

Joint Area Committee – West – 19th August 2009

## 6. Merriott Parish Council Sports Pavilion and Hard Court Enhancement – Request for Additional Funding Support (Executive Decision) (Excepted Business)

*Head of Service:* Steve Joel – Head of Sport, Arts and Leisure  
 Andrew Gillespie – Head of Area Development - West  
*Lead Officer:* Lynda Pincombe, Senior Leisure Facilities Officer  
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### Purpose of the Report

To request that members consider a further funding support request from Merriott Parish Council for the construction of a new four-team changing pavilion and improvement of other ancillary facilities at Merriott Recreation Ground.

### Recommendation

It is recommended that members approve a further capital contribution of £3,000 (as outlined in Option B below) subject to the same terms and conditions as per the previous funding award.

### Background

Members will recall considering funding for this project at Area West Committee in September 2008; £12,500 of capital funding was allocated in principle at this time.

To remind members, the new facilities will predominantly support the activities of Merriott Youth Football Club (currently has 21 teams for players aged 6-18 years old; this equates to nearly 300 young people, although not all teams can regularly play on Merriott pitches), Merriott Rovers FC (has 2 senior teams), Merriott Cricket Club and Crewkerne Cricket Club (Crewkerne on a temporary short term basis only). Within the pavilion, the small social room will be used for parish council meetings and will be available for small community meetings too.

In addition this project will provide an improved floodlit hard court area for use by those wanting to play tennis in the village and for use by the local primary school during the daytime. Winter floodlit football training will also be possible for the first time within the village.

For the information of members, a list of projects within Eggwood ward that have attracted funding support from SSDC in the last three financial years (and current year) is listed in table 1.0 below.

Applicant/Project	Date /Awarding body	Amount Awarded
Merriott Village Hall Plans Group – questionnaire printing	Area West delegated grants budget – Aug 06	£400
Merriott Village Hall – renew kitchen and floor	Area West Committee April 06	£2,000
Merriott Bowls Club – new timber frame bowls pavilion at Merriott Recreation Ground	Area West Committee April 2007	£12,500
Merriott Parish Council – new traditional construction pavilion and ancillary facilities at Merriott Recreation Ground	Area West Committee September 2008	£12,500

Applicant/Project	Date /Awarding body	Amount Awarded
Merriott Bowls Club – BBQ area, patio and garden	Opportunity Crewkerne January 2009	£2,500
Merriott Village Hall Committee – Improvements to heating system	Opportunity Crewkerne January 2009	£5,000
1 <sup>st</sup> Hinton Scout Group – improvements to their storage at Merriott Tithe Barn	Opportunity Crewkerne January 2009	£450
Merriott Village Hall Committee – Energy efficiency improvements	Area West Committee July 2009	£5,200
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£40,550</b>

Table 1.0

In addition, members should note that SSDC's Play and Youth Facilities Team have earmarked £20,000 of Play Builder funding for the enhancement of the play area at Merriott Recreation Ground. Play Builder money was allocated to Somerset County Council via the Department for Children, Schools and Families. In turn Somerset County Council has devolved a proportion of this money to SSDC for the delivery of local play area projects. However, to secure this money, the Parish Council will need to provide approximately £30,000 of match funding.

## Report

Members are now being asked by Merriott Parish Council to consider increasing their original allocation of £12,500 to this project by a further £6,250, in order to help bridge a funding gap in the order of £12,500. A letter from the Parish Council setting out their request is attached at pages 7-8.

As the amount being requested from Area West towards one project now exceeds £12,500, a capital investment appraisal is also attached at pages 9-18. The anticipated project costs and likely sources of funding are detailed within this appraisal.

This project was scored for eligibility in September 2008 and the project exceeds the minimum score required for funding to be considered.

## Current Project Position

The Senior Leisure Facilities Officer and Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture (Cllr. Seal) both attended a meeting with representatives from the Football Foundation, Football Association, Parish Council and football clubs on 1<sup>st</sup> July 09 to discuss the future of this project. It became clear from the meeting, that if stakeholders were able to find a **minimum** of a further £12,500, then a significant offer of funding from the Football Foundation and Football Association was likely to be made to the Parish Council this summer.

The Football Foundation personnel were keen to explore whether the District and County Councils in particular could provide additional funds given the significant investments they had already made in facilities in South Somerset.

The Senior Leisure Facilities Officer acknowledged that the District Council's original contribution of £12,500 was a relatively small contribution in relation to the scale of this project but explained that other significant investments and officer support had also recently been provided to projects in Merriott (see table 1.0 above). Cllr. Seal added that the District Council had a responsibility to support a range of projects across a large geographical area and could only allocate resources from within existing budget limits.

The Senior Leisure Facilities Officer advised Merriott Parish Council that District Council members might be willing to offer a loan to cover the project shortfall. She also offered to provide additional officer time to work with their architect to explore whether project costs could be reduced. A couple of other grant sources were also recommended for further consideration.

A representative from the Youth Football Club made the positive suggestion that if all stakeholders could find an additional £2,000 - £3,000 then the project could be started. It was subsequently resolved that all parties would see what they could do to meet the shortfall and that the Parish Council would provide a progress report to the Football Foundation at the end of July 09.

Since the meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> July, Merriott Parish Council has taken steps to pursue additional contributions from Somerset County Council members but has taken the view that further money should not be taken from their own budgets given the time and scale of contribution already committed and that a large number of residents from outside the parish will also benefit from the project. Cllr Iain Hall (project co-ordinator) from Merriott Parish Council has confirmed that the parish precept was increased a few years ago in order to specifically generate their confirmed contribution of £20,000.

Merriott Youth Football Club has also sought additional monies to bridge the shortfall in funding by applying to the new Community Cashback scheme with some officer support provided by SSDC (£5,000 requested, feedback expected August 09) and have liaised with their local PCSO to look at the option of applying to the Somerset Youth Opportunity Fund, although timescales prohibit an application being progressed at this time.

While Merriott Youth Football Club will be a significant beneficiary of this project, their investment of time and own resources in this project has been outstanding given that all members are volunteers. They have directly raised £20,000 of funding for this project and have been responsible for progressing bids to Sport England (£10,000, for which stage 1 approval has been given) and have recently been working hard to achieve the Football Association Community Club Charter Standard, which is likely to generate £50,000 of funding from the FA. The County Development Manager for the FA has given highest praise for the Club's Community Club development plan, which has now been submitted for approval.

## **Options**

Given that SSDC is also a stakeholder in the project, if members are minded to offer further support to this project, then there are a number of options recommended for consideration:

**Option A** – to provide an additional capital contribution of £6,250 as requested.

**Option B** – to provide an additional capital contribution of £3,000; a proportionate contribution to assist the other key stakeholders to bridge the minimum shortfall of £12,500.

**Option C** – to offer a loan to Merriott Parish Council to help bridge the shortfall on the basis that they have the opportunity to precept to repay a loan.

## **Head of Service Area Development (West) Comments**

With regard to this request for further funding, South Somerset District Council's Constitution states in Part 3 (section 2b) that:

## JAW

“Each joint area committee may undertake all District Council executive functions within their area including:

- 5) Make grants within the guidelines agreed by the District Executive
- 10) Agree expenditure from within budgets delegated to the area committee”

The relevant SSDC Community Grants Policies are:

Policy 5 (Funding and Costs) which states that ... “Up to £12,500 is available for Area grants” and

Policy 17 (Building Facilities and Equipment) which states that ..... “requests for capital funding of over £12,500 are beyond the remit of the Community Grants programme. A Capital Appraisal will be required and referred to the relevant Committee for approval separately”.

In this case Joint Area Committee West is the “relevant Committee”.

Members will be aware that requests for and grant contributions towards the capital costs of community buildings in Area West, including pavilions, are normally dealt with under the limits of the Community Grants programme. This ensures that contributions from your capital budget can be used to fund a wider number of schemes.

The in-principle award of £12,500 to the Merriott Pavilion project by the former Area West Committee in September 2008 followed this practice and enabled the project organisers to continue their fundraising efforts.

The report of the Senior Leisure Facilities Officer indicates the considerable efforts that have been made locally to narrow the funding gap that existed in September 2008. It also explains why, in these exceptional circumstances, a revised award should now be considered.

Rather than revisit the decision taken by the former Area West Committee in September, it would seem both pragmatic and prudent for members to consider a further small capital contribution as recommended.

### **Summary**

Changing facilities are essential to support formal football/cricket provision and given that Merriott Recreation Ground is currently home to 25 junior and senior teams clearly there is a significant need for this project to be progressed as soon as possible. From September 09, the football teams are hiring temporary changing provision, but this is not suitable in the long term.

Merriott Parish Council makes the point in their letter (attached at pages 6-7) that a large number of users of the new facilities will come from outside their village and cite this as a reason why SSDC and SCC should fund the remaining project shortfall. However, it should be noted that while it is estimated (by the Youth Football Club) that only 32% of young people from the junior football teams come from Merriott, this still equates to approximately 100 young people from the parish. In addition, the Youth Football Club estimates that 70% of the football coaches themselves are Merriott parishioners. The other clubs who will benefit from this project also have parishioners playing within their teams although a precise membership breakdown is not available.

It should also be noted that the local school has expressed an interest in using the upgraded hard court facility and that the local PCSO has been discussing, with the Youth

Football Club, the possibility of creating a new youth club based at the pavilion. Therefore it is questionable whether this project “mainly benefits those outside of the village”, as suggested within the Parish Council’s letter.

In the opinion of the assessing officer, this project will deliver a good quality local asset, which will benefit many parishioners.

### **Financial Implications**

If the officer’s recommendation is approved to award a further capital contribution of £3,000, it will leave a balance of £22,000 unallocated Area West capital available until March 2010. In addition there is a further £38,358 capital funding available for 2010/11.

If Option A is approved this would leave £18,750 in the unallocated Area West capital budget until March 2010.

If Option C is approved a loan would be made at the PWLB (Public Works Loan Board) rates currently between 3% and 4% over a period not longer than 10 years. This would enable the loan to be recycled to another group when paid.

### **Implications for Corporate Priorities**

**Corporate Priorities** - The scheme helps to contribute to the Corporate Plan in the following ways:

- Theme 2 – Enhance the environment, address and adapt to climate change
- Theme 3 - Improve the housing, health and well-being of our citizens
- Theme 4 - Ensure safe sustainable and cohesive communities
- 2.9 – Increase resident satisfaction on country parks, open spaces, street cleaning car parks and public toilets.
- 3.20 – Increase children and young people’s satisfaction with parks and play areas and adult participation in sport and active recreation.
- 4.19 - Increase civic participation in the local area

### **Strategy for Sport and Active Leisure in South Somerset 2006-2012**

This project meets the following key objective within the Strategy for Sport and Active Leisure in South Somerset:

- To support the development of new and existing sports clubs to increase participation, improve junior performances and achieve National Governing Body quality accreditation standards.
- The project could also contribute to the Sport, Arts and Leisure team’s aim to achieve a 1% increase in participation year on year and eventually to improve junior performance standards.

## Draft South Somerset Sport and Recreation Built Facilities Assessment Report 2006

This draft report recommends for recreation ground pavilion changing accommodation:

- That there should be 'sufficient, accessible changing accommodation on multi-pitch sites'
- That 'accommodation should be in at least good condition (segregated, well decorated, well maintained, well lit etc.)

**Background Papers:** *Community Grant Application Number AW/08/228*  
*Report to AWC September 2009*  
*Capital Investment Appraisal August 2009*  
*Letter to Andrew Gillespie from Merriott Parish Council dated 8 July 2009*