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HM Government

**Rushcliffe Borough Council
UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

High Street Small Business Grants

Applicant Guidance

1. Introduction

Aim of the grant scheme

The Rushcliffe Borough Council High Street Small Business Grants scheme offers funding to small businesses in the Borough of Rushcliffe as part of our UK Government funded Shared Prosperity Funding.

The aim of the scheme is to assist High Street businesses currently trading in local High Streets and town centres, particularly retail businesses and those in the hospitality and leisure sectors. Funding is available for energy efficiency measures, digital support and shop front improvements with a view to achieving the following objectives:

- Support and sustain existing businesses on the high street
- Improve the appearance of existing premises on the high street
- Encourage businesses to introduce energy saving measures.

Duration of the grant scheme

The High Street Small Business Grants will be available for applications from 1 April 2024 and will close once all the funding is allocated. All grants awarded must be claimed before March 2025.

Amount of grant funding that you can apply for

The grant will support up to 70% of the cost of projects up to a maximum of £5,000.

2. Grant criteria and eligible expenditure

Eligibility criteria

Grants are open to a business which meets the following criteria:

- High Street businesses who pay their business rates to us (Rushcliffe Borough Council), receive small business rate relief or an established business group that represents a group of businesses based in Rushcliffe (who meet the criteria on business rates)
- Business grants are aimed at small independent high street businesses (for the purpose of this scheme an independent business is defined as a single retail outlet, or a chain of two or three stores managed and owned by either a Sole Trader, Partnership or Limited Company).
- Businesses must operate in a sector with a high level of public interaction. These sectors include: retail, hospitality, personal care, leisure, and tourism businesses.
- Has been trading for a minimum of 6 months
- Has between 1 and 50 employees
- Has a turnover of less than £10m
- Is registered with Companies House or the Charity Commission OR is a sole trader or partnership with a Unique Tax Reference Number from HMRC.
- Must be able to fund and evidence 100% of the project cost upfront from their own resources
- Holds a business bank account (a 'trading as' account is acceptable). A business bank account is a trading commercial account in the name of the applying business. All purchases must be made via the business account and all claim payments will be made to the same business account. Personal or current accounts are NOT eligible.

- All appropriate licences and permissions are in place and food businesses have achieved a food hygiene rating of 4 or greater.
- Rushcliffe Borough Council encourages businesses to seek quotes from local Rushcliffe based businesses for work/projects planned.

Additional eligibility criteria for applications for shop front improvements

- Retail units must have a ground floor and street facing frontage
- You must be the owner or leaseholder of the business and premises, and have your landlord's permission (if applicable)
- Applications from long-term leaseholders must include formal approval, planning permission and building control approval from the freeholder to carry out any works affecting the structure or the external fabric of the building.

Eligible project activity

The High Street Small Business Grants can fund projects under the following themes:

1. Energy efficiency measures
2. Digital and ICT equipment purchase
3. Shopfront improvements

see Section 3 for further detail.

Ineligible project activity

The following cannot be supported by the grant:

- Works that have already been undertaken
- Works to upper floors or basements (when applying for grants to improve shop fronts)
- Works to residential properties
- Businesses that are trading from a residential property are excluded from the grant scheme
- Purchase of mobile phones and mobile phone contracts
- VAT (unless the applicant is not able to recover VAT)
- Recurring revenue costs (including: salaries, pensions, stock, rent, utility charges, service charges subscriptions, insurance, tax, recruitment fees, website hosting etc.)
- Repayment of existing loans or debts
- General running costs for the business

The list of ineligible project activities is not definitive and all proposals will be assessed for eligibility by Rushcliffe Borough Council.

Availability of grant

All grants are made at the discretion of Rushcliffe Borough Council and are subject to availability of funding.

Timescale

You must be able to complete your project, pay for it and claim your grant before 31st March 2025.

Grant amount and match funding:

The High Street Small Business Grants scheme will provide up to 70% of the funding requested up to a maximum of £5,000

Match funding provided by the applicant is required for this grant scheme. Any match that an applicant will provide should be included in the application.

Match funding is cash that you will be contributing to the project. For example, you might want to buy equipment that costs more than the maximum amount of grant that can be awarded. Match will be the money you contribute to the purchase to make up the difference between the cost of the item and the maximum amount of grant that you can apply for.

You must be able to pay upfront for any works or purchases as grant payments are made in arrears, to reimburse/contribute to costs already paid.

In all cases applicants need to apply for the grant by submitting a full application form and obtain written approval of award from Rushcliffe Borough Council before any work is undertaken or items/equipment purchased. The grant will not be paid towards the cost of transactions that have occurred before the date of the approval.

VAT

Applicants who are VAT registered will have their grant assessed on the net cost of eligible projects; non-VAT registered applicants will be assessed on the gross cost. If the applicant does not know whether they are VAT registered or not they must seek advice from HM Revenue & Customs.

3. High Street Small Business Grant Themes

Grants are available to support activities under the three themes detailed below.

1 – Energy Efficiency –

Funding for the installation of small-scale measures to reduce energy consumption and costs.

Examples of projects/activities that could be funded under this theme include:

- Installation of LED lighting
- Improved insulation
- Improved heating or cooling systems
- Upgrade to modern electronic thermostats
- Fit additional thermostatic controls
- Fit PVC strip curtains to reduce draughts

2 - Digital / ICT equipment purchase:

Funding to assist the purchase of digital support (website, social media etc) that will support improved productivity or efficiency in the business.

Examples of digital/ICT equipment that could be funded under this theme could include:

- Purchase of laptops, tablets, printers, point of sale machines,
- Purchase of computer peripherals
- Specialist equipment such as audio equipment, cameras, drones, cloud storage
- Specialist support for growing and improving your businesses digital footprint (e.g. SEO, social media etc)

3 - Shopfront Improvements

Funding for physical improvements to the frontages of businesses. It is hoped that these grants will enhance the visual appearance of the high street, making them more attractive to shoppers and visitors and increasing footfall

Examples of projects/activities that could be funded under this theme include:

- Restoration or repair of current shop fronts including painting
- Replacement shop front, windows and doors.
- Installing new fascia signage
- Installing appropriate lighting
- Painting of existing shop fronts and upper floors (including render).
- Replacement gutter and downpipes.

Applicants can apply for a grant under a single theme, or a combination of themes up to the value of £5,000.

4. Applying for the grant

Applicants should submit a completed application form together with any required quotes or budgets

- You must obtain a quote for purchases or works to be undertaken and submit these with your application form. NOTE buying goods/services from a linked company. i.e., one that has any shared directors with your company or that has directors that are close members of your family (husbands /wives / partners / brothers / sisters / children and their husbands /wives /partners / brothers / sisters / children is not permitted.
- Project costs that you include in the application should be net, exclusive of VAT
- Rushcliffe Borough Council will assess the eligibility of applicants

Each application will be judged on its own merits with regard to how well it meets the scheme's aims and eligibility criteria and its ability to be implemented within the set timescales.

Decision on applications

All applications will be subject to an assessment by Rushcliffe Borough Council and the amount offered will be at the discretion of Rushcliffe Borough Council and only whilst funds are available. The decision of Rushcliffe Borough Council is final. It reserves the right to vary the level of grant or reject an application.

Notification of decision on the application will be made in writing to the applicant. An offer of grant will be made by letter, which will specify:

- The eligible applicant
- The eligible goods/services to be accessed/purchased
- The maximum amount of grant awarded
- The date by which the expenditure should be completed

Payment of grant

- Grants are discretionary and Rushcliffe Borough Council reserves the right to withhold payment of the grant in whole or part if any condition of the offer letter has been breached
- No retrospective costs can be paid – do not place an order, pay for or commission any goods and services prior to receiving an offer letter
- The applicant must submit the claim (including invoices and evidence of payment) for grant assistance within one month of the completion date as stated in the offer letter. Payment will be subject to the applicant having satisfactorily completed the project and complied with all terms and conditions of the scheme
- Payment of the grant will only be made when Rushcliffe Borough Council receives copies of invoices and evidence of payment for the approved grant from the applicant. Invoices dated before the date of the offer letter will not be eligible for payment
- Any changes to supplier must be agreed with Rushcliffe Borough Council
- Payment of the grant will be made into the applicant's business bank account (or 'trading as' account) via BACS
- Grants will be paid against the agreed suppliers and works quoted, as stated in your application form
- You must pay 100% of the costs to the supplier – the grant is a reimbursement, for the value stated in the offer letter
- Only costs paid to legitimate businesses will be reimbursed – we cannot reimburse costs paid directly to individuals

IMPORTANT

No claims will be paid where payments to a supplier were made by cash, by a third party or by cheque. All payments to suppliers must be made from a business bank account. Payments made to suppliers by credit card will only be eligible for grant if the card is registered to the business and not a private individual.

FAQs

Can a grant be used to purchase stock?

No. The purchase of stock that can then be sold by a business is not eligible for grant support.

Do I need to provide quotes?

Yes. A minimum of 2 quotes is required for each item of expenditure.

Do I need to include a business plan?

No.

Can I apply to the High Street Small Business Grant Scheme more than once?

Yes. However, eligible business are restricted to one application per project under the scheme.

Will I need to pay the grant back?

No, the funding provided to a successful applicant is a grant and not a loan. Businesses will be required to pay grant funding back if conditions in the grant offer letter and contract are not adhered to.

Where can the Business Rates Account Number be found?

Your Business Rates Account Number can be found at the top of any business rates bill you have been issued. Rushcliffe Borough Council are unable to provide your account number to you to avoid cases of fraud.

What will be accepted as a quote?

A quote should be in written form, addressed to the business, and detail the items to be purchased and clearly show the costs excluding any VAT. The grant will not support the VAT costs and is calculated on the cost excluding VAT.

If the items are being purchased from a retailer who is unable to provide a quote please send a screenshot of the webpage and link to the website for the item you require that clearly shows the price.