



**TONBRIDGE & MALLING
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Nicolas Heslop
Leader of The Council
**Cabinet Member for
Economic Regeneration**
**Borough Councillor
for Cage Green Ward**

Mrs Trudy Dean
Chairman
West Malling Parish Council
9 High Street
West Malling
Kent ME19 6QH

7 June 2016

Dear Trudy,

HIGH STREET INNOVATION FUND – WEST MALLING

You may be aware of the High Street Innovation Fund that the Borough Council received from national Government in the 2012/13 financial year to support retail centres across the Borough.

At a meeting of the Borough Council's Economic Regeneration Advisory Board held on 17 July 2013, members resolved to engage five trading groups with the aim of supporting their local centres. All five were in the north of the Borough. They were Borough Green Chamber of Commerce, Snodland Chamber of Commerce, Martin Square Traders Association, West Malling Chamber of Commerce/Town Malling Day Ltd and Wrotham Traders.

Each centre was offered a grant of £7,500 and local traders were encouraged to put forward their project proposals for how this funding could best be spent.

John Balcombe, who held the economic regeneration portfolio at the Borough Council and Mark Raymond, the Borough Council's Corporate Services Manager met with the Chamber of Commerce soon after the allocation was agreed in September 2013.

When Jane Marshall was its Chairman, the Chamber was developing ideas about a Town business directory and promotional website. However, when she stepped down, there was no one to take this forward and I understand the Parish Council stepped in and decided to invest the grant on new directional signing.

The Borough Council has paid the grant out based on quotes back in April 2014, and has contacted the Parish Council subsequently for an update on progress, but to date, nothing seems to have been implemented.

I am very concerned that nearly three years after the grant was made available to West Malling, we have not seen evidence of the funding being utilised. I am very keen to understand what plans the Parish Council has to make use of the grant and the timescales for doing so.

Yours sincerely,

Nicolas Heslop