

Halesowen Area Committee – 3rd September 2009

Report of the Area Liaison Officer

Delegated Capital Budget

Purpose of Report

1. To recommend grants from the Committee's Capital Budget Allocation and associated matters.

Background

2. The table below summarises the current financial position on uncommitted/unspent capital budget, prior to the approval of bids set out in this report:-

	£
Total allocations 2000/01 to 2009/10	500,000
Less:	
- Spent to date	(373,680)
- Allocated to bidders, but not yet spent	(40,150)
- Earmarked for Shell Corner (£20k) *; Town Centre enhancements (£17k)	(37,341)
Sub-Total	48,829
Available from a review of unspent allocations (see Appendix 3)	20,221
Available to spend on new bids/earmarks	69,050

* see paragraph 4 below.

I shall bring an updated statement to each future meeting.

3. At the last Committee, I was asked to update the Committee on the current position regarding the earmarked funds for Shell Corner and Halesowen Town Centre.

Shell Corner Earmarked Funds

4. Having referred to colleagues in the Urban Environment and Adult, Community and Housing Directorate, the £5,000 earmarked in March 2005 was "towards capital costs of developing Shell Corner Neighbourhood Shop, subject to Partnership raising other capital funds and giving reassurance that the ongoing revenue costs can be met and a further report before any final decisions are made". However, due to questions about

the condition of the premises, it was not possible to undertake renovation works.

5. Regarding the £15,000 earmarked in principle in June 2006 towards environmental and other improvements at Shell Corner, a further report was submitted to Area Committee on 12th September 2006, updating the Committee on progress. The improvement scheme did not progress because at the detailed design stage, after funding was approved, it was revealed that Dudley MBC only owned one third of the service road included in the improvement scheme. Negotiations with the owner of the remaining two thirds of the service road were unsuccessful in progressing the scheme. The scheme was abandoned and the money has been rolled over from the 2006 Area Committee budget in the hope that another capital scheme may come forward in Shell Corner. Unfortunately, no further schemes have been forthcoming.

Therefore, I am recommending that the Committee authorises the unspent earmarked funds of £20,000 for Shell Corner be brought back to the central capital pot for reallocation.

Halesowen Town Centre Earmarked Funds

6. Having referred to colleagues in the Urban Environment Directorate, I am informed that the Halesowen Town Centre Working Group are in the process of determining a series of actions to enhance the town centre environment and progress regeneration. This will involve improvements to the public realm (including gateways, open spaces and lighting) and developing an “in bloom” initiative with partners. Detailed proposals to allocate the funding will be brought to the Area Committee in the near future. However, a financial update will be provided to each Committee until that time.
7. The criteria against which allocations from the delegated capital budget should be considered are set out in Appendix 1. The Area Committee has previously agreed that contributions from the budget will be limited to £5,000 unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated. A copy of the applications referred to in this report are available to Members on request. We have recently advertised within the Halesowen area the availability of Area Committee funding for worthwhile local projects and are receiving increased interest.

Loaves ‘n’ Fishes

8. This application was considered at the last Area Committee in July and that consideration of a grant of up to £2,500 (50% of amount requested) towards a replacement delivery van was deferred pending further information to clarify statistics and activity in Halesowen.
9. I received further information from Loaves ‘n’ Fishes on 14th July and a copy of this is shown at Appendix 2. I do not believe this additional information adds very much in terms of the numbers of people they assist compared to what was already included in the last report.

10. I have suggested that the Area Committee may consider their application further if they approached Sandwell MBC, the borough in which the organisation is based, for capital funding. The organisation is not considering making a bid to Sandwell MBC. I have also requested a further break-down of the 250 households into areas within Halesowen that the letter refers to and am awaiting a response.
11. **I am recommending that the Committee decide to support the organisation up to 50% ie £1,250 provided they seek match funding from Sandwell MBC for the balance.**

Cradley Community and Welfare Association

12. Members may recall that this Committee approved a grant to the Association in March this year for £2,000 towards the cost of a replacement boiler. These funds have since been released.
13. A new application has been received from the Association towards the full cost of a new cooker and microwave, at a cost of approximately £1,000.
14. The Association's aims are to improve the conditions of life for the inhabitants of the area and also to engender a community spirit. They currently have 100+ members per week who attend the Centre, of all ages, from the very young to the elderly, covering all ethnic groups.
15. The Association have provided three estimates from suppliers ranging around £815 to maximum of £1,019 and have requested funding from the Committee of the full amount £1,000.00.
16. **Given that the Committee has provided support in the past and that no other funding has been sought, I am seeking Committee guidance as to whether we should refuse further funding for this organisation until next year, when the Association can submit a new application. However, if the Committee feel that the application can be supported, I am recommending a grant of 50% (i.e. up to £500) be approved.**

Vale Retail (Cornbow) Ltd

17. An application has been received from Vale Retail (Cornbow) Ltd, towards the cost of the construction of a bespoke display case, at a cost of approximately £2,385.
18. In their application, they state that "the Cornbow Shopping Centre is more than just a shopping centre, it's a community centre where local people meet". The Library used to have a shop window which was hired out to community groups to use for displays. This is no longer available as the library entrance has been moved to the space where the window used to be. Whilst the library still has glass cabinets that community groups use, officers feel that there is capacity for more facilities.

19. Vale retail wish to locate this display case to the right hand side of the Library entrance in Queensway Mall by Asda for local groups to use. They are more than willing to give the space, as long as they can obtain the necessary funding for the case itself.
20. The proposed display case will measure approximately 2m high, 1.7m wide and 600mm deep and will be constructed from a veneered mdf having an oak or similar finish set over recessed plinths. It is proposed that the sides and back will be solid with a pair of lockable sliding glass doors to the front with three glass shelves inside.
21. We are awaiting a list of groups and organisations who are in support of their application.
22. **Having consulted with colleagues, who support this application and given that no other source of funding has been sought, I would normally recommend a grant of 50% be approved, but given the benefits that would accrue to community groups as a whole, I am recommending full support of up to £2,385, subject to assurances that the display case will only be used for community groups displays and that the Town Centre manager is consulted about the suitability of material on display.**

2nd Cradley (St. Peter's) Scout Group

23. An application has been received from 2nd Cradley (St. Peter's) Scout Group towards the cost of upgrading the floor surface in the main hall of the Scout Group HQs, estimated to be £5,219. The current floor is over 40 years old and in urgent need of attention to bring it up to the required health and safety standards. They are seeking funding from this Committee of the maximum amount of £5,000. I have asked colleagues to check out the condition of the floor given that money was granted to them in 2005/06 towards renovating the interior of the building.
24. Members may be aware that this Committee has approved grants in the past to this Scout Group, namely £2,000 in 2004/05 for security fencing around the site following vandal attacks, £5,000 in 2005/06 towards the cost of renovating the interior of the building, including the provision of disabled toilets and cooking facilities (total cost of approx. £30,000) and £5,000 in 2007/08 towards the cost of landscaping the area around the HQs (total cost of approx. £6,500).
25. **Given that the Committee has provided support in the past and that no other funding has been sought, I am seeking Committee guidance as to whether we should refuse further funding for this organisation until next year, when the Group can submit a new application. However, if the Committee feel that the application can be supported, I am recommending a grant of 50% (i.e. up to £2,500) be approved.**

Halesowen Chamber of Trade

26. An application has been received from the Halesowen Chamber of Trade towards the cost of purchasing some additional Christmas lights to cover the areas of the town centre which currently do not have any – for example, Queensway.
27. Members may be aware that this Committee has approved grants in the past for this purpose, namely £1,000 in 2003/04, £6,000 in 2005/06, £2,500 in 2006/07 and £5,000 in 2007/08.
28. I am advised by colleagues that Halesowen Chamber of Trade are suffering serious setbacks this year, as a result of the recession, in respect of finding sponsorship from the towns retailers and other businesses. They are looking to purchase a new “green” system as well as upgrade existing lights with LED systems which are cheaper to operate and better for the environment.
29. **Having consulted with colleagues who support the application and given other funding attempts have been sought and that the recession is clearly having an impact upon the availability of sponsorship, I am recommending a grant of up to £5,000 be approved for this year only.**

Eritrean Tigre Welfare Association (ETWA)

30. Members may recall that a grant of £2,000 was approved by this Committee in 2007/08. However, the Association did not take up the funding. We have now received a new application for funding of £3,000 towards a computer, printers and office storage facilities.
31. The aims and objectives of the ETWA are to promote and preserve the good education and health of Eritrean people in Dudley and the surrounding areas by increasing awareness and providing culturally specific information, help and advice. The Association, which is a registered charity, is based in Halesowen and says that about 50+ people living in Halesowen would benefit from an Area Committee capital grant.
32. I have consulted colleagues in the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services who have provided advice and support to the Association. They inform me that the Association has attained charitable status. They currently meet at weekends in a local Scouts building.
33. I have requested further information from the Association regarding storage of these items, as well as clarification of where they meet, how often, how many ‘students’ and also if they have applied for funding from any other source.
34. **Having consulted with colleagues and given that no other source of funding seems to have been sought, I am recommending a grant of up to £1,500 (i.e. 50%) be approved, subject to satisfactory information being supplied.**

Earls Gymnastics Club

35. An application has been received from the Earls Gymnastics Club towards the cost of providing A-symmetric bars, safety mats and a climbing rope, estimated to be just over £5,600. The Club currently have approximately 400 members from across the Borough and from across the wider Black Country and West Midlands area.
36. Members may be aware that this Committee approved a grant in 2006/07 to this Club, namely £5,000 for funding to replace vital safety equipment.
37. The Club offers the opportunity for young people, at all levels, ages, ability, gender or race, to experience gymnastics, in a child friendly and safe environment. Young people are encouraged to progress their learning skills and abilities to achieve their true potential within the sport by working with county, national and international gymnasts.
38. Having consulted with colleagues, who support the application, they have advised that Earls Gymnastics Club is one of very few sports organisations in the Borough which operates in part at a more elite level of sport. It is considered by English Gymnastics to be among the top ten clubs in the country, but does not qualify for funds from the governing body as there is a very limited national pot for distribution.
39. **Given that the Committee has provided support in the past and that no other funding has been sought, and having consulted with colleagues, who support this application, I am recommending a grant of up to £2,500 (i.e. 50%) be approved.**

Wollescote and St. Andrews Scouts

40. An application has been received from Wollescote and St. Andrews Scout Group, who are based in Wollescote. They are seeking funding from the Halesowen Area Committee towards providing an electrical supply and fittings to a greenhouse (which has been donated) and three equipment storage units on the site as well as providing an internal door to enable access to the toilet from the garden area and repairs to the brickwork and painting of the three storage units.
41. As Members may be aware, this Group is currently located in Pedmore and Stourbridge East Ward which falls under Stourbridge Area Committee. However, the Group still falls within the Halesowen District Scouts and of their existing membership, some 40% are resident in Halesowen area and 60% in Stourbridge.
42. Stourbridge Area Committee have supported this project to enable them to get so far and the Group are now seeking support from this Committee in order to complete the community garden and storage facilities on the site. The cost of the overall work still required is just over £2,700 and they have requested funding of just over £1,477.
43. Their aim is to widen the use of the buildings and facilities from just Scouts to the whole of the surrounding communities and this project is a step in that direction by

expanding the activities available to them. The Group, in conjunction with Dudley Youth Services, established a Youth Club and together are developing a raised bed garden area within the grounds of the Scout Headquarters to produce home grown produce to encourage healthy eating. This project involves children and young people working with parents and carers and other members of the local community, including older people and those with disabilities. As a result of these activities, the Group require suitable safe storage facilities to accommodate garden tools and equipment, Youth Club equipment and Scouts Camping equipment etc.

44. **Having consulted with colleagues and given that other sources of funding seem to have been sought towards the overall project, I am recommending the Committee approves a grant of up to £1,477 be approved.**

Finance

45. The total available to spend on new bids in 2009/10 is now £69,050. Recommendations in this report will result in the following allocations and leave a balance of £56,188 for the remainder of 2009/10 available, subject to decisions regarding Loaves 'n' Fishes, Cradley Community and Welfare Association and 2nd Cradley (St. Peters) Scout Group:-

	£	Ward
<u>Recommended for approval:-</u>		
Loaves 'n' Fishes	*1,250	All Wards
Vale Retail (Cornbow) Ltd	2,385	All Wards
Halesowen Chamber of Trade	5,000	Halesowen North and South
Eritrean Tigre Welfare Association	* 1,500	Belle Vale
Earls Gymnastics Club	* 2,500	All Wards
Wollescote & St. Andrews Scouts	1,477	Cradley & Foxcote
Total	14,112	

Note * - This is only 50% of what was requested – Members of the Area Committee could increase these sums if they so wished.

Law

46. The Committee may incur capital expenditure in respect of the various statutory functions of the Council. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 empowers the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive to, or incidental to the discharge of its functions.

Equality Impact

47. This report complies fully with the Council's policies on equal opportunities and diversity. Some of the applications include facilities which are available to children and young people.

Recommendations

48. It is proposed that subject to satisfactory responses to officer queries the Area Committee :-
- (a) supports the application from Loaves 'n' Fishes up to 50% ie £1,250 provided they seek match funding from Sandwell MBC for the balance.
 - (b) considers the application by Cradley Community and Welfare Association towards the cost of a new cooker and microwave;
 - (c) authorises a grant of up to £2,385 for Vale Retail (Cornbow) Ltd towards the cost of a bespoke display case to be located outside the library entrance in Queensway Mall, subject to assurances that it will only be used for community group displays and that the Town Centre manager is consulted about the suitability of material on display.;
 - (d) considers the application by 2nd Cradley (St. Peter's) Scout Group towards the cost of upgrading the floor surface in the main hall of the Scout Group;
 - (e) authorises a grant of up to £5,000 to Halesowen Chamber of Trade towards the cost of purchasing additional Christmas lights to cover the areas of the town centre which currently have seasonal lights, but for this year only;
 - (f) authorises a grant of up to £1,500 to the Eritrean Tigre Welfare Association towards the cost of purchasing a computer, printers and other office furniture;
 - (g) authorises a grant of up to £2,500 to the Earls Gymnastics Club towards the cost of A-symmetric bars, safety mats and a climbing rope;
 - (h) authorises a grant of up to £1,477 to Wollescote & St. Andrews Scout Group towards the costs of supplying and fitting an electrical supply to garages and a greenhouse at their Headquarters;
 - (i) authorises the unspent allocations identified in Appendix 3 amounting to £20,221 be brought back to the central capital pot for reallocation.



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Bill Baker

Area Liaison Officer

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Criteria for Bids/Allocations

- a. The allocation to be spent on 'capital' schemes, as defined by legislation, i.e. one-off type expenditure on acquisition, construction, enhancement of land, roads, buildings, equipment or vehicles, which may also include the making of grants or loans for capital expenditure by others.
- b. Schemes should contribute to the Community and Council Plans and should not conflict with existing Council Policy.
- c. Schemes should be for the general benefit of the wider community, i.e. not just for the benefit of individuals or specific groups and should 'make a difference' in the local area.
- d. Schemes should not result in any on-going revenue costs.
- e. Consideration should be given to schemes that might generate external funding (i.e. using these budgets as match funding).
- f. Spending must be in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, and demonstrate Best Value.
- g. Approved allocation must normally be claimed within six months.