

Town Centre Grants Guidance Pack



Guidance Pack for town centre grants

Ipswich Borough Council has allocated £25,000 towards a small grant scheme with the aim of supporting the growth of local businesses, improving the local environment and raising the image of the town centre amongst locals and visitors alongside encouraging landlords to bring empty shops back into use.

These guidance notes are provided to help you understand the aims of the Grant Scheme and how you can make a grant application.

Overview of the scheme

A grant up to the value of £1000 is available to new and existing small independent businesses to fit out or improve the visual look and appearance of the shop or buy a new piece of equipment that will make the business more efficient. We have set a maximum grant of £1,000 per project in order to assist as many businesses as possible.

The grant will need to be matched with an equal sum of money (i.e. if the grant is £250 you will need to include £250 of match).

Applicants should be aware that it is unlikely that there will be enough funding for every application received, some applicants may be offered a lower level of grant and some will be unsuccessful.

All applications that meet the criteria below will be assessed by a grant panel on a monthly basis, with written decisions issued following these panel meetings.

Priorities of the scheme

- To bring empty units back into use enabling the creation of new employment opportunities
- To encourage new business opportunities in the town centre and outlying areas
- To promote and assist in providing a vibrant and mixed retail offer
- To enhance the aesthetic appeal of retail areas/centres in the town



Who can apply?

The shop front improvement grant scheme is open to all freehold owners and leaseholders with at least 5 years left on their lease within Ipswich town centre.

Eligible commercial premises include:

- Shops – including hairdressers, beauty salons, funeral directors, launderettes, dry cleaners etc.
- Financial and professional services (e.g. accountants, estate agents, solicitors etc.)
- Restaurants, public houses, cafes and food takeaways
- Buildings that are being used to provide a community service.

The following organisations/businesses are ineligible:

- National retailers/chains/multiples with more than 3 locations
- Charities
- Betting Shops/Pawnbrokers

Priority in the initial funding rounds will be given to businesses within Ipswich's main shopping streets; Tavern Street, Westgate Street, Carr Street, Buttermarket, Northgate Street, Upper Brook Street, Queen Street, St Nicholas Street, St Peters Street, the Thoroughfare, the Walk, Dial Lane, St Lawrence Street and St Stephens Lane. Any future funding rounds could be extended to include the "Gateway" areas to the town centre.

Funding Criteria

Businesses can apply for funding for the following (this list is not exhaustive):

- Fit out of premises
- Purchase of assets which will make the business more efficient
- changes to layout
- redecoration (internal and external)
- new fixtures and fittings
- signage

The grant will not fund:

- Recurring revenue costs (including: salaries, stock, rent, utility charges etc)
- Repaying existing loans or debts
- Fund where other public funding has been accessed for refurbishment of the premises

How to apply

- Initial enquires for the scheme should be made to opportunities@ipswich.gov.uk
- The applicant will need to complete the application form and provide supporting documentation, this should include (where appropriate):
 - Supporting Information
 - 3 months bank statements, showing availability of match funds
 - Schedule of proposed works
 - Quotes for the proposed works and your justification for not choosing the lowest quote (if applicable)
 - Planning/Licencing/Environmental Health consents/details – copy of permissions if applicable
 - Copy of tenancy (if tenant) and copy of written consent for the works to be carried out by the landlord or owner of the building
 - Photographs showing the current front/side elevations and internal images of your shop/business
 - Visuals of proposed alterations
 - VAT declaration
 - A business plan (indicating type of business and products/services offered, number of staff to be employed, and brief marketing plan including target customer base) (if applicable)

Decision Process

Applications will be considered by a small panel who will meet once a month and a decision will be made on your application at the next possible meeting, unless further information is required from you. All grant offers will be made in writing. If your project requires planning permission and your grant is approved we will write to you making an in-principle offer of funding, we will then issue a formal grant offer

letter as soon as permission is granted. Full details of the conditions that apply to the grant will be set out in the grant offer letter.

All grants will be conditional on you securing appropriate planning consent. The scheme operates independently of the planning process and any offer of a grant does not imply that planning consent will be granted.

Grant Conditions:

- The business must be located within Ipswich Borough
- Grants are discretionary and Ipswich 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
- The applicant must hold a business bank account (a 'trading as' account is acceptable)
- The applicant must have all the necessary permissions and licenses to operate the business or make changes to the premises (e.g. changes to signage or shop frontage decoration may need planning consent)
- The applicant must give consent for Ipswich Borough Council to involve the business in publicity e.g. press releases and photographs
- The business must have the ability to match fund the grant
- The applicant must not have any other outstanding debts payable to Ipswich Borough Council
- All grant decisions are at the discretion of the Chief Executive and grant panel
- All applications will be assessed on the criteria and priorities of the scheme
- All the necessary statutory approvals and legal requirement must be complied with before grants can be claimed.
- The grant is repayable should any of the conditions be breached or if the project is not implemented in full
- Grants will be limited to one per business
- The applicant/business needs to be financially solvent
- You will be required to maintain the property to a satisfactory standard for a minimum of five years.



Offer of the Grant

An offer of grant must be accepted within 15 working days of receipt of the offer letter by returning a copy of the offer of grant letter signed by the applicant. After this date the offer will be automatically withdrawn. The applicant will then have to re-apply if they still wish to proceed after this date.

Payment of Grant

- The grant will be paid in arrears on proof of payment and production of relevant invoices that meet the set criteria, invoices dated before the date of the offer letter will not be eligible for payment
- The applicant must submit the claim (including receipted invoices) 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
- If the actual costs are less than those outlined in the application and agreed in the offer letter, payment will be restricted to the actual amount in accordance with the receipted invoices
- If the costs of the proposed project exceed the maximum grant awarded as agreed in the offer letter, Ipswich Borough Council is not obliged to increase the grant amount.
- Payment of the grant will be made into the applicant's business bank account (or 'trading as' account) via BACS



Repayment of Grant

Ipswich Borough Council reserves the right to recover all or part of the grant it has provided if:

- The business is sold or ceases to trade for whatever reason within a 6 month period from receipt of the grant
- The business relocates outside the boundaries of Ipswich Borough Council within a 6 month period from receipt of the grant
- Information provided in the application form or other correspondence is found to be substantially incorrect, misleading or incomplete.