

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

**Wednesday 12 November 2014**

**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 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.

**Deferred Applications for Consideration at this Meeting**

5. There were 3 applications for funding deferred at the July meeting of the Community Forum and a further 2 applications were deferred in September. Copies of the applications were e-mailed to Members prior to each meeting.
6. St Margaret's Church, Hasbury

An application was received for a project to provide car parking facilities and a permanent access for people with disabilities. The total project cost was estimated to be £30,000.

This was deferred at the July 2014 meeting to enable the recommendation of the Halesowen North and South Community Forum to be taken into consideration.

In June 2014 the Halesowen North and South Community Forum deferred this application pending the submission of more detailed information.

At the time of preparing this report no further information has been received in connection with this application.

#### 7. COCOA – Welcome to Dudley Project

In March 2014 an application was received from COCOA for funding towards a project intended to work with individuals newly arrived in Dudley to encourage them to access mainstream services appropriately.

In principle a contribution of £1,000 was approved, subject to a contribution being considered by the Halesowen North and South Community Forum, and it was agreed that the application would be considered further at the July meeting of this Forum.

At the July meeting the application was deferred in order to ascertain the outcome of the Project's endeavours to secure funding from other sources, including Dudley Council for Voluntary Services (DCVS). This reflected the recommendation of the Halesowen North and South Community Forum from 24 June 2014.

No further information has been received at the time of preparing this report.

#### 8. Life Centre Debt Advice

An application from Life Centre Debt Advice was made to all 10 Community Forums. The application was for £1,230 to assist with the appointment of a Debt Advice Manager's post.

This was deferred at the July 2014 meeting to enable a scoping exercise to be undertaken by the applicant to confirm the benefits of the application for people in Halesowen.

No further information has been received at the time of preparing this report.

#### 9. There were 2 further applications for funding that were deferred at the September meeting of the Community Forum.

#### 10. Halesowen Abbey Trust - Purchase of Leasowes Walled Garden

Halesowen Abbey Trust applied for funding to enable the purchase of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Walled Garden in Leasowes Park to enable it to be restored and opened to the public.

The total cost of purchase is £50,000 and the Abbey Trust has secured funding of £10,000 from A.J. Mucklow, £5,000 from Halesowen North and South Community Forum and a £400 public donation.

A member of the public present at the September meeting questioned the ownership of the Walled Garden and it was agreed that this would be investigated.

Records indicate that the freehold for the Walled Garden in Leasowes Park has, at some point in the past, been disposed of by the Council.

Stourbridge College became a Further Education Corporation following the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. The disposal of the freehold of the land that Stourbridge College occupied in Leasowes Park, Halesowen was the transfer to the College Corporation at this point in time. The site was subsequently used by horticultural students.

With the more recent amalgamation of Stourbridge College with Birmingham Metropolitan College (B-MET) the assets of the FE Corporation of the former transferred to the latter. Title to the Walled Garden is with B-MET who are selling the property.

*I recommend that Members consider whether a grant of up to £5,000 should be approved.*

#### 11. Dudley Council for Voluntary Service (DCVS)

DCVS has requested funding of £3625.60 to help fund the annual Dudley Volunteer Awards. The aim of the event is to recognise publicly the contribution of volunteers. It is a high profile event publicised through a range of media outlets and helps to promote the work of voluntary organisations and volunteering opportunities. A schedule of costs has been submitted with the quote.

This funding request has been submitted to all 10 community forums. DCVS receives funding from Dudley MBC, Dudley PCT and Dudley Community Partnership.

*In September I recommended that Members consider whether a grant of up to £362.50 should be approved equal to one tenth share when shared equally with the other Forums. However the event for which the funding was requested, took place on Thursday 16 October 2014.*

### **New Applications for Consideration at this Meeting**

#### 12. Halesowen in Bloom

Halesowen in Bloom aims to make the town a better place to live and work in, a delightful place to visit and a profitable location of investment.

The application is for the purchase of trough planters for installation at Queensway adjacent to the bus station, Queensway Centre and Earls Island. The total project cost is £14,000 and Halesowen in Bloom are requesting 50% of the project cost from the two Community Forums in Halesowen - £7,250.86.

Belle Vale, Hayley Green & Cradley South Community Forum is asked to make an allocation of £3,625.43.

*I recommended that Members consider whether a grant of up to £3,625.43 should be approved which is 50% of the amount requested from the two Community Forums covering Halesowen.*

### 13. Chamber of Trade – Christmas Lights

Halesowen Chamber of Trade seeks to preserve a spirit of goodwill, friendship and unity amongst all persons engaged in trade and commerce within Halesowen and district. The Chamber seeks to protect the interests of business and to promote the town centre.

The Chamber organise the annual Christmas lights to improve the town centre environment and to encourage visits to the town.

The application is for the refurbishment of the Halesowen town centre Christmas lights and the request is for **£4,896** towards a total project cost of £14,500. The remaining funding is raised through donations and sponsorship.

*I recommended that Members consider whether a grant of up to 4,896 should be approved.*

### 14. Duke of Edinburgh

The Dudley Duke of Edinburgh Award Association supports volunteer leaders to deliver the Award in partnership with the local operating authority, enabling young people from all areas and backgrounds across the Borough to access the Award and to develop their selves. The Award increases self esteem and confidence and provides participants with life skills that equip them for adulthood. The Award is highly regarded by employers and training providers.

The application is for funding to train leaders to enable them to gain qualifications – Basic Expedition Leaders (BEL) course, First Aid course and Hill and Moorland Leader course - which will enable the group to increase the number of young people that are able to access the Award. This will also ensure that leader's qualifications meet the requirements of the operating authorities' guidelines.

The cost of the project is £5,000 and the Dudley Duke of Edinburgh Award Association is requesting a grant of **£5,000**.

Originally this application was received by the Kingswinford North & Wall Heath, Kingswinford South and Wordsley Community Forum. The Association was advised to submit the application to all 10 Community Forums given the Borough-wide nature of the activities of the organisation.

*I recommended that Members consider whether a grant of up to £500 should be approved which is one-tenth of the total amount requested from the ten Community Forums.*

15. An application from Dudley MBC for funding towards a Christmas tree was forwarded to Elected Members in advance of this meeting. However on closer inspection the location that had been identified was in the neighbouring Cradley & Wollescote Ward. The applicant was notified and the application was redirected.

16. The approach adopted by other Community Forums will be reported verbally at the meeting on 12 November.

## **Finance**

17. Taking account of all previous commitments from this Community Forum, the current balance of funding available to the Belle Vale, Hayley Green and Cradley South Community Forum is **£11,718.84**. Details have been forward to Members prior to the meeting.
18. The Empty Shops Grant allocation for the Belle Vale, Hayley Green and Cradley South Community Forum is **£16.736.10**. Details have been forward to Members prior to the meeting.

## **Law**

19. The Localism Act 2011 gives the Council a power of general competence to act in the interests of the community.
20. 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**

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

## **Recommendation**

22. 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.