

Bolsover

Executive

13th June 2016

Report of the Chief Executives and Partnership Manager

<p>Bolsover Business Grants Scheme</p>

This report is public

Purpose of the Report

- To provide an update on the progress of the Bolsover Business Grants Scheme following the launch in January 2016.
- Outline proposed amendments and seek approval to implement within the scheme.

Report Details

1.1 In March 2015 Bolsover District Council Executive took the decision to establish a Bolsover Business Growth Fund (BGF) and allocated £200,000 from Transformation Reserves to pilot a scheme over 24 months for areas ineligible for BNED LEADER funding.

As this funding is for those ineligible areas for LEADER this means businesses in the larger towns of Shirebrook, South Normanton and Bolsover (with the exception of smaller localised areas) are eligible for BGF and can apply for up to 90% support grant between £1,000 to £10,000.

Funding can be used for a variety of projects including:

- Extending and improving premises
- Employing an apprentice (but not core costs)
- Development of the business profile to boost trade
- Business Growth Items
- Business start-up costs

1.2 Following the launch of the scheme in January 2016 the Council has received the following:

- 14 Expressions of interest
 - 2 have been rejected
 - 9 invited to full application

- 2 have submitted their full application
- 1 EOI is awaiting consideration

A broad range of business types are represented and are predominately small to medium enterprises(SMEs) which is expected as 80% of Bolsover businesses are made up from this group.

1.3 The Partnership Team supports the management of this funding and provides the appraisal process on behalf of the Council to contribute to the delivery of the Growth Strategy. The intentions behind this scheme also contribute to the Strategic Aims of the Bolsover Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and therefore a representative from the Bolsover Business and Employment Partnership form part of the approval process.

1.4 Administering the initial tranche of applications has demonstrated what works well in the process such as broadening the business understanding and needs by working with Economic Development; the two stage process; the range of support that can be funded and the quick responses businesses receive in response to their EOI applications. However this has also highlighted areas that require strengthening.

1.5 The eligibility for LEADER funding is largely categorised by rural classifications which is determined by DEFRA and is very clear in its application of this due to European Financial Regulations. However the practical application of this has highlighted some areas that are difficult to judge their eligibility and/or impacts the practicality of administering BGF. For example:

- Pleasley Mills which has a small proportion of a building within the LEADER area and the remainder is in BGF.
- The Tangent in Shirebrook although it is within a LEADER area the location is more aligned to the urban town of Shirebrook where the business mix within that would not be suitable for LEADER.

1.6 An urgent decision in respect of the situation due to it being commercially sensitive was required hence the need for a Delegated Decision in respect of the 2 applications:

- Reality3 (Communications) Ltd – Pleasley Mills
- J M Hill Building Services Ltd – The Tangent

2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation

2.1 Executive note the progress to date

2.2 Executive agree some flexibility within the BGF funding which is not restricted to European Financial Regulations to take account for areas which are difficult to judge and/or are counterproductive to the Authority's growth agenda. Particularly in respect of Pleasley Mills and The Tangent, both key economic sites.

2.3 In accordance with the Delegation Scheme, Executive is asked to endorse the decision taken to pay BGF to the 2 companies named in paragraph 1.6.

3 Consultation and Equality Impact

- 3.1 As per the previous paper presented to Executive on 30 March 2015 outlining the consultation with businesses to identify their needs, aspirations and any barriers to their growth. The purpose of this paper is to further support this by incorporating some flexibility within the BGF to support businesses, particularly in strategic sites.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 Continuing with the process as previously agreed in March 2015 would continue to support businesses growth, however due to LEADER's strict criteria this approach is restrictive and counterproductive in some instances to the District Council's Growth agenda.

5 Implications

Local businesses will benefit to ensure the District grows in terms of economic regeneration and attract inward investment by utilising BGF.

5.1 Finance and Risk Implications

None

5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection

All taken account of in the administrative process of managing the BGF

5.3 Human Resources Implications

None

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 Executive note the update
- 6.2 Executive agrees to relax the LEADER criteria applying to the BGF in both Pleasley and Shirebrook to enable businesses within those areas to apply for BGF funding even if technically within the LEADER area..
- 6.3 Executive retrospectively endorse the 2 applications for BGF affected and awarded to:
- Reality3 (Communications) Ltd – Pleasley Mills
 - J M Hill Building Services Ltd – The Target

7 Decision Information

Is the decision a Key Decision? (A Key Decision is one which results in income or expenditure to the Council of £50,000 or more or which has a significant impact on two or more District wards)	No
District Wards Affected	BGF is predominantly available for businesses in wards within Bolsover, Shirebrook and South Normanton. However this report has no direct affect on any specific ward.
Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework	Growth

8 Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
Previous report to Executive 30 March 2015 outlining the BGF and consultation with businesses (attached)	
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Report Reference –