

Grant to Long Load Village Hall Management Committee (Executive Decision)

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Purpose of the Report

Councillors are asked to consider the awarding of a grant for £5,000 towards the costs of renovation work on Long Load Village Hall and external improvements to the site.

Public Interest

Long Load Village Hall Management Committee has applied for financial assistance from the Area North community grants programme. 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 £5,000 to Long Load Village Hall Management Committee, the grant to be allocated from the Area North capital programme (Local Priority Schemes), subject to SSDC standard conditions for community grants (appendix A) and the following special conditions:

- Access Review to identify future improvements

Application Details

Name of applicant	Long Load VH Management Committee
Project	Long Load VH Renovation and New Land
Total project cost	£40,652
Amount requested from SSDC	£5,000 (12%)
Recommended special conditions	Access review
Application assessed by	Mary Ostler, Neighbourhood Development Officer

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	Y
B Equalities Impact	5	7
C Need for project	5	5
D Capacity of Organisation	13	15
E Financial need	5	7
F Innovation	2	3
Grand Total	30	37

Background

Long Load Village Hall is a Grade II listed building which, until 1960, was the village school. It was purchased for the village in 1965 to be used as the village hall. With the closure of the church and the public house, it is now the only public building in the village and used for a variety of purposes including clubs and meetings.

The hall is run by the Long Load Village Hall Management Committee (VHMC), an unincorporated organisation and registered charity (304576) set up for the maintenance of the fabric of the village Hall and its facilities together with the organisation of, and support for, community activities.

The hall has a single room plus kitchen and toilet facilities and stands on a plot with a small paved area outside. This is not enough to accommodate an event which needs outdoor space. Attempts to use the hall in conjunction with space on other sites for a village fete were not satisfactory as it involved people having to cross a busy road to move between activities. Parking space is also very limited, particularly for people needing easy access to the building. Parking behind the building avoids a steep slope which leads to the accessible entrance.

The need to keep the hall in a good state of repair is particularly important now that it is the only building left in the village for community activities and private social events.

Parish Information

Parish*	Long Load
Parish Population*	332
No. of dwellings*	156

*Taken from the 2011 census profile

The project

The project is in two parts:

Firstly, in the last twelve months successful negotiations have been completed with the owner of the land surrounding the hall for the donation of some land at the back as an amenity area for events, with space for disabled parking. There was no charge for the land. The legal and planning costs of £1,473 to complete the transaction were met by a grant of £1,000 from the Parish Council, with the balance from the VHMC.

To make use of this newly acquired land, expenditure is needed on fencing and gates, a hard base for a storage shed and reinforcement of the grass in the area where parking will be allowed.

Secondly, over the last three of four years it had become evident that expenditure was needed on the fabric of the hall. In particular, the metalwork in the windows is corroding, causing the glass and surrounding stonework to crack. Also the pointing is breaking away from the stone and allowing moisture into the walls, which has caused serious damp in places.

The committee had been looking at options for doing the most urgent work in stages but, following discussion with the District Council, decided that it was best to put together a single project and seek significant external funding.

The resulting project was submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund which asked for the project to be extended to include activities which would widen knowledge of local heritage and make use of voluntary effort.

The overall project therefore now comprises work on the windows, repointing of external walls, rebuilding of a section of boundary wall, internal decoration, and a range of heritage tasks looking at the history of the village and, particularly, of the hall when it was used as the village school.

The result of the HLF bid has been a grant of £28,400

Local Support / evidence of need

In 2015 there were nine groups using the hall on a regular basis, including art groups, Health and Welfare, Table Tennis, and Connexions, in addition to charity events and ad-hoc lettings for public and private events.

Funds are raised from letting fees and from events run by the committee. For a number of years the Parish Council provided a grant to help with heating costs in the winter. However, this has not been needed in the last three years and the Parish Council has used the money to make a contribution to the renovation project.

Non-financial support will consist of voluntary effort in running the project, carrying out the heritage tasks and working on the internal decoration. In the bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund it was estimated that 15 volunteers would be involved in work on the projects in addition to people contributing information on local history. Using the HLF rates for volunteer time, this came to £8000 of non-financial support.

Project Costs

Renovation work	34,072
Heritage tasks	3,330
Costs associated with land	3,250
Total project cost	40,652

Funding Plan

Funding Source	Funds secured
Parish Council	2,000
Own funds	1,252
Clarks Foundation	4,000
Heritage Lottery Fund	28,400
Total secured	35,652
Amount requested from SSDC	£5,000*

Previous grants

None during the last three years.

The Village Hall is subject to Business Rate Relief as a charity

Consents and permissions

None applicable.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This application is for £5,000 representing 12% of the project cost. The VHMC have shown their commitment to maintaining the hall as the only public meeting place in the village and as a building which is also significant in the history of the community.

It is recommended that this application for £5,000 is supported.

Financial Implications

There is £184,655 available in the Area North capital programme for Local Priority Schemes. If the recommended grant of £5,000 is awarded, £179,655 will remain in this allocation for future years.

Council Plan Implications

The project supports:

Focus Four: Health & Communities

Area North Development Plan priority: Self-help and community facilities

Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications

Repair of the windows and repointing of the walls will help to maximise heat retention and minimise energy consumption. More public events in the village facilitated by an improved hall and outside space may reduce the need for villagers to travel further afield.

Equality and Diversity Implications

The exterior improvements will provide parking close to the level entrance at the back of the building, enabling safer access for people who have limited mobility and for small children.

As the only remaining community facility, the village hall is especially important as a base for activities for members of the community who may find it difficult to reach other locations.

Appendix A

Standard conditions applying to all Community Grants.

This grant offer is made based on the information provided in application form no. AN16/06 and represents 12% 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 identify any future improvements needed.