

Merriott Village Hall (Executive Decision)

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Purpose of the Report

For members to consider a grant for financial assistance to replace windows, construct a new entrance and create a terrace area at Merriott Village Hall.

Public Interest

Merriott Village Hall Committee want to make improvements to the building which will make it more energy efficient, improve the access into the hall and create an outside seating area overlooking the recreation field.

Recommendation

That Members support a grant of £11,000 to be awarded to Merriott Village Hall Committee towards their enhancement works.

Background

Merriott Village Hall is run by a long established charitable trust. The hall is over 90 years old and located next to the recreation ground, which it shares a car park with. The hall is used regularly for a number of activities including majorettes, dog training, badminton, line dancing, brownies and short mat bowls. In addition it's used for a variety of village events and is booked out by residents for private functions such as parties and weddings.

Over the years the village hall committee have spent time and money maintaining and updating the building to ensure it meets the requirements of groups and residents in and around the village.

New entrance, windows and terrace seating area

An opportunity has now arisen to make considerable improvements to the hall, which will not only create a better entrance into the building, but will also allow for the construction of an outdoor seating area overlooking the adjacent playing field.

To the rear of the village hall is a redundant storage building which is owned by the parish council. The building is located just a couple of metres from the back of the village hall and creates a barrier between the hall and the car park. The parish council have decided to demolish the building, so they can create more space in the car park. The demolition of the building will open up the back of the village hall.

Currently the rear of the village hall has 5 windows that look out onto a small strip of wasteland situated between the hall and the redundant building. These 5 windows, like the rest of the windows in the building (14 in total), are old, draughty and in poor condition. The committee would like to replace 13 of the windows with double glazed plastic ones, which will improve the insulation. They then want to replace one of the rear facing windows with a door, thus creating a new entrance from the car park side of the building.

The new entrance will be beneficial to everyone who drives to the village hall, but in particular anyone with mobility difficulties will find it will greatly improve their access into the building. A recent audit of village halls in South Somerset carried out by Access for All, highlighted that it was 30 metres from the rear car park to the front entrance of the hall. The audit stated that dropping people off at the front of the building was not a safe option due to the traffic calming scheme located on the highway in front of the building. Creating a new rear entrance will provide a safer and more convenient entry point into the village hall for anyone arriving by car.

The Village Hall Committee have consulted with Access to All about this proposal and have incorporated their advice into the project to ensure that the new rear entrance can be accessed via a ramp of the appropriate width and gradient.

As well as creating a new entrance the village hall committee would like to spruce up the small strip of land behind the village hall. Currently the land is very scruffy with a large redundant water tank taking up some of the space. The committee propose to lay down some paving slabs on part of the land, which will allow tables and chairs to be placed outside when the weather allows. The rest of the land will be covered with a membrane and gravelled to ensure the area is kept tidy and weed free. Metal railings with a gate will be erected to separate the village halls outside space from the car park.

This project will have a number of considerable benefits for Merriott Village Hall:

- Firstly the new double glazed windows and door will improve the insulation of the building and help make it more energy efficient.
- Secondly, opening up the back of the village hall and creating a terrace area where people can sit will help make the hall more attractive to potential bookers. Being able to see the recreation ground from both the newly created terrace and from inside the hall will make the outlook more attractive and also appeal to people with children that may wish to play on the recreation field.
- Thirdly, the new entrance will mean it is safer and more convenient for people accessing the village hall from the car park, especially anyone using a wheelchair and parents with small children in prams.

Finance

The cost of the project is outlined below:

Item / activity	Cost (£)
Demolition of the old building	876
Replace 14 windows & 1 window with a door	10,100
External works including paving, ramp, repointing wall, lighting and installation of membrane	10,300
New metal railings and gate	1,614
TOTAL	£22,890

The Village Hall Committee proposes to fund the scheme in the following way:

Funding source	Status	Amount
Parish council	Secured	876
Village hall committee's own funds	Secured	2000
Garfield Weston Foundation	Submitted awaiting decision	4000

SSDC	Awaiting decision	11,000
		£17,876
Section 106 (Broadway Farm)	Secured	To be agreed
Funding Shortfall		£5,014

The Village Hall Committee has been allocated £10,206.53 in Section 106 contributions from the Broadway Farm development and the trigger point for those funds to be released has been reached. However, it should be noted that the Village Hall Committee have 2 other projects planned to improve the hall, these are upgrading the men's toilets and installing a new kitchen. As a result the Village Hall Committee have allocated the balance from the S106 funds to part fund the future planned improvements.

The Neighbourhood Development Officer has assessed the grant application and has given it the following score.

Category	Maximum score	Score
A Eligibility	Y/N	Yes
B Equalities Impact	7	7
C Need for Project	5	4
D Capacity of Organisation	15	14
E Financial need	7	4
F Innovation	3	3
Total	37	32

Councillor Paul Maxwell, the Ward Member, has been consulted and is in support of the project, and has stated

I wholeheartedly support this application as this will enhance an extremely important and popular venue and facility in Merriott. The Hall is used by many and various groups and organisations from Merriott and is a thriving and well run hub in the Village. The new entrance and outdoor seating area will be a major improvement and help to compliment the customers enjoyment of the venue.

Financial Implications

The grant of £11,000 can be found from Area West Capital budget.

Council Plan Implications

Supporting this project helps address Focus 4 of the SSDC Council Plan:

- Health & Communities - Will enhance existing hall by improving access and providing outdoor seating area.

Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications

The works include replacing old windows with new double glazed windows and a door, which will improve the insulation and energy efficiency of the building.

Equality and Diversity Implications

The new entrance will improve access into the building for anyone using a wheelchair.

Background papers: Community Grant Criteria
