

**Okehampton Town Council
Policy & Resources Committee 11th March 2024
Meeting Report**

Date:	4 th March 2024
Name:	Emma James

6.2 Town Centre Initiative - To consider and resolve to approve, in principle with policy to follow, setting aside remaining grant budget funds amounting to £2,895.81, or as remains at year end, for the purpose of creating an additional grant scheme in 2024/25 for application by town centre businesses to assist with front elevation exterior decoration/improvement. Supporting the economy and a public realm project within DCC's Regeneration Scheme.

The idea for this initiative has come from a news article, extract below, and could be a way for OTC to support the business community and economy:

Businesses have praised a council for initiatives to help support them and boost trade.

Ottery St Mary Town Council introduced a grants scheme offering up to £500 to repaint and update shop fronts, along with late night shopping, Christmas events, and a Visit Ottery campaign project.

Businesses said the shop fronts project had helped boost footfall.

The deputy mayor said the town council was doing "everything it can" to help.

Earlier this year, the South West Business Council said **one in five shops were empty across the region** and 1,800 premises closed in 2022.

The town centre has had five shops open in recent months, the town council said.

Nicholas Scott, from grocers Rabbit and Co, said the town council had been very supportive.

He said: "Primarily one of the biggest things for us was when we expanded into this shop here, they contributed to the exterior decoration, helping us make the shop front look nice."