architect and provide you with support to complete a 'Full Application for Funding Form'.

The review panel will reconvene to assess the full grant applications using transparent scoring criteria to select projects, which will make the most difference to business sustainability and economic uplift in the high street. The scoring criteria will be made available to applicants before they complete their full application for funding.

The local review panel will send all full applications for funding that have scored 75% or above, to the Central Bedfordshire review panel. This panel will ensure that all applications scoring 75% or above from all participating towns in Central Bedfordshire fit within budget and meet the wider strategic aims of the programme.

High Street Improvement Scheme Grants

If your full grant application for funding is successful you will be issued with an offer of grant funding and a contract stating our terms and conditions. If you accept these terms and conditions you will then be assigned an architect and business support consultant who will work with you to design and deliver your proposals to a specified process and timescale.

The grant budget will be held and managed by CBC. CBC will collect 90% of your match funding before the work begins and they will pay the architect and contractors directly for all works carried out under this programme. On satisfactory completion of your works you will be required to pay the final 10% of your match funding contribution to CBC.

If your 'Full Grant Application' for funding is unsuccessful at this stage you will be sent a letter explaining the reasons. There will be no right of appeal.

Application Process

- Check eligibility by reading guidance notes and expression of interest form
- Contact your town council to make an appointment
- Complete expression of interest form - Thursday 1st September 2016 (round one), Tuesday 1st November 2016 (round two) and Wednesday 1st February 2017 (round three)
- Invitation to complete full application for grant funding or Application declined and reasons will be provided
- Support provided to complete a full application for funding and scope of works
- Full application form review by local review panel
- Applications scoring 75% or above are referred to the Central Bedfordshire review panel for final selection
- Application successful and offer of grant made with contractual terms and conditions or Application declined and reasons provided
- Design and build scope of works is defined and agreed by all parties
- Contract accepted and signed by applicant
- 90% of match funding paid by business
- Work begins, subject to planning permission, listed building consent and building control regulations (if applicable)
- 10% of match funding paid on completion of works to satisfactory standard

Evaluation and Monitoring

The Town Council will be responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this programme in their market town and if you receive funding they will require you to participate in the ongoing monitoring and evaluation process by providing important statistics including percentage increase of business turnover, footfall figures and increase in ATV (average transaction value). This will be a condition of grant offer.

Publicity and communications

As part of the publicity and communications of the High Street Improvement Scheme, Central Bedfordshire Council and your Town Council may use your business as a case study. By taking part in the scheme you will be asked to agree for your business to be used as a case study including photographs and details of the upgrade.

State Aid

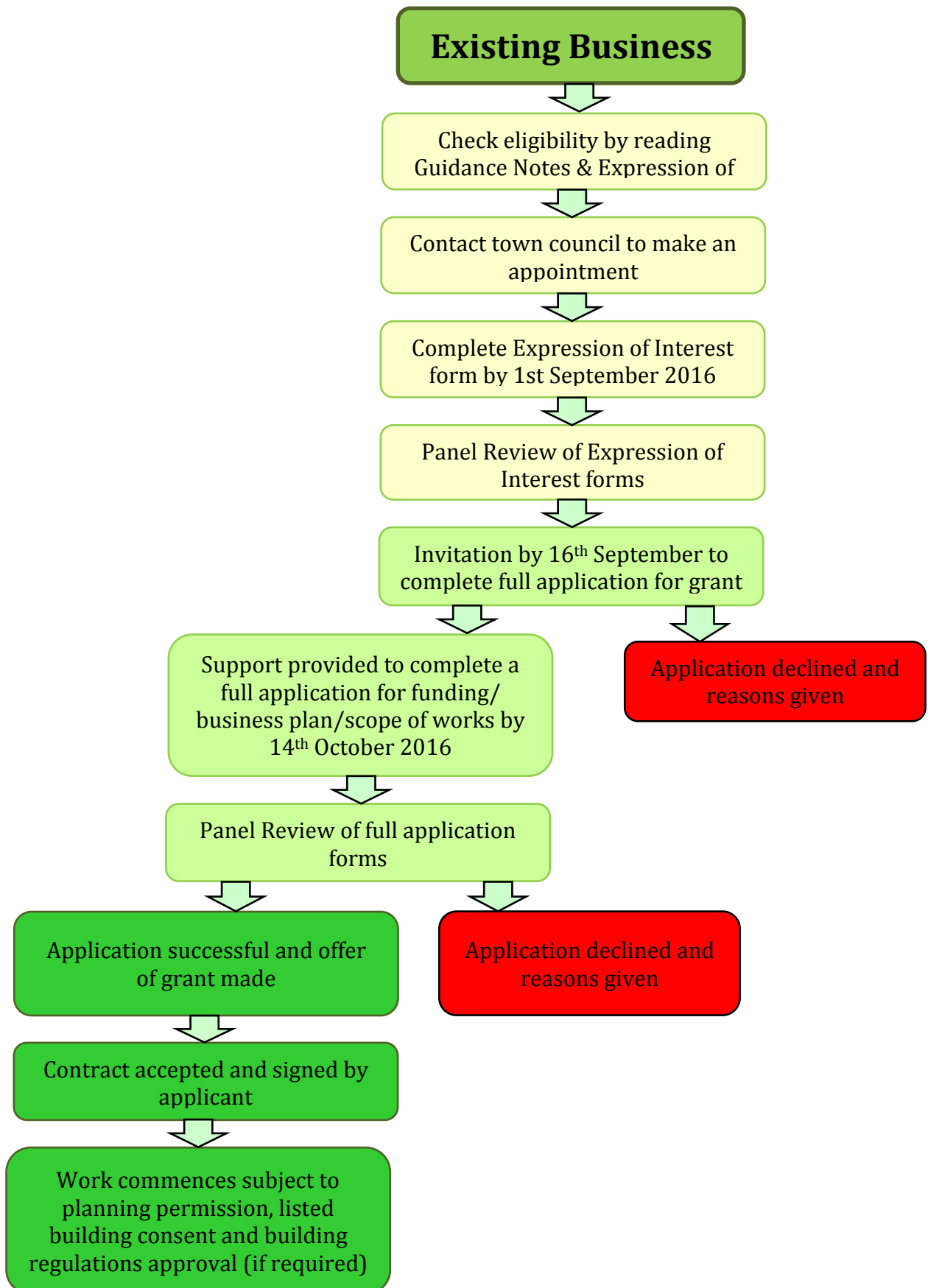
State aid rules are designed to prevent the public sector giving the private sector subsidies, or covering costs that commercial firms would normally be expected to bear themselves, in order to ensure the common market in goods and services within European Union.

State aid can be given legally by using one of a set of approved EU mechanisms for state aid. De Minimis is used to describe small amounts of state aid that do not require European Commission approval. The total de minimis aid which can be given to a single recipient is €200,000 over a 3-year rolling financial period. This can be given for most purposes, including operating aid, and is not project-related. This ceiling takes into account all public assistance given as de minimis funding over the previous 3 financial years.

To ensure the High Street Improvement Scheme is compliant with state aid requirements and that no business receives aid in excess of the Di Minimis Threshold, Central Bedfordshire Council will:

- Require each business recipient to complete a De Minimis Disclosure Form before allowing it to participate in the Scheme
- Collect and record information from each business applying to the scheme about any previous state aid they have received from any public body within the previous 3 years.
- Provide a final form to the business to summarise the aid given.
- Maintain copies of the De Minimis Disclosure Forms and information about the amount and nature of the relevant aid provided for a period of ten years after the date on which the relevant aid is provided

Application Process Diagram – Round One



Expression of Interest Form

1. Name of Business:

2. Type of Business (please list your key products and services):

3. Company Status: e.g. sole proprietor, partnership, Ltd Company, Co-operative:

4. Business Details

Address:

Email:

Telephone Number:

Website Address (where applicable):

Vat Number (if registered):

Number of employees (full and part time):

How long have you been trading in the town centre?

5. How do you intend to use a business grant? Describe how you will use the grant; provide photos where appropriate

6. How much money do you think you will require?

Shop Front Grant required: £
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7. Provide an estimated breakdown of proposed project costs (excluding VAT)

8. It is expected for you to provide match funding towards your total project costs. Are you able to contribute 40% of the total project costs?

Yes/No

9. If your application applies to either a building or land, please indicate what legal rights you have to the site:

Freehold/Leasehold

If leasehold do you need to obtain the permission of the landlord before you make alterations to the property?

Yes/No

If leasehold what is the unexpired term of the lease? Years..... Months.....

10. How will the grant help your business to become more profitable?

Consider how the improvements help you to increase takings, employ more people, attract more customers etc.

11. Applicant's Details

Applicant's Name:

Applicant's Address:

Applicant's Tel No:

Applicant's E-mail:

12. Declaration by Applicant:

I declare that to the best of my knowledge and belief the information given on this application form and in any supporting material is correct.

I understand that the information provided will be held on computer systems by Central Bedfordshire Council and kept only for as long as is required. This information may also be shared with partner organisations.

I understand my Town Council and Central Bedfordshire Council reserve the right to make all final decisions on grant allocations, all decisions will be based on overall benefit to the town centre.

Please complete this form and return with any associated documents to your town council, address.

Should you require further support please telephone your town council.

Signed:

Date: