

## **Grant to Iminster Warehouse Theatre Expansion Appeal (Executive Decision)**

*Strategic Director: Martin Woods, Service Delivery*  
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### **Purpose of the Report**

Councillors are asked to consider a grant of £12,500 towards the capital purchase of a building next to the existing theatre, as part of the theatre's extension programme.

### **Public Interest**

Iminster Warehouse Theatre, comprising Iminster Entertainments Society and Iminster Youth Theatre, has applied for financial assistance from the Area West community grants programme. The organisation has a once in a lifetime opportunity to purchase the building adjoining the existing theatre; this will allow them to extend their facilities and services to the local community.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that councillors award a grant of £12,500 to Iminster Warehouse Theatre, the grant to be allocated from the Area West capital programme subject to SSDC standard conditions for community grants (appendix A) and the following special conditions:

- Establish and maintain a "sinking fund" to support future replacement of the building / facility as grant funding is only awarded on a one-off basis.
- Use the SSDC Building Control service where buildings regulations are required.
- Incorporate disabled access and provide an access statement where relevant.
- In the event of a sale of building within 5 years, the full financial funding is to be paid back to the District Council.
- Town Council support and a financial contribution is secured.

### **Application Details**

Name of applicant	Iminster Warehouse Theatre including Iminster Entertainments Society and Iminster Youth Theatre
Project	Iminster Warehouse Theatre Expansion Appeal
Total project cost	£125,000
Amount requested from SSDC	£12,500 (10%)
Recommended special conditions	As above
Application assessed by	Debbie Haines, Deputy Community Office Support Manager

### **Community Grants Assessment Score**

The table below shows the grant scoring for this application. In order to be considered for SSDC funding under the Community Grants policies, applications need to meet the minimum score of 22.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Actual Score</b>	<b>Maximum score possible</b>
A Eligibility	Y	Y
B Equalities Impact	3	7
C Need for project	4	5
D Capacity of Organisation	12	15
E Financial need	6	7
F Innovation	3	3
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>37</b>

## **Background**

Ilminster Warehouse Theatre is a highly valued asset amongst the community of Ilminster and the surrounding villages. It is used by the Ilminster Entertainments Society and Youth Theatre, the Thursday group - a weekly activity, enjoyed in the main by retired people, the Cinema at the Warehouse; the Ile Flower Club and other social events. It is also used by local schools also for their school productions and for civic social occasions.

The Warehouse Theatre, located within the town centre offers more than 80 performances a year and is run entirely by its body of over 200 volunteers. The youth theatre currently provides regular weekly classes for 76 children, with a further 15 children on the waiting list. Cost for participation is kept to a minimum to encourage as many children as possible to take part. The theatre is funded through ticket sales and bar/café income, lettings to other groups and private hire and membership fees.

This year marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ilminster Entertainments Society and 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the theatre was opened, having been converted from a former fruit and vegetable depot into the Warehouse Theatre.

## **Parish Information**

Parish*	Ilminster
Parish Population*	5808
No. of dwellings*	2716

\*Taken from the 2011 census profile

## **The project**

An opportunity has arisen to purchase a building adjacent to the existing Theatre, which would provide much needed additional space. However, the offer is time limited with purchase being necessary by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, at which time the property would be put to the open market.

They have convened a Development Planning Committee, drawing on the expertise of their volunteers, who will work with architects on the design and build of the project. By reconfiguring the combined properties, improvements could be made to the changing rooms, storage for props and costumes, reception and refreshments areas, rehearsal and performance space, particularly for use by the Youth Theatre. The performing arts studio will also provide a more suitable space for a wide range of community uses and functions. The design will also consider improved access for disabled patrons and practitioners.

## Local Support / evidence of need

Since the launch of the campaign in June 2017 the fundraising committee have co-ordinated many events and appeals and have raised over £36,000 through fundraising, community donations and have a 'sponsor a seat' or 'buy a brick campaigns'. Approximately 50% of the overall funding raised to date has been from the wider local community support for the project, which highlights both the success of the fundraising committee's work to promote the appeal and the strong desire within the local community to see the project delivered. Once the building is in their ownership, the membership will continue their fundraising endeavours to carry out the necessary refurbishment plans.

Non-financial support will consist of voluntary effort in supporting and continuing to raise funds to deliver the overall project.

Ilminster Town Council is due to consider an application for funding towards the project after publication of the Area West Committee agenda. A verbal update on the outcome will be given at the meeting.

## Project Costs

Purchase price of building	£125,000
<b>Total project cost</b>	<b>£125,000</b>

## Funding Plan

Funding Source	Funds secured	% of Total cost	Status
Own Funds (reserves)	£30,000	24%	Secured
Fundraising activities and community donations	£36,295	29%	Secured
Youth Social Action Fund	£1,165	1%	Secured
Gooch Charitable Foundation	£20,000	16%	Secured
Tesco Bags for Help	£2,000	2%	Secured
Fairfield Trust	£15,000	12%	Secured
Fundraising / interest free loans	£8,040	6%	Pending
Amount requested from SSDC	£12,500	10%	To be agreed
<b>Total</b>	<b>£125,000</b>	<b>100%</b>	

There is currently a shortfall of £8,040 however there are 3 fundraising events planned before 31<sup>st</sup> March deadline. The Youth Theatre is performing short plays entitled 'Playing with Shakespeare', the Ilminster Entertainments Society is putting on 2 performances all of which will raise funds through ticket sales and raffles. Small donations through the 'sponsor a seat' and 'buy a brick' appeal are also ongoing.

It is anticipated that the shortfall will be met by 31<sup>st</sup> March but, if not, several theatre members are prepared to offer personal, interest free loans to the theatre of up to £1,000 each to underwrite the deficit.

## Previous grants

None

Ilminster Entertainment Society receives 90% Business Rate Relief as a charity

## **Consents and permissions**

The building will require planning permission for change of use. Pre-application advice from SSDC planning department indicates that change of use would be acceptable with considerations such as the impact of noise being a concern. They confirm that this would need to be determined through the proper planning process.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

This application is for £12,500 representing 10% of the project cost. The group has shown their own commitment and that of the wider community to the current facility and this project. The group has a proven track record in delivering capital projects for the community. It is recommended that this application for £12,500 is supported subject to a town council contribution.

## **Financial Implications**

There is an uncommitted balance of £43,707 available in the Area West capital programme. If the recommended grant of £12,500 is awarded, £31,207 will remain unallocated for future years.

## **Council Plan Implications**

The project supports:

### **Our Vision for South Somerset**

A place where businesses flourish, communities are safe, vibrant and healthy; where residents enjoy good housing, leisure, cultural and sporting activities

### **Economy**

- Capitalise on our high quality culture, leisure and tourism opportunities to bring people to South Somerset.

### **Health and Communities**

- Support communities so that they can identify their needs and develop local solutions.
- Help people to live well by enabling quality cultural, leisure, play, sport & healthy lifestyle facilities & activities.

## **Area West Development Plan Implications**

**Priority 4 - Health & Wellbeing** of individuals - Supporting community groups and the voluntary sector to work with statutory providers to improve access to advice, services, social activities, with an emphasis on vulnerable individuals and groups– e.g. LIC's, youth support, activities for older people, making better use of halls, digital inclusion skills etc.

## **Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications**

More public events in the town facilitated by an improved building offer may reduce the need for villagers to travel further afield.

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

Improvements will provide the town with a facility that meets the current standards for accessibility.

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## Appendix A

### Standard conditions applying to all Community Grants.

This grant offer is made based on the information provided in the application form and represents 10 % of the total project costs. The grant will be reduced if the costs of the total project are less than originally anticipated. Phased payments may be made in exceptional circumstances (e.g. to help with cash-flow for a larger building project) and are subject to agreement.

The applicant agrees to: -

- Notify SSDC if there is a material change to the information provided in the application.
- Start the project within six months of this grant offer and notify SSDC of any changes to the project or start date as soon as possible.
- Confirm that all other funding sources have been secured if this was not already in place at the time of the application and before starting the project.
- Acknowledge SSDC assistance towards the project in any relevant publicity about the project (e.g. leaflets, posters, websites, and promotional materials) and on any permanent acknowledgement (e.g. plaques, signs etc).
- Work in conjunction with SSDC officers to monitor and share the success of the project and the benefits to the community resulting from SSDC's contribution to the project.
- Provide a project update and/or supply before and after photos if requested.
- Supply receipted invoices or receipts which provide evidence of the **full** cost of the project so that the grant can be released.

### Standard conditions applying to buildings, facilities and equipment

- Establish and maintain a "sinking fund" to support future replacement of the building / facility / equipment as grant funding is only awarded on a one-off basis.
- Use the SSDC Building Control service where buildings regulations are required.
- Use a contractor selected from the SSDC approved list for play area facilities.
- Incorporate disabled access and provide an access statement where relevant.

### Special conditions

Access Review to help with future improvements.