

St James Reordering Project Grant Application (Executive Decision)

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Purpose of the Report

To consider funding towards the cost of the reordering/refurbishment of St James Church.

Public Interest

Community grants are available in each area to voluntary and charitable organisations, not-for-profit groups, Parish or Town councils and other organisations that benefit the wider community. Applications are encouraged that meet a clearly identified local need.

Recommendation

That members consider this application for up to £5,000 towards the reordering/refurbishment of St James Church, Yeovil from the community grants budget.

Background

St James Church is situated on Preston Road and covers the old parish of Preston Plucknett, which includes approximately 15,000 people in the area between Thorne Lane, Western Avenue, Preston Road and Ilchester Road. However, the church groups and premises are open to all, regardless of where they live.

St James Church is a registered charity, of which the church council (PCC) are Trustees. The group runs and maintains the premises which are used by around 5,000 people. This includes around 3,500 attending events for Christmas, seasonal festivals, family celebrations, and educational visits.

The group also run activities for parents, children, young people, senior citizens and relationship support, accessed by over 500 members of the community and have hosted groups for addiction recovery, uniformed organisations, local community groups and a community choir.

The group also support and promote volunteering for other charity and community causes including school governors, Street Pastors, hospital patient support, debt support and the food bank.

Project

The project is to refit the interior of St. James Church to make it suitable for community use, and to serve the needs of a growing church in an expanding area of Yeovil.

The current church interior dates to 1860, when Preston Plucknett was a village of 250-300 people. The fixed pews are uncomfortable, restrict the seating capacity, and give no flexibility for different layouts. Though the church building is beautiful, the heating and

lighting are inadequate (only heating to 10 degrees above the outside temperature), and accessibility is poor.

The re-ordering plan will replace the current interior with underfloor heating, flexible comfortable seats, a raised dais for performances and shows, and new lighting, AV, Wifi and hearing loop facilities. The changes will make the building usable all year round, by community and church groups, with a seating capacity of 130 in a flexible layout.

St. James has a smaller church room which is used by a wide range of community groups including AA, Inspire2Achieve, parent and toddler, young people, uniformed organisations, senior citizens social groups, a retirement association, quilting and 'knit and natter'.

However, the group now has limited availability and has been forced to turn away many potential users. Making the church available and usable to community groups would provide a much-needed community asset. It would also give the church a much better facility for the current community groups and events that it runs. The group has consulted with user groups, church members and the community and the results have shown consistent support for these plans.

The project is run by a task group from St. James' who have a range of expertise in project management, buildings, surveying, finance and engineering. The project works will be contracted to a local builder and be overseen by an architect. Once completed, bookings will be managed by volunteers from the church, a system which currently works well for the church room, and enables a wide range of community users.

The project has already been promoted through social media, leaflet drops, parish council newsletters and the local press. After completion, information will go out through a variety of means: leaflet drop, parish council newsletter, social media, local press, 'open days' and opening events, and word of mouth.

Ongoing costs of using the building will be met through hire fees, as presently happens in the church room. Longer-term maintenance will be funded by the church through its members, as at present.

Assessment Scoring

Below is the summary table from the grant assessment form. It is recommended that funding is only awarded to projects scoring 22 points or more.

Category	Score	Maximum score
A Eligibility	Y	
B Equalities Impact	5	7
C Evidence of Need	5	5
D Capacity of Organisation	14	15
E Financial need	6	7
F Innovation	1	3
<i>Grand Total</i>	31	37

Funding Breakdown

Funding Sources	% Funding of the Total Project Cost	Amount of Funding (£)	Status
Parish and Town Councils	1.5	5,000	Pending
Own Funds	40	138,000	Secured
Joseph Rank Trust	7.2	25,000	Secured
Clarks Foundation	5.8	20,000	Secured
Diocese of Bath and Wells	7.2	25,000	Secured
Various other grants	19.1	66,000	Some still pending
Fundraising	17.7	61,000	Pending
SSDC Area South Grants	1.5	5,000	This application
Total Project Cost	100%	345,000	

There are also indirect costs that are covered through the donation of time by members of the church and community and through the promotional support given by local media and community groups.

Financial Implications

The uncommitted 2016/17 community grants budget stands at £11,230. If members agree this award of £5,000, it will leave £6,230 in the budget.

Grant Conditions

The grant would be subject to all the standard grant conditions.

The grant offer would be made based on the information provided in the application form and would represent up to 1.5% of the total project costs (the final payment may be reduced if the costs of the total project are less than originally anticipated, however payment will not exceed the grant amount approved at committee).

Corporate Priority Implications

Health and Communities

To build healthy, self reliant, active communities we will:

- Help people to live well by enabling quality cultural, leisure, play, sport and healthy lifestyles facilities and activities.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

The new heating and lighting will be more efficient and therefore help reduce carbon emissions.

Equality and Diversity Implications

The project will improve the accessibility of the building. An access audit has recently been undertaken and the project will help to improve a number of the issues raised, for example the current fixed pews do not offer enough space for two wheelchair users to pass each other, the seating is uncomfortable and not flexible for those with mobility issues and the lighting and hearing loops will be improved as part of the project to assist people with visual or hearing impairments.

Background Papers

None