



DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

PROPOSED INDIVIDUAL DECISION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TOPIC – RELEASE OF ALLOCATED LOCAL AUTHORITY BUSINESS GROWTH INCENTIVE SCHEME (LABGI) RECEIPTS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

The Access to Information Procedure Rules – Part 4, Section 22 of the Council's Constitution provides for a decision to be made by an individual member of Cabinet.

In accordance with the Procedure Rules, the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief Executive and the Chief Finance Officer are consulted together with Chairman and Vice Chairman of The Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any other relevant overview and scrutiny committee. In addition, all Members are notified.

If five or more Members from those informed so request, the Leader may require the matter to be referred to Cabinet for determination.

If you wish to make representation on this proposed Decision please contact the relevant Portfolio Holder and the following Democratic Services Officer by 5.00pm on Wednesday 6 November 2013.

Contact Officers:

Case Officer: Ivor Bundell, Head of Economy and Arts, ibundell@winchester.gov.uk, 01962 848 563

Democratic Services Officer: Nancy Graham, Tel: 01962 848 235, ngraham@winchester.gov.uk

SUMMARY

- The Local Authority Business Growth Incentive Scheme (LABGI) existed for a period under the last Government. It took the form of a reward grant to local councils based on recorded business growth during the preceding year.
- The Council received a number of payments, a significant proportion of which were allocated to areas of economic development work. In 2009, when the country was facing the global financial crisis, the Leader announced in his budget speech that the Council would allocate £400,000 of its LABGI resources, "specifically to support projects directly related to the health of the local economy, businesses and employment"(CAB1815, March 2009 refers).

- CAB1815 sets out the areas of work to be funded from this money. Whilst most of it has now been spent, an allocation of £40,000 to support city centre retail promotion remains. With an active and well-funded Business Improvement District (BID) in the city, it has not been clear how to use this money to add value to BID programmes: officers have therefore – with the sanction of the Portfolio Holder – kept it in reserve.
- This sum was brought forward into 2013/14 budgets (CAB2493, June 2013 refers), and it is now proposed to commission two pieces of work which accord with the intentions of the fund.
- These are:
 - a) an Independent Retail Healthcheck: this will analyse performance of retailers on the secondary shopping streets of Winchester. It will compare them with other cities and consider low-cost ways in which they, the BID and the Council can help them to improve performance.
 - b) a promotional DVD marketing the evening economy of Winchester, from 5pm through to late night. This will feature late night shopping opportunities, the Christmas markets and other seasonal retailing events, set against a picture of a vibrant night time street scenes, hospitality and cultural events. The DVD would be part of a suite of marketing films which have already proved very popular on the web, for exhibitions and in presentations. Visit Winchester has a well populated and well viewed film channel on www.youtube.com/visitwinchester - the films have been viewed over 50,000 times.
- It should be noted that whilst the LABGI money was specifically allocated to fund city centre retail initiatives, both will be designed in a way that also benefits the market towns. The specification for the Healthcheck, for example, requires consideration of this and the DVD will incorporate images from across the District in spite of its city focus.
- Both activities support the Community Strategy outcome of economic prosperity. Retail is named as one of the five core sectors of the local economy, and therefore meriting particular support from the Council.

PROPOSED DECISION

That a release from the LABGI earmarked reserve, allocated for the purpose of supporting retail in the city centre be approved as follows:

- a) £10,000 for the Independent Retail Healthcheck, and
- b) £8,000 for the production of a professional marketing film promoting the evening economy of Winchester.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

It is proposed to spend £18,000 of existing budget in 2013/14 on the two activities proposed in this Decision Notice, out of a total allocation of £40,000 for city centre retail support.

Officers will work with the Portfolio Holder to consider the best use of the remaining £22,000, now that the BID has begun its second term and its business plans for the coming five years are fixed.

REASON FOR THE PROPOSED DECISION AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- a) *The Independent Retail Healthcheck* is a direct response to feedback from traders that the secondary shopping streets are fairing badly compared with the High Street. It is recognized that the BID team works hard to generate media coverage of and footfall in these streets, but during meetings between the Portfolio Holder and retailers it was clear that there is a feeling that more could be achieved through joint action by the retailers, the County and City Councils and the BID.

Many other steps have been taken over recent years to support the independent retailers, ranging from new pedestrian signage and a specialty shopping leaflet to free entries on the VisitWinchester website, annual street parties and creative seasonal promotions such as the highly successful "Easter Bunny Hop". The Council commissioned the Kite Flyer sculpture in Parchment Street in response to traders who felt that a special feature was needed there to draw shoppers across St George's Street. The resurfacing of The Square, including the extension of the colourful bollards, has also helped to enhance the independent retail experience. So, having tried many approaches, it is felt that an objective external analysis is needed to set out the potential of the secondary shopping streets, along with an affordable means to realize this potential.

- b) *The Evening Economy Film*: Winchester's night time offer attracted 'Purple Flag' accreditation three years ago, and is being visited again later this month by an external assessor. During this time, it is noticeable that this offer has diversified and expanded, with a number of celebrity-linked eateries; new festivals such as the Winchester Film Festival and 10 Days, which both use multiple venues around the City Centre; more late night opening in the run up to Christmas, and so on. However, footfall could be higher – which in turn would encourage more businesses to open longer, particularly in the very quiet period between 5.30pm and 8pm.

The proposed marketing film will be created in partnership with the BID and Winchester & The Heart of Hampshire Destination Management Partnership.

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN ON THE PROPOSED DECISION

The specification for the Independent Retail Healthcheck has been shared with all BID members and it has been warmly welcomed: four independent retailers would sit on the evaluation panel selecting the consultants to carry out this work.

When asked in a survey this spring, 62% of tourism businesses said they agreed that the evening economy this was an important area for the VisitWinchester brand to develop and they supported the idea of making a film. The approach has worked well already for the city's summer festival season, for business tourism and for retail.

FURTHER ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION NOTICE

n/a

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS BY THE DECISION MAKER OR A MEMBER OR OFFICER CONSULTED

n/a

DISPENSATION GRANTED BY THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

n/a

Approved by: (signature)

Date of Decision

Councillor Robert Humby – Portfolio Holder for Economic Development