

Community Grant to Radio Ninesprings (Executive Decision)

Director: *Kirsty Larkins, Director of Service Delivery*
Manager / Lead Specialist: *Tim Cook, Locality Manager*
Lead Officer: *Adrian Moore*
Contact Details: adrian.moore@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462462

Purpose of the Report

Councillors are asked to consider the awarding of a grant of £5,748 towards a Local Community Radio FM transmitter for Wincanton/Bruton.

Public Interest

Awarding grants is a key way that SSDC supports and helps to deliver community projects sponsored by Parishes and voluntary community organisations in the towns and villages across the district.

Radio Ninesprings radio station has applied to the Area East community grants programme for financial assistance with the costs of a Local Community Radio FM transmitter for Wincanton. The Locality Officer who is submitting this report to enable the Area East Committee to make an informed decision about the application has assessed the application.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Councillors award a grant of £5,748. The grant to be allocated from the Area East capital programme and subject to SSDC standard conditions for community grants (appendix A).

Application Details

Name of applicant:	Radio Ninesprings
Project:	Local Community Radio FM transmitter for Wincanton/Bruton
Total project cost:	£11,496
Amount requested from SSDC:	£5,748
% amount requested	50%
Application assessed by:	Adrian Moore

Community Grants Assessment Score

The table below shows the grant scoring for this application. Applications must meet the minimum score of 22 to be considered for SSDC funding under Community Grants policies.

Category	Max Score available	Officer assessment score
A Supports Council Plan/Area Chapter	1	1
B Supports Equalities & Diversity	1	1
C Supports Environment Strategy	3	1
D Need for Project	10	7
E Capacity of Organisation	15	12
F Financial need	7	5
Total	37	27

Background

Radio Ninesprings is a Local Community Radio station for South Somerset. It launched on 104.5 FM on 1st October 2018 after being awarded a Community Radio License by Ofcom (The Office of Communications – regulator for the communications services) to provide a service of local community radio to the Yeovil area. Community radio stations are a third tier of radio broadcasting in addition to commercial radio and the BBC. They reflect a mix of cultures and interests and give a new voice to communities. They raise income through advertising / sponsorship, training, and funds awarded by public bodies. They are ‘not for profit’ and their programmes are influenced by the communities they serve.

Radio Ninesprings is a ‘not-for-profit’ educational charitable company run by volunteers, based in Yeovil. The charitable purposes of Radio Ninesprings are to advance the educational and training of the residents of Yeovil and district of South Somerset in radio production, broadcasting and media skills techniques. It has offered training places for two students studying BTEC Creative Media at Yeovil College and work experience given to local school pupils.

In June 2019, Radio Ninesprings successfully applied to Ofcom to have its licensed broadcast area extended to Wincanton/Bruton and Chard/Crewkerne. Following the granting of the license extension, the station has a responsibility to provide a service of community radio to the whole of South Somerset. The additional FM frequencies given to Radio Ninesprings are 103.3 for Wincanton/Bruton and 107.6 for Chard/Crewkerne.

In the last twelve months, Radio Ninesprings has made great strides towards being recognized as the main broadcast provider of local information, local news and entertainment for South Somerset. It is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status.

Parish information

Parish*	N/A
Parish Population	N/A
No. of dwellings	N/A

The project

Following the successful application to Ofcom, Radio Ninesprings was given permission in November 2019 to extend its Licensed Broadcast Area to the district of South Somerset and build two new FM transmitters, one to cover the Wincanton area positioned at Wincanton Racecourse and one to cover the Chard area positioned at Cricket St Thomas Golf Club. These FM Transmitters are required to strengthen reception of Radio Ninesprings in and around the western and eastern parts of South Somerset.

The transmitter will be located at Wincanton racecourse and provide an FM signal within an 8-mile radius of Wincanton. The owners of Wincanton Racecourse have given permission to erect the FM transmitter on their main building.

In the case of Chard/Crewkerne, Radio Ninesprings has also applied to Area West Committee for an SSDC Community grant for an identical transmitter. The transmitter will be located at Cricket St Thomas Golf Club and provide an FM signal within an 8-mile radius of Chard. The owners of Cricket St Thomas Golf Club have given permission to erect the FM transmitter on their main building.

The work of building the transmitters will be led by TransplanUK a professional business that specializes in providing transmitter sites. The project will be managed and overseen at every stage of development by the Directors/Trustees of Radio Ninesprings.

Local support / evidence of need

Radio Ninesprings broadcasts from a main transmitter on 104.5 FM located at Yeovil Town football club's ground at Huish Park. The signal is strongest towards the North and beyond. It is strong around the greater Yeovil area. It is less strong in Wincanton/Bruton, Chard/Crewkerne and places in between. Local residents have told Radio Ninesprings of problems receiving an acceptable signal on FM in the Wincanton/Bruton and Chard/Crewkerne areas. It was with the aim of solving this problem that Radio Ninesprings applied for and was awarded by Ofcom two further FM frequencies to strengthen coverage in and around the Wincanton/Bruton and Chard/Crewkerne areas.

Having Radio Ninesprings local community radio available for listening in Wincanton/Bruton and Chard/Crewkerne areas will benefit local people of all ages and will help strengthen the community spirit and identity of these towns.

Radio Ninesprings will work closely with schools in Wincanton/Bruton and Chard/Crewkerne to give young people opportunities to make radio programmes, to develop their writing, creative and computer/IT skills. The radio station will work closely with voluntary and charity groups to support people who are unemployed, providing opportunities to participate at the radio station. Radio Ninesprings will support local businesses and the self-employed, giving opportunities to talk on-air about their products and services, to build community demand for a healthy, sustainable local economy. The radio station will engage with all groups who live and work in the Wincanton/Bruton and Chard/Crewkerne areas.

The success of the project will be measured by the number of people who listen to Radio Ninesprings in the Chard/Crewkerne and Wincanton/Bruton areas. Also by the number of people who take part in the radio programmes and join as volunteers and by the number of local businesses who advertise and sponsor programmes. Radio Ninesprings encourages audience feedback through e-mail, Facebook and Twitter and these responses would be used to measure performance.

There are many ways in which Radio Ninesprings benefits the residents of South Somerset, these include:

- People who are not in employment or training are given opportunities to receive training in media skills to include writing, media law, editing and presentation. This experience will help enhance their chances of securing employment.
- Residents are given opportunities to take part in programmes, to talk about local issues, to publicise local events and make programmes of local interest.
- Young people wishing to make a career in broadcasting/journalism are given the opportunity of work experience and training.
- Volunteer membership of Radio Ninesprings is open to everyone regardless of age or ability.

During COVID-19, a huge amount of free air-time has been given to communicating public service announcements on behalf of Public Health England, Yeovil Hospital, South Somerset District Council, Somerset County Council and others.

Over the past twelve months more than 150 people and local organisations have been interviewed on the Radio Ninesprings Breakfast Show on a range of subjects. There has also been given regular air-time to local charitable organisations to appeal for funding and new volunteers.

A new show featuring local bands/musical performers was introduced each Sunday from 4.00pm to 6.00pm. A daily programme about local businesses – ‘Working Lunch’ – was launched in partnership with Yeovil Chamber of Commerce. A campaign was launched to recruit a team of ‘virtual’ Village Correspondents from around South Somerset to provide very localized information and news for inclusion in ‘Community News’. The Mayor of Yeovil was given a monthly slot ‘Mayor on the Air’ to talk about the town and local fund raising activities. Building work was completed on a second studio for delivering media training to students at Yeovil College. A partnership was formed with BBC Somerset and Somerset’s seven other Ofcom licensed community radio stations for the exchange of local news and broadcast content.

The communities of Wincanton/Bruton and Chard/Crewkerne are not provided with a service of local community radio to which they can turn for local information and local news and take part in to comment on local issues. By making Radio Ninesprings available through the two additional FM transmitters the situation of not having a service of local community radio provided would be corrected.

Project costs

Project costs	Cost £
1 x BW RX300V3 rebroadcast transmitter:	3,145
1 x EME 7020-30B directional coupler, mounted:	350
1 x SA623 or equivalent block filter:	685
1 x Amphenol model 7034107 end-fed transmit antenna:	385
1 x Amphenol model 7059098 3-element yagi receive antenna:	325
1 x 4m 49mmØ Dural pole:	42
2 x HD Norstel RA clamps:	12
2 x 20m (est) x RG213 feeder cable terminated Nm/Nm:	64
Fixing materials:	35
Delivery and installation of antenna, transmitter with integrated receiver, processor, RDS encoder, test and commission to Ofcom requirements:	650
Power and RF connectivity:	70
Local Remote Contribution studio system:	4,732
Legal fees	1,000
Total	11,496

Funding plan

Funding source	Secured or pending	Amount £
Wincanton Town Council	Secured	500
Castle Cary Town Council	Secured	300
Bruton Town Council	Secured	150
Own Funds	Secured	1,148
Radio Camelot	Secured	1,400
Somerset Community Foundation	Secured	1,250
Battens Solicitors	Secured	1,000
SSDC Community Grant	Pending	5,748

Total		11,496
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The bulk of Radio Ninesprings income comes through 'on air' advertising, sponsorship, and training grants. The income from advertising doubled in the first year of operation. Radio Ninesprings also generates income streams through hiring out equipment, staging fund raising events, providing studio facilities to the BBC and through grants and donations.

Conclusion and Recommendation

It is recommended that a grant of £5,748 is awarded

Financial implications

The balance in the Area East Capital programme is £75,919. If the recommended grant of £5,748 is awarded, £70,171 will remain.

Grants are awarded subject to all other funding being secured before the commencement of the project and are on a % basis of the full project costs. Payment of the grant cannot exceed the grant award and is proportionally reduced if full project costs are under budget.

Council Plan Implications

Council Plan themes and Areas of focus for 2021/22

Focus 1: High quality cost effective services

- Transform customer services through technology.
- Provide access to services to suit our customers' needs
- Actively manage assets and resources to ensure the best financial or community return.
- Seek business opportunities for the council.
- Work with partners to achieve economies, resilience and influence.

Focus 2: Economy

To promote a strong and growing economy with thriving urban, rural and land based businesses and improving productivity we will:

- Work with businesses and use our assets.
- Advise and support initiatives that ensure worker skills meet the employer's needs.
- Lobby for and support infrastructure improvements to enable growth.
- Capitalise on our high quality culture, leisure and tourism opportunities to bring people into the district

Focus 3: Environment

To keep South Somerset clean, green and attractive we will work in partnership to:

- Promote recycling and minimise waste
- Promote the use of 'green' technology
- Maintain and promote access to our Country Parks and open spaces to promote good mental and physical health.

- Keep streets and neighbourhoods clean and attractive.
- Continue to support long term flood resilience.
- Promote a high quality built environment in line with Local Plan policies.
- Support communities to develop and implement local, parish and neighbourhood plans.

Focus 5: Health and Communities

To build healthy, self-reliant, active communities we will:

- Support communities so that they can identify their needs and develop local solutions.
- Target support to areas of need.
- Help people to live well by enabling quality cultural, leisure, play, sport & healthy lifestyle facilities & activities.
- Work with partners to tackle health issues such as diabetes and hypertension and mental health.
- Work with our partners to keep our communities safe.

Area Chapter Implications for 2021/22

Improved communications with our residents across the district supports all of the work in the Area Chapters.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

None

Equality and Diversity Implications

The project aims to provide for people across all age and interest groups in the local community.

Background Papers

None

Appendix A

Standard conditions applying to all SSDC Community Grants

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 the 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 before starting the project, if these were not already in place at the time of the application.
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.
- Note that they cannot apply for another community grant for the same project within a 3 year period of this award.

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 when buildings regulations are required.
- Incorporate disabled access and provide an access statement where relevant.

Special conditions

None