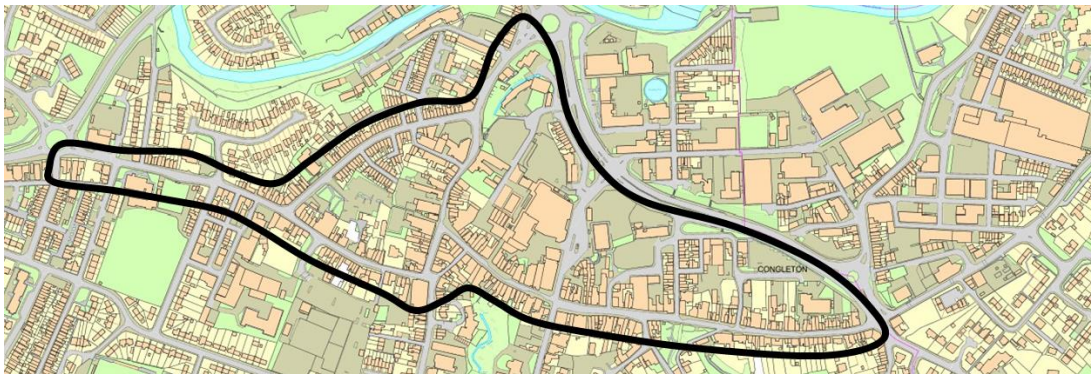


**CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL**  
**COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES**

<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	<b>Finance &amp; Policy</b>		
<b>MEETING DATE AND TIME</b>	<b>30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 - 7.00pm</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Town Hall</b>
<b>REPORT FROM</b>	<b>Martha Hayes, Town Centre and Events Officer</b>		
<b>AGENDA ITEM</b>	<b>14</b>		
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	<b>First Floor Improvements Grant</b>		
<b>BACKGROUND</b>	<p>In April 2020 a Regeneration Working Group was set-up to help Congleton businesses, get back on their feet and recover from the pandemic. In this time the working group has helped by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicated with the local business owners predominantly in the Town Centre with the latest grant funding information.</li> <li>• Initiated a Town Centre tidy, including a deep cleanse of the street and its furniture.</li> <li>• Added bunting and festoon lighting to make the Town Centre more welcoming.</li> <li>• Worked with Cushman and Wakefield, consultants employed by Cheshire East Council on future plans for the vitality of Congleton.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, the Congleton In Bloom Working Group has sponsored two years' worth of free hanging baskets and the Christmas group have sponsored two years of free small Christmas trees.</p> <p>Cllr Russell Chadwick, Chair of the Regeneration Working Group, would like to incentivise landlords and businesses to make improvements to the first floors of the Town Centre properties.</p> <p>The Town Council offered a shop front improvement grant scheme in 2017 which helped 10 properties improve their ground floor frontage. The idea would be to reintroduce this scheme, but open it up to include first floor maintenance.</p> <p>Higher quality shop frontages will make the area feel more welcoming to the local residents and visitors, improve the image and contribute towards a stronger sense of identity.</p>		
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	<p>To agree funding which will provide a grant support scheme for minor repairs and enhancement to the frontages of independent shop premises in Congleton Town Centre. The First Floor Improvement Scheme aims to improve the visual impact of the Town Centre.</p> <p><b>Congleton Town Council to offer a grant of up to 50% of eligible costs up to a maximum of £1,000 grant per property.</b></p> <p>Works that will be funded include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exterior repainting of timber or render.</li> <li>• Minor alterations e.g. replacement of doors, windows, fascia, masonry, rainwater goods.</li> <li>• New/ replacement high quality signage.</li> <li>• New/ replacement high quality awnings</li> <li>• Other physical works which improve the visual aspect of the property frontage, can be considered.</li> <li>• Related costs such as scaffolding, planning application fees, professional fees etc.</li> </ul>		

	<p>All works should be undertaken post approval of a grant principle.</p> <p>All works to be carried out to a high standard. Checks will be made by Congleton Town Council to ensure that works have been carried out in accordance with the details in the application documentation and to a high standard.</p> <p>** The scheme will not fund routine maintenance or internal works.</p>
<b>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	For £10,000 to be made available.
<b>EQUALITY CONSIDERATIONS</b>	<p>The scheme would be open to all independent businesses in the Town Centre, occupied or vacant. An independent shop can be part of a chain of no more than 5 shops, or a franchise that is run as your own business. The applicant must be able to fund the works in the first instance as the grant will be paid upon receipt of proof of payment. Works to be implemented within a 12-month period of being granted the funds.</p> <p>They will be made aware of this grant scheme, the map below indicates the cut-off area of what businesses can apply. Same boundary as 2017:</p> 
<b>DECISION REQUESTED</b>	To agree the proposal and approve a budget code for this grant scheme, and in accordance with our Financial Regulations recommend this to Council on 21 <sup>st</sup> October for approval.