

Stourbridge Area Committee - 16th June 2008

Report of the Area Liaison Officer

Capital Allocations

Purpose of Report

1. To consider eleven applications for a capital allocation.

Background

2. The Area Committee has an unallocated capital budget of £50,412-09 for 2008/9 provided the Council makes its usual allocation to Area Committee at its meeting in July.
3. The Area Committee has previously agreed that contributions from the budget will be limited to £5,000 unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated. Spending proposals are invited from members of the Area Committee, the public, representative organisations and Council directorates, and each proposal is assessed against the following criteria:-
 - (a) The allocation is 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 Plan 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 ongoing revenue cost to the Council;
 - (e) Consideration should be given to schemes which might generate external funding (i.e. using the allocation as match-funding);

- (f) Spending must be in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, and demonstrate Best Value; and
 - (g) Approved allocations must normally be claimed within six months.
4. A copy of the applications referred to in this report are available to Members on request.

Application by Pedmore Cricket Club

- 5. Pedmore Cricket Club is based at Pedmore Hall Lane in Pedmore and currently has 380 members of varying ages 80% of whom live within Stourbridge.
- 6. The Club is applying for a capital allocation of £2,905-35 to complete a four year project of providing perimeter fencing. The final phase of the project will install a 95 meter stretch of larch lap fencing between the cricket club and Pedmore Hall Lane. This will make the site more secure and safe for the growing number of very young boys and girls that are attending coaching nights to learn the game of cricket.
- 7. In the year ending November 2007 the Club had a net cash surplus of £4,494-62.
- 8. Since 2002 the Club has received 4 capital allocations totalling £14,254-16 and a grant from the Stevens Trust of £5,000.
- 9. This application appears to satisfy the criteria set out in paragraph 3 above.

Application by West Midlands Fire Service

- 10. West Midlands Fire Service has submitted an application to each of the 5 Area Committees.
- 11. In consultation with Dudley's Children and Young People's Trust the West Midlands Fire Service is organising a programme of 10 courses specifically targeted at young people who are on the verge of not being in education employment or training. The programme will engage with up to 150 young people through a mixture of classroom-based interaction and practical fire fighting training exercises working on the Fire Station Drill Yard.
- 12. The total capital allocation applied for from all Area Committees is £8,065, of which the share for Stourbridge is £1,613. The capital application will specifically be for the purchase of a range of personal protective equipment, drill yard equipment and a PA system. The West Midlands Fire Service will match the capital allocation with the same amount in revenue.
- 13. There has not been any previous capital allocation to West Midlands Fire Service and this application appears to satisfy the criteria set out in paragraph 3 above.

Application by Black Country Visual Arts Network

14. The Black Country Visual Arts Network aims to bring arts and arts activities to a wider audience in the area by providing public arts events, workshops, exhibitions and other artistic activities. They hold a free annual public exhibition at the Bonded Warehouse and have also staged many other smaller public exhibitions, most recently utilising an empty unit in the Ryemarket. In the last 3 years all but one of their exhibitions have been held in Stourbridge.
15. The application is for a capital allocation of £2,370-00 to purchase a set of equipment to stage exhibitions in both traditional and digital forms. The equipment will include a computer projector, laptop, printer (and accessories) and transportable and adjustable lighting.
16. The Network has a membership of 50 of whom 50% live within Stourbridge, the remainder living in other parts of the borough.
17. The latest accounts for the Network for the year ending March 2007 show a balance of income over expenditure of £2,854-12 with net available cash of £3440-96.
18. There has not been any previous allocation to the Black Country Visual Arts Network.
19. This application appears to satisfy the criteria set out in paragraph 3 above.

Application by Amblecote Allotments Guild

20. The Amblecote Allotments Guild is situated at School Drive, Amblecote.
21. The application is for a capital allocation of £5,000 towards the cost of providing a composting toilet for the allotment site. The toilet will make the site more accessible to people with disabilities and make the site more attractive to older people, children and those who are currently discouraged from using the site due to the lack of facilities. The total cost of the project is £8,569 and the balance will be paid by the Council, charitable donations and the applicant.
22. The latest accounts for the Amblecote Allotments Guild for the year ending the 30th September 2007 shows a modest building society balance of £2,479.
23. The applicant has not previously received any capital allocation from the Area Committee.
24. This application appears to satisfy the criteria set out in paragraph 3 above.

Application by Oldswinford Cricket Club

25. Oldswinford Cricket Club is situated at the Bigmoor Playing Fields, Albemarle Road, Stourbridge.
26. Oldswinford Cricket Club is a very old established club operating with very close community ties and having strong links with local schools.

27. The application is for a capital allocation of £5,000 towards the cost of purchasing "roll on and off" wicket covers which are a mandatory requirement of the English Cricket Board. The total cost of providing the covers is £5,500 and the balance of £500 will be paid by the Club from its own funds.
28. The Club's Balance Sheet as at the 30th September 2007 showed a net profit for the year of £600 and net current assets of £18,552.
29. Since 2002 the Club has received 3 capital allocations totalling £13,200 and a grant from the Stevens Trust of £2,500.
30. This application appears to satisfy the criteria set out in paragraph 3 above.

Application by The What? Centre

31. The What? Centre is based in Coventry Street, Stourbridge, and it provides an advice and therapeutic counselling service for young people aged 13 to 25.
32. The application is for an allocation of £1,345-00 in order to fit trunking in the office to ensure that staff can access electrical equipment such as computers and printers. This is a health and safety issue because a number of items of equipment currently have trailing cables.
33. The latest accounts for the What? Centre for the year ending 31st March 2007 showed a net deficit of £31,390-00 with net current assets of £8,666-00.
34. The What? Centre has previously been awarded four capital allocations totalling £5,937-17.
35. This application appears to satisfy the criteria set out in paragraph 3 above.

Application by the Humaara Project

36. The Humaara Project which is based at 138 High Street, Lye has submitted an application for a capital allocation.
37. The main aims of the Humaara Project are to promote health and well-being amongst the South Asian community in Lye and to encourage and improve access to services. The Project also aims to improve confidence, capacity and skills amongst the community and to engage isolated and disengaged members of the community through access, education and creating activities that are relevant. The Project is a small grass-root local community group that was constituted in 2004. It is still in its early developmental stages.
38. The applicant wishes to establish an Art / Textiles and Tailoring Community Enterprise Project that is relevant to Pakistani women and their families and which will engage them to improve their current positions and well-being.
39. The total cost of this Project is £30,200-00 and the application is for a capital allocation of £5,000-00 towards the cost of purchasing a range of equipment

including sewing machines, a fast press machine, table equipment, a sewing table and software.

40. The applicant is trying to secure the balance of funding from other sources. To date the Project has been awarded £10,000-00 from Awards for All and they are applying for funding from the Big Lottery Fund and Comic Relief. If the Area Committee is minded to approve the application for a capital allocation, the allocation will not be payable until they have secured the balance of funding.
41. The annual accounts for the year ending 31st March 2008 show a minor deficit and no net current assets.
42. There has not been any previous capital allocation to this applicant.
43. As this Project is specifically focused on one part of the community members are asked to consider whether the application satisfies paragraph (c) of the criteria set out in paragraph 3 above.

Application by Rufford Primary School PTFA

44. An application for a capital allocation has been submitted by the Rufford Primary School PTFA, Bredon Avenue, Stourbridge.
45. The PTFA propose to create a garden area for the school by reinstating and developing an area currently occupied by mobile classrooms. The estimated cost of this project is £15,000-00 (plus VAT) and the application is for a capital allocation of £5,000-00. Rufford School will provide the balance of funding.
46. The PTFA accounts for 2006/07 show a net balance of just over £3,200-00.
47. In October 2005 the PTFA was awarded a capital allocation of £5,000-00.
48. This application appears to satisfy the criteria set out in paragraph 3 above.

Application by the Thomas Pocklington Trust

49. The Thomas Pocklington Trust is based at the Mary Stevens Centre, Hagley Road, Oldswinford.
50. The main aim of the Trust is to provide support to people with a sight loss in the south of the borough. Facilities include day services, a resource and information service, Braille translation and a reader scheme.
51. The Trust proposes to create a Community Sensory Garden at the Mary Stevens Centre. The total cost for this project is £25,397-00 and the Trust is applying for a capital allocation of £5,000-00. The balance of funding has not yet been secured but the Trust has submitted a number of bids to other organisations. If the Area Committee is minded to approve the application, it would be subject to the usual condition that the balance of funding must be secured before the allocation is payable.

52. The Trust is a national charity. Its annual accounts for the year ending 31st March 2007 show a net operating deficit of £1.4m but with net assets of £98.79m of which £435,000 is cash at bank in unrestricted funds.
53. There has not been any previous capital allocation to the Trust and this application appears to satisfy the criteria set out in paragraph 3 above.

Application by the Caledonia Residents Association

54. An application has been submitted by the Caledonia Residents Association who are based at the Thorns Community College, Stockwell Avenue, in the Lye and Wollescote ward.
55. The aims of the Association include the improvement of the quality of life of all residents and protecting and enhancing the character, amenities and resources of the area.
56. At its meeting on the 19th November 2007 the Area Committee awarded an allocation of £4,535 to the Association to renovate and make safe a wall separating 2 levels of ground on the estate including the replacement of the original steps, adding a new disability ramp and handrail, and flag stoning the base of the wall. The “public” areas of the Caledonia estate have not been adopted by the Council and, therefore, their repair and maintenance are a private responsibility.
57. The Association have now submitted a further application for a capital allocation of £3,800 to renovate and make safe 3 sets of paved steps leading onto residential pathways and to include the provision of new safety handrails. The total cost of this project is £4,000 and the Association will contribute £200 from their own funds.
58. As with their earlier application the Association feel that this project will enable local people and other members of the public to move safely between different parts of the estate.
59. The latest accounts for 2007/8 for the Association show a small balance of £470.
60. This application appears to satisfy the criteria set out in paragraph 3 above.

Application by the Lye and Wollescote United Communities Group

61. An application has been submitted by the Lye and Wollescote United Communities Group. The group has been developed from members of the former “Lye Carnival” group, local friends of the parks groups, local individuals and service providers. The aim of the group is to re-establish the Lye Carnival to be held at Stevens Park, Wollescote, on the 17th August 2008, and to hold at least one other community event later in the year. As these events serve residents in wards of both Stourbridge and Halesowen, they have submitted an application to the Halesowen and Stourbridge Area Committees.

62. The application is for a capital allocation of £299-88 to purchase a party/event tent which is required for many purposes such as shade, shelter, changing, various activities and as a focal point for the organisers of the event. The tent is constructed from good quality canvas and steel. The tent will be also available for use by other local groups at a nominal cost in order to cover damage.
63. As a new organisation, the group do not have completed accounts for this year but they have produced the 2007 accounts for the Lye Carnival which made a small surplus of £15-00.
64. There has not been any previous capital allocation to this organisation.
65. The application appears to satisfy the criteria set out in paragraph 3 above.

Finance

66. The Area Committee's delegated budget allocation is funded by the Council's mainstream capital resources. The current position with regard to available resources for 2008/9 is set out in paragraph 2 of this report.

Law

67. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, enables the Council to do any thing which it considers is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well being of the Borough or any part of it.

Equality Impact

68. This report complies fully with the Council's policies on equality and diversity. The applications submitted by Pedmore Cricket Club and West Midlands Fire Service particularly benefit children and young people.

Recommendation

69. It is recommended that, subject to the Council confirming its capital allocations budget in July 2008, the Area Committee consider the applications submitted by Pedmore Cricket Club, West Midlands Fire Service, Black Country Visual Arts Network, Amblecote Allotments Guild, Oldswinford Cricket Club, the What? Centre, the Humaara Project, Rufford Primary School PTFA, the Thomas Pocklington Trust, the Caledonia Residents Association and the Lye and Wollescote United Communities Group.

John Polychronakis

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List of Background Papers

1. Application submitted by Pedmore Cricket Club
2. Application submitted by West Midlands Fire Service
3. Application submitted by Black Country Visual Arts Network
4. Application submitted by Amblecote Allotments Guild
5. Application submitted by Oldswinford Cricket Club
6. Application submitted by the What? Centre
7. Application submitted by the Humaara Project
8. Application submitted by Rufford Primary School PTFA
9. Application submitted by the Thomas Pocklington Trust
10. Application submitted by the Caledonia Residents Association
11. Application submitted by the Lye and Wollescote United Communities Group