

Area North Committee – 27th February 2008

11. Area North Community Grants (Executive Decision)

Head of Service: Charlotte Jones, Head of Area Development (North)
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Purpose of the Report

To seek approval for the allocation of financial support to the refurbishment and redevelopment of the Martock Market House to provide a new Community and Information Centre, as a key project from within the Martock Community Plan.

As this is grant for over £12,500, a capital appraisal for this project is included in Appendix A

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members approve the allocation of £25,000 to Martock Parish Council towards the Martock Community Office (Market House redevelopment) project; from the Area North Capital Programme allocation for Martock; subject to the standard conditions for SSDC Community Grants.

Background

The Martock Area Community Plan was updated and re-published in 2007, fully supported by the Market and Coastal Towns Association and SSDC. Its aim is to deliver the Martock Vision: “to work together to build a safe, vibrant, fully inclusive and thriving community in which we are all proud to live and work”.

The Martock Community Planning Partnership is constituted and operating well, comprising a range of local groups and representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors, who are working together to coordinate the delivery of 34 projects over the next 5 years. This partnership, has created a positive and participative atmosphere, with a number of visible and tangible benefits - for example a reduction in anti-social behaviour, greater use of the recreation field, more sporting activities, greater involvement by young people and businesses in local projects.

Already completed projects include: full-time youth worker employed as a pilot project; play area improvements; Youth Parish Council; youth centre refurbishment; and information boards. Others well underway include: local policing contract; town centre enhancement; new community centre.

The Area North Capital Programme includes an in principle allocation to key capital projects from the Martock Community Plan, which fit with the SSDC corporate plan objectives.

The Martock Market House

The Martock Market House, is the property of Martock Parish Council, and is an 18th century municipal building (Grade 2), with a long history of community use. Standing at

the heart of the village, now a sizable town of nearly 5,000 residents, it is considered by many as the focal point of the village centre.

This project is to restore and alter this prime community facility, currently heavily under-utilised, converting it to a modern Community Office and Information Centre, catering for both residents and visitors.

This application for funding is for phase 1 of a two phase project. Phase 1 includes alterations to the ground floor layout to provide an office and lift to the upper floor, refurbishment of the public toilets, and access improvements to the upper floor meeting room. Phase 2 is subject to a Heritage Lottery bid. If this is unsuccessful phase 1 is a stand alone project.

Why is this project needed?

Unlike Somerton and Langport, Martock has no Community Office, and so face to face access to services is limited. A modern Community Office and Information Centre is planned, locally owned and managed, with ICT links and surgery type office space, staffed by the parish clerk (full time) and local volunteers.

A feasibility study was undertaken in early 2007, and a public consultation event in March, followed by presentation of the outcomes and plans in April. The proposed use and benefits have received enthusiastic public response, with a range of service providers including Yeovil College, Age Concern and Connexions indicating future use.

This project was started following the 2003-04 community consultation with the following results:

- 57% wanted a local information point and 31% a tourist information point
- 72% wanted more information on local heritage and walks
- 31% were not aware of the local Police Post, located at the village edge.
- 42% wanted local employment information

Technical development

Detailed costs through architects plans have been assessed, and two-stage selective process completed, widely used in the construction industry, completed. An initial conservation statement has been prepared, with full involvement of the Councils Conservation team. This involved 10 contractors expressing interest, and five invited to interview. Two contractors submitted detailed costs. Detailed plans and the tender report from a chartered surveyor have been submitted. The project has full planning and listed building consent and the selected contractor has previous experience of restoring historic buildings.

Costs and funding

The cost of the project is estimated to be £122,400. Martock Parish Council has secured a £50,000 contribution from the Somerset Rural Renaissance Programme, and is itself contributing £45,000.

Martock Parish Council recently agreed with SSDC to take back the lease of the Martock Public Toilets, as part of a 'spend to save' agreement. The public toilets are located in part of the ground floor of the Market House. Martock Parish Council will be meeting all ongoing revenue costs of the whole building.

Summary

This project to create a new Community Office and Information Centre for Martock, represents an important investment into a local community building, and is key to extending and enhancing local access to services. As a key project in the Martock Community Plan, it is recommended for support.

A capital appraisal for this project is included in Appendix A.

Implications for Corporate Priorities

- 8** - Work in partnership with the public and private sector in developing and delivery of the Market Town Vision
- 11** – Work in partnership with others to improve the health prospects for all
- 16** - Maintain above 80% the people satisfied with their neighbours as a place to live

Other Implications

This project is one of 34 within the Martock Area Community Plan.

Financial Implications

The current Area North Capital Programme includes an in principle allocation of £50,000 towards the Martock Community Plan; approving this application for £25,000 will leave a balance of £25,000.

Background Papers: *Grant application file; Martock Community Plan*
