

ANGUS COUNCIL

INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE – 13 OCTOBER 2009

RURAL SHOPS AND COMMUNITY POST OFFICE CONVERSION GRANT SCHEME
AMENDMENT TO REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
NEWBIGGING VILLAGE SHOP AND POST OFFICE

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

ABSTRACT: The owners of the Newbigging Shop and Post Office having previously been awarded grant assistance to undertake Phase II of the improvements to their premises wish to amend the works to be undertaken.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee agree to revise the offer of grant to £1,509.15 for the improvements to the shop and post office at Newbigging under the Rural Shops and Community Post Office Grant Scheme, payment of grant being subject to confirmation that all necessary statutory consents are in place.

2. BACKGROUND

- 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.

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 As was also agreed by the Committee the owners applied for Phase II of the improvements which were in turn approved by Committee on 21 April 2009 (Report No 335/09 refers) and part of these works, to improve the external appearance and security of the premises by replacing the existing lighting to the shopfront, together with a complete rewire back to a new fuse box have been funded to the value of £675.00.
- 3.3 The other element for which funding under Phase II was approved was the installation of a slim line ice cream refrigerated unit and a hot food storage and display unit. The lowest estimate for all the works to be undertaken as approved was £1,868.00 which would attract a grant of £1,681.20.
- 3.4 At present those employed within the Shop and Post Office make use of toilet facilities within a vacant flat above the shop which is an unsatisfactory arrangement. Further, the owners now wish to sell or rent out the flat whilst continuing to operate the Shop and Post Office. This would necessitate the installation of separate toilet facilities within the Shop and Post Office premises to meet health and safety requirements under The Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992. The owners have therefore requested that the outstanding Phase II grant be amended to meet the cost of the works.

4. PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The amended proposal comprises the formation and installation of a toilet and wash basin for the use of staff employed within the Shop and Post Office. The works comprise the necessary joinery work, plasterwork both internal and external, plumbing including all sanitary items, pipework and sewer connections and necessary electrical installations for lighting and ventilation and are estimated to cost in the region of £2,220.00.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 The applicant has submitted two competitive estimates for the revised Phase II works. The Chief Quantity Surveyor has confirmed that the lower quotation submitted is fair and reasonable.
- 4.4 Whilst the grant could be seen as the Council facilitating the sale of an integral part of the property to the benefit of the owner rather than the local community a balanced judgement needs to be considered to reflect the real benefit of retaining a viable local shop. The separation of dependency between the shop and the flat is likely to make the shop more viable and therefore justify the recommendation for approval.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 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 to be met from the 2009/10 budget. However, as noted at 3.2 above, a sum of £675.00 has already been paid in respect of Phase II works which would leave a balance of £1,509.15 available towards the cost of £2,220.00 for the amended Phase II works.
- 5.2 This grant payment of £1,509.15 can be met from the approved budget of £6,000.00 for the Grant Scheme within the Planning and Transport 2009/10 revenue budget.

6. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

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

7. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 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.

8. SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

- 8.1 This report contributes to the following local outcome contained within the Single Outcome Agreement for Angus.
- Sustainable business growth is achieved.
 - Angus residents are well equipped for employment.
 - Economic constraints to active citizenship are minimised.

9. CONSULTATION

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

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 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 a material extent in preparing the above report.

**P&T/GWC/GEP/IAL
28 September 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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