

Report to Belle Vale, Hayley Green and Cradley South Community Forum

Tuesday 3 February 2015

Report of Lead Officer

Community Forum – Love Your Local Community Fund

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the allocation of expenditure from the Community Forum Funding budget and the Empty Shops / High Street Innovation Grant for the remainder of the 2014/15 municipal year.

Background

2. The 10 Community Forums are responsible for allocating expenditure from the Community Forum Funding Budget. More recently each Community Forum has received a one-off allocation of funds from the Empty Shops Grant. The guidelines against which allocations from the delegated budget should be considered are set out in Appendix 1. These are corporate guidelines only and it is ultimately for each Community Forum to decide on individual applications.
3. The two Community Forums in Halesowen – Halesowen North & Halesowen South and Belle Vale, Hayley Green & Cradley South – have tended to make reference to one another with regards to decisions on allocations of funding for projects local to the Halesowen area.
4. Copies of applications referred to in this report have been sent to Members prior to the meeting.

New Applications for Consideration at this Meeting

General Fund

5. At the last meeting of Belle Vale, Hayley Green and Cradley South Community Forum the approvals for expenditure resulted in there being no General Fund monies remaining for allocation in 2014/15. Applicants have been made aware of this and advised that whilst their submissions will be considered it will not be possible to make any allocation to successful projects until the new financial year – 2015/16.

6. Women's Awareness Association

The Women's Awareness Association which uses facilities a number of buildings in Halesowen, including the Leisure Centre and the 1st Halesowen Scout Headquarters in Elizabeth Road, has requested a grant of £5,000. The funding

would be used to purchase tables, chairs, white boards, a camera, a printer, an I-Pod and speaker for use by the members of the group which numbers over 200 beneficiaries.

Representatives from both the Women's Awareness Association and the Leisure Centre have confirmed that storage is available to enable items to be securely locked away when not in use.

The Women's Awareness Association has previously received two allocations from Halesowen Area Committee, in 2010 and 2011, totalling £10,000.

I recommended that Members consider whether a grant of up to £5,000 should be approved for payment from the 2015/16 General Fund.

High Street Innovation Fund

7. Halesowen Chamber of Trade – Christmas Lights

At the Forum meeting on 12 November 2014 Halesowen Chamber of Trade applied for funding towards the cost of Christmas lights in the town centre. The request was for £4,896.

The application was deferred to enable accounts of the organisation to be inspected. Accounts have been submitted and circulated to Councillors.

The Chamber of Trade has reported a shortfall of funding for the Christmas Lights and has requested that Belle Vale, Hayley Green and Cradley South Community Forum reconsider the deferred application.

I recommended that Members consider whether a grant should be approved from the High Street Innovation Fund to meet the shortfall of £1,800 that the Chamber of Trade has reported in connection with the 2014 Christmas Lights.

8. The approach adopted by other Community Forums will be reported verbally at the meeting on 3 February.

Finance

9. Taking account of all previous commitments from this Community Forum, the current balance of funding available from the General Fund for distribution by the Belle Vale, Hayley Green and Cradley South Community Forum is **-6.16**. Details have been forward to Members prior to the meeting.

10. The Empty Shops/High Street Innovation Grant allocation for the Belle Vale, Hayley Green and Cradley South Community Forum has been revised and is **£13.946**. Details have been forward to Members prior to the meeting.

Law

11. The Localism Act 2011 gives the Council a power of general competence to act in the interests of the community.

12. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables the Council to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive to or incidental to the discharge of its statutory functions.

Equality Impact

13. This report complies with the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy.

Recommendation

14. That:-

- i) The Community Forum considers the applications referred to in this report and makes recommendations to the Director of Corporate Resources on each individual application.



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List of Background Papers

- The application forms on which this report is based have been sent to Members prior to the meeting but contain exempt information under the terms of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.
- Appendix 1 Corporate Guidelines for Considering Funding Applications.

Community Forums

Guidelines for considering funding applications

Every funding application will be considered on its own individual merits by Community Forum Elected Members, who will take into account the funding available and make recommendations on each application to the Council's Director of Corporate Resources.

Applications will be considered only from voluntary and community organisations that are based in Dudley borough. Applications should be submitted through a parent organisations e.g. a sports club rather than an individual team within a club.

Applications are to be submitted at least 21 days before a Community Forum meeting in order to be considered at that meeting. Later applications will be considered at the next available Forum meeting. Elected Members can make recommendations on genuinely urgent applications between Forum meetings.

A decision on an individual application will not be seen as setting a precedent for the consideration of any other applications received by the Council or another Community Forum.

All expenditure must be in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, be subject to the Council's legal powers and demonstrate good value for money. Quotations must be provided in line with the Council's procedure rules. Details are set out in the application form.

Guidelines for considering applications

The following guidelines are to assist Elected Members in considering funding applications. Individual Community Forums reserve the right to make exceptions to these guidelines depending on the circumstances of each individual application.

1. Funding may be spent on "capital" and/or "revenue" schemes. (**Capital:** one-off expenditure on buying, constructing or improving land, buildings, equipment or vehicles; **revenue:** expenditure on running costs of projects or activities, including staff costs and the purchase of consumables and services from third parties. Priority will be given to one-off, time-limited, or start-up spend, rather than ongoing running costs which should normally be funded by the organisation itself).

2. Schemes should contribute to the aims of the Community Strategy and not conflict with Council policy. Schemes should be for the general benefit of the wider community, not just for the benefit of individuals or specific groups and should make a difference in the local area.
3. Funding applications may be submitted to more than one Community Forum depending on the area(s) of benefit. Each individual Forum shall retain discretion over its own funding allocation. A recommendation made by one Community Forum shall not create an expectation that it will be supported by another Forum.
4. Schemes should not result in any on-going revenue costs that the organisation cannot fund from its own resources e.g. running costs and repair and maintenance of new/improved buildings and equipment.
5. Individual funding applications should be for a maximum of £5,000 unless there are exceptional circumstances. Organisations will be encouraged to match fund or seek further funding through other means. Priority will be given to schemes that might generate such funding.
6. Applications will not normally be considered from organisations who have previously applied for funding to the Community Forums (or former Area Committees) within the previous three years.
7. Representatives of organisations submitting applications are encouraged to attend the Forum meeting and to speak if they wish in support of their applications.
8. Once an application has been approved, it will be on the condition that the commitment is spent within nine months; otherwise the funding will be returned to the Council. A fresh application would need to be submitted and approved in order for the funding to be released.
9. In appropriate circumstances, funding may be given on condition that certain items of equipment purchased with the funding are made available for use by other organisations.

High Street Innovation/Empty Shops Grant Funding Applications

10. One-off funding has been made available in the 2014/15 financial year for projects which improve the appearance or economic vitality of an area, with preference to the borough's centres and High Streets.
11. The Council will decide which source of funding successful applications will use, but as guidance for applicants High Street Innovation / Empty Shops Grant funding will be considered for the following:-

Eligible proposals

- Proposals will be considered either for Capital or Revenue activities.
- Proposals of up to £5,000 in value (including VAT where applicable).

- Proposals are preferred for projects within the Borough's defined Principal or Local Centres, but applications may be considered in any location where benefits to the local economy or environment may be demonstrated.
- Proposals that show a partnership approach (between for example business and the Community will be preferred).

Ineligible proposals

- Proposals which create ongoing revenue costs for the Council. Proposals must demonstrate how any improvements will be maintained.
- Proposals which are required as a direct result of a planning condition, enforcement action or any other statutory consent.
- Proposals that do not have the agreement of the owner or occupier of land or property affected.
- Proposals that do not have a realistic prospect of being granted planning permission.

Suggested areas of expenditure

- Proposals to improve the appearance or condition of empty commercial or retail premises.
- Proposals to improve vacant or unsightly land.
- Match funding to support funding bids for the above.
- Activities and events to support centres economic vitality.