Abstract: The owners of Hillside Shop and Post Office have applied for grant assistance to undertake improvements to the premises.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee agree to offer a grant of £1,993.20, being the balance of funding available in 2011/12, which is approximately 80% of the cost of £2,483.88 for the improvements to the shop at Hillside under the Rural Shops and Community Post Office Grant Scheme, subject to the Chief Quantity Surveyor confirming that the costs are fair and reasonable.

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 The owners of the Hillside Village Shop and Post Office have not previously applied for assistance under the scheme.

4. PROPOSALS

4.1 The owners are proposing to amend the layout of the premises to increase space for merchandise and to improve access for the disabled, particularly wheelchair users. The works comprise alterations to the existing office, including repositioned fire door and security lock. New repositioned counters to be installed to both shop and post office.

4.2 Post Office Counters are funding the necessary electrical works associated with repositioning of computer and electronic equipment.

4.3 The applicant meets the eligibility criteria under the above scheme. It is the only general store within the village of Hillside and is open for 12 months of the year. As the post office is less than three miles from the nearest provision the maximum grant is £2,500 or 90% of the approved works whichever is the lower.
4.4 The applicant has submitted two competitive estimates for the improvements which have been forwarded to the Chief Quantity Surveyor for confirmation that the lowest quotation submitted of £2,483.89, excluding VAT is fair and reasonable.

5. RISKS

5.1 This report does not require any specific risk issues to be addressed.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The discretionary grant for the scheme is available up to a maximum of £2,500 or 90% of the approved works whichever is the lower. The estimated cost of the works is £2,483.89 for which a grant of £2,235.50 (90%) would normally be payable. Following report No. 556/11 (approved 23 August 2011) a balance of only £1,993.20 remains within the 2011/12 budget for this discretionary grant scheme. It is therefore recommended that the grant award be £1,993.20 (circa 80% of the cost) which is the balance of the approved budget within the Planning & Transport 2011/12 revenue budget.

6.2 The Committee is advised that if approved, there would be no further funding available within the 2011/12 revenue budget for grant awards of this type.

7. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

8. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 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.

9. SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

9.1 This report contributes to the following local outcome contained within the Single Outcome Agreement for Angus.

COMMUNITIES THAT ARE PROSPEROUS AND FAIR

1. We have a sustainable economy with good employment opportunities.

2. Angus is a good place to live in, work in and visit

10. CONSULTATION

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

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 The owners of the Hillside Village Shop and Post Office are endeavouring to improve the access particularly for the disabled and to maximise the attractiveness of the facilities and range of goods and to protect and secure the shop to service both the local community and wider rural area.

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
9 September 2011
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 Natural and Built Environment 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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