

Area North Committee – 23 October 2013

8. Community Grant to Robert Sewers Village Hall, Curry Rivel (Executive Decision)

Strategic Director: Rina Singh, Place and Performance
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Purpose of the Report

Councillors are asked to consider awarding a community grant for £8,000 towards the cost of an extension to the entrance lobby at Robert Sewers Village Hall, Curry Rivel.

Public Interest

The management committee of the Robert Sewers Village Hall, Curry Rivel has applied for a community grant towards physical improvements to the hall. The application has been assessed by the Neighbourhood Development Officer who has submitted this report to allow the Area North Committee to make an informed decision on the application.

Recommendation

It is recommended that councillors award a grant of £8,000 to the Robert Sewers Hall, Curry Rivel, towards the cost of an extension to the entrance lobby, to be allocated from the Area North capital programme (Local Priority Schemes), subject to SSDC standard conditions for community grants (appendix A).

Application Details

Name of applicant	Robert Sewers village hall management committee
Project	Extension to entrance lobby
Project description	To extend the village hall entrance lobby to improve the flow of people through the hall and enhance the kitchen and bar area
Total project cost	£28,775
Amount requested from SSDC	£8,000 (28%)
Recommended special conditions	None - SSDC standard grant conditions
Application assessed by	Sara Kelly, Neighbourhood Development Officer (North)

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.

Category	Actual Score	Maximum score possible
A Eligibility	Y	
B Target groups	5	7
C Project	4	5
D Capacity of organisation	12	15
E Financial need	5	7
F Innovation	1	3
Grand Total	27	37

Background

Curry Rivel has over 2200 residents and is one of the largest villages in South Somerset.

The Robert Sewers village hall was built in 1935 using a legacy from local resident Robert Sewers. It is a registered charity operating under the Charity Commission's model village hall trust scheme. The committee successfully applied for Hallmark 1 status in 2012 (an accreditation scheme for the management of community buildings operated by the Community Council for Somerset).

Through considerable public consultation since 2011, including a public meeting and surveys, the management committee have agreed the following objectives.

- To maintain and update the fabric of the building to make it warm and inviting for users whilst being more environmentally efficient.
- To make the hall more accessible to users via promotion, booking and web site improvements.
- The village hall committee to actively put on events to encourage use and raise funds for the village hall.
- To enhance the overall user experience and encourage hall usage over the next three years to enable the hall to be self-sufficient and establish a reserve fund for any future improvements.

In order to achieve these objectives, the management committee produced a three stage business plan to improve the facilities at the hall.

The committee identified that a significant amount of the work required for stage one could be done on a voluntary basis and also used the Community Payback service. As a result, the hall has been thoroughly refreshed, including re-decoration and an on-line booking system.

Encouraged by the success of the initial improvements, the committee has started some innovative activities aimed at increasing fundraising to help drive forward the completion of more items contained within the business plan. These activities include booking nationally known figures who are on tour, monthly film evenings with Moviola and regular 'Big Breakfasts'.

How the project was developed

The village survey in 2011 highlighted frustrations with the layout of the entrance area which can become crowded during well attended events especially when refreshments are being served or a bar is operating as part of the event. People waiting for refreshments impede access to toilets and also to the committee room at the back of the

village hall. Access for disabled users can also be problematic. A local architect was asked to redesign the space to give optimum flow of people whilst improving access to the kitchen and unlocking useable space elsewhere in the hall.

Plans were drawn up for an extension to the entrance area and a variety of consultation activities then took place to seek resident's views. The plans were put on public display in the village hall and advertised in the Curry Rivel news and village web site. Regular users of the hall were also consulted. Feedback was very supportive and there is a real sense of willingness to achieve the objectives of the business plan.

Attendance at fundraising events has been good with many people volunteering to help and new friendships being forged.

The Project

This project is part of a programme of improvements which are split into three stages and detailed in the village hall's business plan.

Stage one included improvements to the booking system, re-decoration of the hall and new lighting and heating systems which are more economical and cost effective.

Members may recall that stage one of the improvements was supported by Area North with a grant of £4,500 in June 2012. The work involved in that grant application has not yet been fully completed – on the advice given by the Neighbourhood Development Officer to the management committee. This was to ensure that all stages of the work were carefully planned. The programme of improvements has now been mapped out with dependencies between stages being highlighted. This careful planning will ensure that no abortive work is undertaken and also any advice contained within the recent access review can be acted upon.

This application is for funding towards **stage two** of the programme which will deliver an extension to the entrance area to give optimum flow of people and enhance the kitchen and bar area. This will also improve access for disabled users.

Planning consent has been granted for the extension (13/00919/FUL). Three detailed quotes have been obtained by the management committee and the lowest tender has been selected.

The hall has benefitted from an access review carried out by South Somerset Disability Forum which has supported the management committee's project planning.

Project Costs

Ground works, foundations, drainage	£4,600
Construction and internal alterations	£20,775
Making good externally and adjustments to parking area	£3,400
Total project cost	£28,775

The costs shown above include a 10% contingency.

Funding Plan

Funding Source	Funds Secured
Own funds	£6,000
Curry Rivel Parish Council	£2,400
Awards for All	£10,000
Local organisations (donations)	£500
Total secured	£18,900
Amount requested from SSDC	£8,000*

*This is 28% of the total project cost.

Curry Rivel Parish Council has awarded £2,400 in the current financial year towards this project (8% of the project costs). Whilst this is slightly less than normally preferred, the Parish Council's budget for community grants this year was £3,000 and therefore the amount awarded to the village hall committee represents 80% of their grants budget which shows a very good level of support.

The Future

The village hall management committee aim to significantly increase usage of the hall following the redevelopment work. They have set themselves a challenging target of 50% increase in hall usage and also hope to encourage the development of youth groups.

Enthusiasm is high and the committee have a very active fundraising programme in place.

Following the success of the recent fundraising events, a suggestion came forward from the local community to run an 'open gardens' event in 2014 to showcase individual skills and raise money for both the village hall and the Curry Rivel church.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This grant application is for £8,000, which represents 28% of the project cost. As the project has received a grant of £10,000 from Awards for All, work has to commence by the end of November 2013 and must be completed within one year.

Adding the existing and proposed grants together gives a total SSDC contribution of £12,500 towards a total project value of just under £38,000 – making an average SSDC contribution of 33%. Both the amount and percentage are in keeping with SSDC grants policies.

The committee's efforts are to be congratulated, particularly for their efforts to form a longer term plan of carefully costed staged projects. There has been significant community involvement throughout, including an active fundraising programme with increased use of the hall and new ideas in the pipeline.

It is recommended that this application for £8,000 is supported.

Financial Implications

There is £89,658 available in the Area North Capital programme for Local Priority Schemes. If the recommended grant of £8,000 is awarded, £81,658 will remain in this

allocation for 2013-14 and for future years. In addition there is a further £171,028 unallocated capital for local investment.

Council Plan Implications

Focus Four: Health & Communities: encouraging communities to be healthy, self-reliant and with individuals who are willing to help each other.

Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)

The overall programme of works has aimed to maximise energy efficiency and minimise heating costs.

Equality and Diversity Implications

Local consultation revealed that access for disabled users can be problematic during busy social events at the hall. The committee have been assisted by an access review conducted by the South Somerset Disability Forum. The project design has taken account of the issues raised, and access will be improved.
