

# **GRANTS COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD**

10<sup>th</sup> January 2006

**Present:**

Councillor     The Mayor, Stuart Drummond, Councillors Peter Jackson and Robbie Payne

Officers:       John Mennear, Acting Assistant Director, Community Services  
                     Alison Mawson, Head of Community Safety and Prevention  
                     Danielle Swainston, Early Years Manager  
                     Tracy Liveras, Young People and Play Co-ordinator  
                     Susan Ryback, Grants Officer  
                     Angela Hunter, Principal Democratic Services Officers

### **22. Apologies for Absence**

None.

### **23. Declarations of interest by Members**

None.

### **24. To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2005**

Received.

### **25. Play Opportunities Pool Award 2005/2006** *(Director of Children's Services)*

**Type of decision**

Non-key.

**Purpose of report**

To consider a grant award rising from an application from a community group to provide play services in 2005/2006.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee**

Grant aid totally £18,000 was available annually to community groups and voluntary organisations for the provision of play opportunities. To date, grant aid had been approved totalling £16,495.57 leaving a balance of £1,504.43.

An application had been received from St Luke's Little Angels which operated from St Luke's Church Community Hall, off Hart Lane as a Parent and Toddler Group. The group currently borrowed toys and equipment from an existing group that operated on a Monday and it was envisaged that these groups would join together and provide 2 sessions per week.

The Young People and Play Co-ordinator had visited the Group and engaged with parents there. The Centre was large and there was a warm and friendly atmosphere with plenty of interaction between both parents and children. The organisation had raised some funds, a proportion of which was used to hire the hall, provide refreshments and purchase art and craft materials. The grant aid would be used to enable the group to purchase identified play items and it was proposed a contribution of £1,000 be made.

A Member asked how accessible this Group was to people living in disadvantaged areas. The Young People and Play Co-ordinator indicated that there were no boundaries to who could attend this Group and that there people attending from across the whole town as it was a good play group.

### **Decision**

A grant award totalling £1,000 for St Luke's Little Angels was approved.

## **26. Community Pool 2005/2006** *(Director of Adult and Community Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Non-key.

### **Purpose of report**

To advise Members of two applications to the Community Pool and to seek approval for grant awards from remaining funds and to request approval for the change of use of a grant awarded to Headland Future Ltd in the 2004/2005 financial year. Also to inform Members of an underspend of the grant awarded to Central Residents' Association in the current financial year and to request the accrual of the balance of the award into the 2006/2007 Community Pool Budget.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee**

The Community Pool provided financial assistance to community groups and voluntary organisations with £404,600 being available during 2005/2006. To date, grants had been awarded to 31 groups totalling £385,945 leaving a balance of £18,655. However, this balance had recently been increased to £24,572 due to an underspend on Directed Lettings, an overpayment made on an invoice to ADT Alarm Company from CRA and an underspend on a strategic reserve.

### **Hartlepool Voluntary Development Agency (HVDA)**

The HVDA was established in 1986 and provided a wide range of support and development including working with volunteers and voluntary and community groups, building links and developing partnerships with agencies and distributing funding through Community Chests. HVDA have supported 74 groups in this current year, assisting 14 of them to raise £482,457 from external sources. However, this work was now under threat as HVDA had a shortfall in core funding mainly due to the demise of European Regional Development Funding (ERDF), which came to an end in December 2004.

The Grants Officer confirmed that HVDA had received approximately £27,000 of funding from the Council for 2005/2006 towards running costs and salaries. Additional grant was requested amounting to £23,334 to cover core funding for January – March 2006 and this was broken down in the report. As resources were not available to approve the grant at the level requested, Officers had recommended a breakdown of areas to be targeted within the resources available and these were included within the report.

HVDA currently hold approximately three month's reserves as recommended by The Charities Commission. If the application for grant funding was refused, the shortfall would need to be met from these reserves.

Members agreed that the loss of ERDF funding was a big issue that would affect a lot of organisations across the town. However, Members were concerned at approving this application as they felt that any additional funding may be used to cover redundancy costs and that better planning from HVDA should have been in place to deal with this foreseeable situation. Members referred the issue of the withdrawal ERDF funding and the impact it would have across the voluntary sector to the scrutiny process.

### **Wharton Trust**

The Wharton Trust provided social development and recreational activities and courses for all members of the community of all ages, as well as supporting the local community with access employment and training. The Trust has had problems this financial year securing funding to cover operational costs and have had to increase internal income. Support was

provided to the Trust by Officers from the Adult and Community Services Department in relation to the management and financial affairs of the organisation.

The Trust had identified a shortfall in funding for January to March of this year and had made an application for a contribution of £5,000. Although the Trust had some outstanding debt to the Council, there was a payment plan in place to repay this and had been actively working to secure their future, including applications to other sources for funding for 2006/2007 financial year.

Members were very supportive of the Trust and felt they made an excellent contribution to the community that was second to none.

### **Headland Future**

Headland Future provided social, recreational and educational opportunities for young people. In 2004/2005 a grant of £4,453 was awarded to Headland Future from the Community Pool for the installation of a hoist facility as part of the Abbey Street project, to allow full disabled access to all areas including the gym facility. However, due to operational difficulties and the lack of demand for the gym facility, the hoist was not installed.

A partnership had been forged with Headland Future, the Headland Development Trust and the Salvation Army to form the Active8 Centre Partnership in the Salvation Army building in Durham Street. This Centre provided a health and fitness centre for residents of all abilities and ages. The gym equipment originally purchased for the Abbey Street project had been relocated to the Active8 Centre to maximise community use, and since the installation 28 new members had joined the centre.

As the multi-gym facility had been relocated, Headland Future had requested that the terms of the grant be varied to incorporate:

- i) lift repairs at their Abbey Street premises to allow full disabled access throughout the building
- ii) routine maintenance of the gym equipment at the Active8 Centre.

Headland Future had recently overcome financial difficulties by reviewing their operation and re-mortgaging their premises. Although Members reiterated the point that it was not usual to change the use of funding once approved, they agreed that this case was exceptional and that it would be the right decision to approve this change of use.

### **Central Residents' Association (CRA)**

A grant of £15,000 had previously been approved by the Grants Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2005 towards the salary costs of a Manager and Administrator's post. Although monthly payments had been made to the Administrator, the CRA had not been in a position to employ a Manager

which left a balance of £11,635.53 remaining.

The CRA had recently declared themselves '*voluntary insolvent*' as they were no longer in a position to continue trading. It was therefore proposed to accrue the balance into the Community Pool for the 2006/2007 financial year for the benefit of the voluntary sector.

The balance of the Community Pool budget was £24,572 and if all of the above items were approved this would be fully expended.

### **Decision**

- i) The application for HVDA be refused due to the reasons stated above.
- ii) The application for The Wharton Trust for £5,000 be approved.
- iii) The change of use of the grant awarded to Headland Future as detailed above be approved.
- iv) The remaining balance of £31,162.53 of the Community Pool Budget be accrued into 2006/2007 financial year.

## **27. NRF Community Safety Grants Pool – (*Head of Community Safety and Prevention*)**

### **Type of decision**

Non-key.

### **Purpose of report**

To seek approval to allocate a proportion of the NRF Community Safety Grants Pool to a project.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by the Committee**

The Community Safety Grants Pool was awarded to allow community groups access to funding to tackle local community safety problems. The objectives and criteria of the grants were detailed within the report.

Members were asked to consider an application from Owton Manor West Neighbour Watch and Residents' Association to fund a pedestrian access gate, a bin bay and various repairs to the Manor West Centre at Brierton Lane shops.

The Grants Panel had agreed that the project would benefit the welfare and safety of residents of the flats above the shops as well as visitors to the various outlets. The funding requested was above the maximum grant (£500) that could be recommended by the Grants Panel or approved by the

Director of Regeneration and Planning Services. However, there was sufficient budget remaining within the Grants Pool to approve this application.

Whilst Members expressed surprise that none of the other retail outlets were willing to contribute towards this project, they acknowledged that the residents' group was very active and that the additional security would benefit local residents. Members were concerned that there appeared to be a substantial amount of this Grants Pool budget for 2005/2006 remaining and requested that a press release be issued to actively pursue applications for the balance of funding.

### **Decision**

- i) The application for £3,084.82 towards the cost of a pedestrian access gate, bin bay and various repairs to the Manor West Centre at Brierton Lane shops be approved.
- ii) That applications for the balance of funding from the NRF Community Safety Grants Panel be actively pursued.

**J A BROWN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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