

ANGUS COUNCIL

INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE

21 APRIL 2009

**SUBJECT: RURAL SHOPS AND COMMUNITY POST OFFICE CONVERSION GRANT
SCHEME – REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
NEWBIGGING VILLAGE SHOP AND POST OFFICE**

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

<p>Abstract: The owners of the Newbigging Shop and Post Office have applied for grant assistance to undertake Phase II of the improvements to their premises.</p>
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1 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee agree to offer a grant of £1,681.20 for Phase II of the improvements to the shop and post office at Newbigging under the Rural Shops and Community Post Office Grant Scheme, subject to confirmation from the Chief Quantity Surveyor that the costs are reasonable.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 In August 1996 the Planning and Transport Policy Committee of Angus Council agreed to operate a joint Rural Shops and Community Post Office Conversion Grant Scheme. The scheme, originally introduced by Tayside Regional Council was to support a basic level of convenience shopping and facilities in rural areas as part of a strategy to maintain rural population levels. A copy of the eligibility criteria for the scheme is appended to this report, for information.
- 2.2 This discretionary scheme has assisted both existing shop keepers and new Post Masters to carry out improvements and/or adopt good business practices thus increasing the viability of their businesses. There is at present a budget of £6,000 for each financial year.
- 2.3 Phase I of the improvements to Newbigging Village Shop and Post Office were approved by Committee on 14 October 2008 (Report No. 985/08 refers) and the works completed and fully funded to the value of £815.85 in the financial year 2008/09.
- 2.4 As also agreed by the Committee the owners have now applied for the balance of the funding to undertake Phase II of the works.
- 2.5 Phase II comprises further works to improve the external appearance and security of the premises by replacing the existing external lighting to the shopfront, together with a complete rewire back to a new fuse box. The other element for which funding is required is the installation of a slim line ice cream refrigerated unit and a hot food storage and display unit. The lowest estimate for these items is £1,868.00 which would attract a grant of £1,681.20.
- 2.6 The works are required to improve the appearance and efficiency of the shop and post office and are eligible under the scheme.

3 RURAL SHOPS AND COMMUNITY POST OFFICE CONVERSION

- 3.1 The applicant meets the eligibility criteria under the above scheme. It is the only general store within the village of Newbigging, which has recently seen an increase in population due to new housing, it is open for 12 months of the year and is in excess of three miles from the nearest town. The role of the post office has increased following the closure of others within the wider area.
- 3.2 The applicant has submitted two competitive estimates for all three aspects of Phase II of the works and these were forwarded to the Chief Quantity Surveyor for confirmation that the lowest quotations submitted are fair and reasonable.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The discretionary grant for the scheme is available up to a maximum of £3,000 or 90% of the approved works whichever is the lower. As the sum of £815.85 for Phase I was met from the 2008/09 budget this leaves a maximum of £2,184.15 that can be funded in respect of the Phase II works. However, as noted at 2.5 above, the lowest estimate of £1,868.00 would only necessitate grant of £1,681.20 being paid.
- 4.2 This grant payment of £1,681.20 can be met from the approved budget of £6,000.00 for the Grant Scheme within the Planning and Transport 2009/10 revenue budget.

5 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

6 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The issues dealt with in this Report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective (as required by legislation). An equalities impact assessment is not required.

7 SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

- 7.1 This report contributes to the following local outcome contained within the Single Outcome Agreement for Angus.
1. We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe
 - Sustainable business growth is achieved.
 2. We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people
 - Angus residents are well equipped for employment.
 - Sustainable business growth is achieved.
 - Economic constraints to active citizenship are minimised.
 13. We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity
 - Growth in tourism in Angus is achieved.
 - A good quality of life is enjoyed by all in Angus.

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Head of Law & Administration and Head of Finance have been consulted during the preparation of this report.

9 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The Newbigging Village Shop and Post Office is the only facility available to serve the growing community both within the village and surrounding rural areas and provides services beyond the provision of goods.

ERIC S. LOWSON
DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

NOTE

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

P&T/GEP/IAL
12 March 2009

RURAL SHOP & COMMUNITY POST OFFICE GRANT SCHEME

Eligibility Criteria

- a. Food shops or general stores which provide the sole source of a range of convenience goods in a rural community, operate for 12 months of the year and are over one mile from the nearest alternative town providing an extensive range of shopping, or
- b. Any one wishing to run a rural Community Status post Office. The applicant must be contracted by the Post Office Counters Ltd as a Sub-Postmaster/Mistress to issue pensions and allowances, sell stamps and postal orders and handle posting and telephone account business.

Eligible Works

- c. Essential physical improvements to the interior and exterior of the property associated with increasing the viability of the business, making the shop more attractive to potential customers and complying with Environmental Health and Food Hygiene Regulations, or
- d. Essential physical alterations to an applicant's premises which must be carried out to satisfy Post Office Counters Limited's operational requirements

Grants Available

Discretionary grant up to a maximum of :-

- 1) £3,000 or 90% of approved works, whichever is the lower, or
- 2) £2,500 or 90% of approved works, whichever is the lower if the shop is less than three miles from the nearest provision

**Infrastructure Services, Planning & Transport Division
Angus Council
County Buildings, Market Street,
Forfar, Angus,
DD8 3LG**

If further assistance required please telephone Regeneration & Countryside Planning on
01307 473334

Conditions of Grant

Grant will be based on the lower of two written quotations and the work must be executed by the Contractor submitting that offer unless authorised in writing.

No work can commence before written approval of grant is issued.

The Council may, in agreeing to the payment of grant, impose conditions on the works to be carried out or on the operation of the shops.

All necessary statutory consents must be obtained prior to application for grant.

Payment of grant will be made on the satisfactory completion of works and submission of receipts confirming that expenditure has been incurred.

In the event of the applicant disposing of the shop or discontinuing its use within three years of its date of payment, Angus Council may require repayment of all, or part of the grant —100% in Year 1, 75% in Year 2 and 50% in Year 3.

Freestanding equipment purchased under the grant scheme shall not be disposed of without the written consent of Angus Council, Angus Council reserves the right to require repayment of all, or part of the grant.

Where the business consultant identifies the need for further training and/or counselling, payment of the grant will be made subject to:-

- the applicant agreeing to undertake the appropriate training
- the applicant completing the training to the satisfaction of the business consultant

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