

REPORT TO:	ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE (SPECIAL)	AGENDA ITEM: 7
DATE OF MEETING:	02 JANUARY 2025	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - PLACE AND PROSPERITY	CATEGORY: OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	MIKE ROYLANCE (01283 595725) mike.roylance@southderbyshire.gov.uk	DOC:
SUBJECT:	SWADLINCOTE TOWN CENTRE GRANT SCHEME	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	SWADLINCOTE	TERMS OF REFERENCE: EDS03

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Committee recommends a budget of £150,000 be allocated to support improvements to property frontages in Swadlincote Town Centre over three years commencing in 2025/26 in the final 2025/26 General Fund budget report to Finance and Management Committee on 6 February 2025.
- 1.2 That authority is delegated to the Executive Director - Place and Prosperity to finalise the detail of the Swadlincote Town Centre Grant Scheme, and programme arrangements.
- 1.3 That authority is delegated to the Executive Director - Transformation and Resources to approve the grant awards in accordance with the Swadlincote Town Centre Grant Scheme.

2.0 Purpose of the Report

- 2.1 It is proposed to continue the physical improvements that the District Council has been undertaking in Swadlincote Town Centre. Support is sought for the allocation of a budget to work with property owners and tenants to improve their frontages.

3.0 Detail

Background

- 3.1 The Council is currently undertaking a programme of physical improvements to Swadlincote Town Centre, including the following:
 - first floor frontage improvements to No's 5-15 West Street, fronting The Delph Market Place;
 - refurbishment of No.1 High Street to create the South Derbyshire Visitor Information Centre;

- refurbishment of The Delph Market Place, including prevention of unwanted vehicle access;
 - regeneration of the derelict Bank House/Sabine's Yard site to create the new Midland Road Car Park with free long stay spaces, additional electric vehicle charging points and a pocket park on Belmont Street;
 - employment of a Community Safety Enforcement Officer (Town Centres) whose role includes pursuing the maintenance of privately-owned land;
 - support for the community group, Swad in Bloom, to enable them to undertake planting projects; and,
 - refurbishment of the public toilets.
- 3.2 During this period the private and third sectors have brought a number of vacant buildings back into use including the former church and cinema in West Street, former bank in High Street and former bowls club in Belmont Street, all of which had been long term vacancies. They have also invested in numerous individual retail premises.
- 3.3 There is a continuing need to support investment in the town centre in the face of national trends, including rising operating costs for businesses, competition from out of town and online shopping, pressure on household incomes and the changing role of town centres.
- 3.4 Town centre shop front improvements were eligible for support through the Business Grant Scheme which was part of the District's UK Shared Prosperity Fund programme. However, despite significant interest from property owners and tenants the take-up was low. Potential applicants, which are often micro-businesses, cited the expenditure, time and expertise required to secure the necessary approvals, and the challenges of finding contractors prepared to quote for relatively small projects.

Grant Scheme

- 3.5 The proposed Swadlincote Town Centre Grant Scheme aims to contribute to the further revival of the town centre by enhancing the environment in order to attract greater numbers of shoppers and visitors. The initiative seeks to improve the visual appearance of Swadlincote town centre by incentivising property owners and tenants to invest in their premises. Priority would be given to prominent frontages and other aspects that are visible from main public routes.
- 3.6 Eligible Works would include the refurbishment or replacement of the following:
- doors and windows
 - masonry, render, tiles and other fascia materials
 - reinstatement of more appropriate features in keeping with the building's design
 - roofs and rainwater goods
 - walls, fencing, landscaping and other boundary treatments
 - new shopfronts more appropriate to the building's design and setting
 - signage
- 3.7 It is proposed that a flexible approach to implementation is taken, with a high level of support available to property owners/tenants, including:
- grants to property owners and tenants
 - works contracted by the Council through quotes, tenders or frameworks
 - works undertaken by the Council's partner contractors

- works undertaken inhouse by the Council's own employees

3.8 There would also be scope for the Council to fund associated professional fees (eg. architects, surveyors, planning consultants), either directly commissioning the consultancy work or as an eligible cost as part of a grant award.

3.9 Private sector applicants would normally be expected to make a financial contribution to a project, however, works that they had undertaken recently could also be taken into account. Third sector applicants could potentially be eligible for the full cost of works to their premises.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 As set out in the draft General Fund budget presented to Finance and Management Committee on 21 November 2024, it is proposed £150,000 capital funding to fund grants, works and associated professional fees over the next three years is approved.

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
Proposed allocation	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000	£150,000

4.2 The Council has Capital Receipts in Reserves that can be utilised to fund this proposal.

5.0 Corporate Implications

Legal Implications

5.1 The Council has the power to give grants to improve and regenerate areas of the district. Any grants and the Grant Scheme will be subject to Subsidy Control requirements. The appointment of contractors will need to comply with procurement rules.

Council Plan Implications

5.2 Swadlincote Town Centre is highlighted under the 'Drive our Economy' priority of the Council Plan, which aims to achieve 'a thriving economy and place that has jobs, skills, education, infrastructure, and opportunity'. The key aim is to 'Enhance and attract inward investment in Swadlincote Town Centre'.

Risk Impact

5.3 Vibrant Town Centres are the heart of a community, and influence both civic pride and perceptions of an area. The appearance of the town centre is a significant part of this.

6.0 Community Impact

Consultation

6.1 Businesses, residents and shoppers have been independently surveyed for their views on Swadlincote Town Centre and desired improvements. The appearance of areas of the town centre has consistently been cited as one of the main negative factors.

Equality and Diversity Impact

- 6.2 The Town Centre is a highly accessible location with good provision of, for example, public transport, disabled parking and pedestrianised areas, offering access to a wider range of services and facilities.

Social Value Impact

- 6.3 Town Centres are the heart of a community offering a wide range of services and activities provided by the public, private and voluntary/community sectors.

Environmental Sustainability

- 6.4 The Town Centre is the most accessible location for those using sustainable forms of transport, with a bus station, cycle links and connectivity into adjacent residential areas for those on foot. A vibrant Town Centre also discourages travel to other centres further afield often by private car.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 By investing in the Town Centre, the District Council can build confidence and so encourage businesses and other public and third sector organisations to follow suit, at a time when the vibrancy and vitality of Town Centres is increasingly challenged.

8.0 Background Papers

Swadlincote Town Centre Vision and Strategy