

GRANTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

24 February 2009

The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Robbie Payne (In the Chair)

Councillor Victor Tumilty and the Mayor, Stuart Drummond

Officers: John Mennear, Assistant Director (Community Services)
Peter Gouldsbro, Community Safety Officer
Susan Rybak, Community Resources Manager
Pat Wormald, Senior Clerical Officer
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

Also present: Representatives from Hartlepool Community Studio.

15. Apologies for Absence

None

16. Declarations of interest by members

None

17. Community Safety Capital Grants Allocations *(Head of Community Safety and Prevention)*

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

- I. To inform members of additional funds added to the grant allocation for 2008:09
- II. To update on the application on which a decision was deferred at the Grants Committee meeting of 17th November 2008
- III. To consider / seek approval for recommended grant awards

Issues for Consideration

The Council had decided that its capital budget for 2008/09 would include an allocation of £150,000 to implement community safety projects, which were associated with and contributed to Safer Hartlepool Partnership's strategy covering crime, disorder and substance misuse. Following an agreement to carry forward an under-spend of £3,717 from 2007/08 this had been increased to £153,717. Subsequently a sum of £3,279 had been released to the Fund from prudential borrowing monies carried over from 2006/7 budgets.

The following proposals were put forward for consideration

Rossmere Way Recreation Ground

At the meeting on 17th November 2008 members deferred a decision on an application for £22,750 to support the fencing of Rossmere Way Recreation Ground in order to ascertain whether the applicants had been successful in obtaining alternative funding. The applicants had since confirmed that the project in question had been completed using alternative funding. A verbal request was made to transfer the initial funding application towards a future project to construct permanent changing rooms and pavilion. No written details or application had been received and Members felt therefore that this sum should not be carried forward indefinitely and asked that it be returned to the central pot.

Station Lane Allotments

This Seaton Carew site has approximately 75 plots. The site had become run down resulting in many plots becoming vacant. In response £35,000 had been invested by the Council to re-invigorate the site. External security to the site comprises a 2 metre close board wood fence and the gate entry was felt to be a weak security point. Although the area does not suffer from high levels of crime there were still incidents of theft and vandalism and it was felt logical to maintain the site as a secure and in-demand provision. The installation of three security gates would cost £2,735 with £960 being obtained from HBC Community Services. Therefore a grant of £1,775 was requested. Members expressed their support.

Business Security Fund

The Business Security Grant scheme had been running for a number of year and been successful in assisting small businesses, vulnerable to crime, to secure their premises. Business could apply for up to half of the cost of security installation to a maximum of £2,500. This could include monitored CCTV, security fencing, roller shutters and security lighting. Cleveland Police Crime Prevention Officers would visit the businesses and offer advice. The overall project fund was £74,000 with £17,00 being provided through HBC Economic Development and £37,000 from the private sector. Therefore a grant of £20,000 was requested. Members expressed their support, asking whether

Cleveland Fire Brigade had any involvement. The Community Safety Officer to bring this information back to the committee.

North Cemetery

North Cemetery first opened in 1856 to provide a burial ground for West Hartlepool. With the site now technically closed as a burial ground it has become increasingly incorporated within the town's overall fabric as an area of green space. The number of people exercising their pets or generally walking through the cemetery now significantly exceeded people visiting burial sites. However there had also been unwelcome visitation including drug-related crime and general anti-social behaviour. To combat these problems a North Cemetery Masterplan had been formulated and endorsed. Phase 1 entailed a package of improvements to the Chester Road entrance including some wall demolition, installation of double gate, replacement wall and railings and new paving. The total cost of the project would be £81,6000 with £42,000 being provided by HBC Neighbourhood Services and £13,250 from the Dyke House, Stranton and Grange NAP forums. Therefore a grant of £26,350 was requested. Members expressed their support although concerns were raised about the possible dispersal of anti-social behaviour into other areas.

Wharton Terrace Improvements

Wharton Terrace lies within both the North Central Housing Market Renewal area and the Dyke House/Stranton/Grange NAP area. Consultation carried out as part of the NCH Market Renewal area Masterplan had shown a need for action to restore local confidence in the area and stem incidents of anti-social behaviour. Two years ago the NAP forum funded design plans for streets in the area, including Wharton Terrace. At that time substantial monies were invested in a landscaping programme for St Oswald's Street, including the removal of planters which tended to provide a congregation point for people engaged in alcohol consumption and anti-social behaviour. It was proposed that similar remodelling plans be implemented in Wharton Terrace. The total cost would be £54,000, £19,000 of which would come from the NAP forum. Therefore a grant of £35,000 was requested. The Community Safety Officer highlighted that the project cost included a 'contingencies' element of £4,440. Should this cost only be partially utilised HBC would invoke a proportionate clawback condition. Members expressed their support for the proposals.

Burn Valley Allotments

This site comprises 76 plots and is well secured around the perimeter with CCTV installed on site. However the general area had suffered from unacceptable levels of crime and a gate entrance on Brinkburn Gardens, while effective in restricting unauthorised entry, was slightly set back from the main fence line. The resultant small strip of land had gradually become a location for fly-tipping and assembly with resultant anti-social behaviour. It was proposed that the gates be brought forward to become a continuous part of the external fence line. This

would remove the problem area and would not affect tenant access or have an impact on road or footpath traffic. The total cost of the project was £1,890 with £680 to be provided by HBC Community Services. Therefore a grant of £1,210 was requested. Members expressed their support although they queried whether this work could be done with the Station Lane allotment improvements at a reduced rate. The Community Safety Officer advised that there were no savings to be made in bulk purchase of materials and the work would be carried out in-house. The Chair asked that this be made clear in future reports.

Waverley Terrace Community Allotments

This area had recently been designated for the development of community allotments at the east end of the site by the Culture, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio. The general area suffers higher than average levels of crime and anti-social behaviour and measures were proposed to maintain the investment in the garden, namely security fencing and a CCTV system. The total cost for this would be £19,050. Of this £2,000 would come from the Rift House / Burn Valley Forum, £5,000 from Pride in Hartlepool and £3,699 from the HBC Minor Works Budget. Therefore a grant of £8,351 was requested. Members expressed their support for the installation of security fencing on the site however they were reluctant to install CCTV as it was not usual practice to provide cameras to areas where there was no proven need for them. The Community Safety Officer indicated that Rift House East Residents Group had requested the CCTV. Members felt that this was a private area and there were public areas more in need of CCTV provision at this time. The Community Safety Officer was asked to remove the £5,050 and reduce the grant approval to £3,301.

Decision

That the following applications be approved:

- Station Lane Allotments - £1,775
- Business Security Fund – £20,000
- North Cemetery - £26,350
- Wharton Terrace Improvements - £35,000
- Burn Valley Allotments - £1,210
- Waverley Terrace Community Garden - £3,301

That the following application be refused and the monies returned to the Community Safety Capital Grant Fund:

- Rossmere Way Recreation Ground - £22,750.

18. Community Pool 2008/09 *(Director of Adult and Community Services)*

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

To advise and seek approval for the level of grant awards to community groups and voluntary organisations from the Community Pool for 2008/09.

Issues for Consideration

The Community Pool budget originally available for distribution for 2008/ 2009 amounted to £594,867. Following previous funding rounds, the amount left available for distribution was £67,207.

The following applications were put forward for consideration:

Hartlepool Bereavement Services

At the meeting on 17th November 2008 members deferred two decisions. The first was for £9,785 as a contribution toward the salary costs of a part-time Bereavement Worker for Hartlepool Bereavement Services. At that time officers had recommended rejection of the application because the organisation had not been fully constituted for more than two years and were therefore ineligible to apply to the Community Pool. Officers had since met with the group and established that the service had only been available from January 2009. Therefore they were unable to demonstrate a track record of providing services of this nature to what could be considered a very vulnerable client group. In addition the group did not have the recommended policies and procedures in place and were obviously unable to provide an annual report or accounts. Therefore officers continued to recommend that the application be rejected.

Making a Difference

Also deferred on 17th November 2008 was a request to amend the terms and conditions of a previous award to Making a Difference. This organisation had been awarded a one year revenue grant of £12,272 towards the salary costs of a Project Co-ordinator, Support Worker and insurance costs, but had been successful in securing additional funding from the Primary Care Trust as a contribution towards the Support Worker's salary costs. It had therefore requested that the grant could be attributed to the salary costs of the Project Co-ordinator and a Counsellor's post. This request had been deferred by the Committee pending further information on the counselling service. Information had

been provided which showed an ongoing need for the counselling services and the positive impact on the lives of the young people benefitting from them. Officers were therefore continuing to recommend approval of the request to amend the terms and conditions of the original grant awarded to now include a contribution to the salary costs of a Counsellor.

Members made reference to the success of their bid for additional funding from the PCT, querying whether they would have been awarded the amount they had been if this contribution had been known. Making a Difference could have received this Community Pool funding at the expense of another group. The Assistant Director advised that this was not necessarily the case but he would provide details of all those Community Pool applications considered on 21st July 2008. Members also queried why this additional post had been provided when the funding was not there to support it. The Community Resources Manager commented that the group had thought the PCT funding would be greater than it eventually was. Members suggested that HBC officers meet with PCT representatives to discuss funding and the voluntary sector. The Assistant Director advised that in the case of certain physical activity grants the PCT would put an amount into a central pot which would then be distributed as the Grants Committee saw fit. This was felt to be a better way to proceed.

Hartlepool Community Studio

This organisation had applied for additional grant aid of £10,808 as contribution to core costs including the salary costs of key staff. Earlier in the financial year the group was awarded a grant of £21,525 also as a contribution of key staff salary costs. The Studio was undergoing a period of substantial change with a recent restructure of the organisation having resulted in a reduction in overheads of £43,000 per annum and the redundancy of three staff. Their financial reserves had also been depleted by investment in services to protect the future of the organisation. The board of management were confident that the restructure would effect savings necessary to ensure The Studio's future but would need additional financial support to cover a shortfall in core costs in the current financial year. Officers therefore recommended approval of £10,808 grant aid as a contribution to the core costs of the Studio.

Representatives of the Studio were present and addressed the committee, answering queries relating to their plans for the future and the strength of the board of management. While they were keen to improve the public profile of the Studio with impressive live bands they would not shoot above their means to do this. They thanked the committee members for all the help they had given over the past 10 years. Members praised the organisation for having recognised their problems and attempting to correct them.

Hartlepool Access Group (HAG): Shopmobility

Members were advised that the Project Co-ordinator and Access Audit Supervisor had both left their posts in December 2008 leaving HAG with no alternative but to cease the operation of all projects apart from Shopmobility. Officers had been informed that the Group were potentially insolvent and that a non Community Pool grant approved for the purchase of equipment had been used inappropriately for revenue costs. Since being alerted to this situation a basic audit of HAG's financial records had been carried out by an HBC Internal Audit Officer. This showed that the Community Pool grant approved had been expended for the intended purpose. An action plan was included within the audit report and HBC officers had met with the Chairman of the HAG Executive Committee to discuss its contents. The Middleton Grange Shopping Centre Manager had been approached with a view to possibly taking over the management of Shopmobility but officers had been advised that they were not in a position to do this.

It had also become apparent over recent weeks that HAG did not have sufficient funding to continue to run Shopmobility until the end of the financial year. Subject to approval from 1st April 2009 funding would be available from the Community Pool and PPG, the Middleton Grange Shopping Centre Managers, in order to support Shopmobility until that date members had approved an emergency financial contribution of £735 per week from the Community Pool to cover staffing and utility costs. This funding had commenced from 2nd February 2009 and members were asked if they would be prepared to continue this funding into the near future. The Hartlepool Voluntary Development Agency was supporting HAG with advice and information and were paying for a consultant to formulate a Business Plan. This was due to be completed on 5th March 2009. Members suggested that should the Business Plan not be presented by this date the temporary funding be stopped. Members were keen that Shopmobility continue to operate but were not happy at the current situation. They indicated that they would not be prepared to agree funding for the 2009/10 financial year until the business plan was provided.

Decision

- I. That the application from Hartlepool Bereavement Services be rejected
- II. That the request from Making a Difference to amend the terms and conditions of the award approved on 21st July 2008 be approved.
- III. That the application for funding from Hartlepool Community Studio be approved

- IV. That limited continuing support of £735 per week be provided to Hartlepool Access Group (HAG): Shopmobility subject to the production of a business plan by the organisation
- V. That the remaining balance of the Community Pool totalling £54,194 (less ongoing contributions to Hartlepool Access Group: HAG: Shopmobility) be considered for allocation against bids at future meetings or carried forward into the new financial year.

19. Community Pool 2009/2010 *(Director of Adult and Community Services)*

Type of Decision

Non key

Purpose of Report

The Community Pool budget for the 2009/2010 financial year had been set at £482,593.

In the 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 financial years, one award from the Community Pool in each year was approved on a tapering basis. As it was agreed, in principle, and as funding was available the following awards were being reserved from the total budget available:

£4,085.50 – Owton Manor Neighbourhood Watch and Residents Association (third year tapered award)
£17,056 – RESPECT (second year tapered award)
£23,252 – Shopmobility

However officers recommended that the application from RESPECT be deferred until the next meeting as the group were currently unable to provide the supporting documentation to supplement their application for funding. After deduction of the £3,000 Direct Lettings allocation and funding of the awards detailed above this would leave a balance for distribution at this meeting of £435,200

Members were referred to Appendix 2 of the report which provided a list of all the applications to the Community Pool for 2009/10 and details of the recommendations relating to those applications. A number of applications were recommended for deferral or refusal and detailed information on the applications and the reasons for these recommendations were included within the report:

As a result of the Mayor's and Councillor Payne's declarations of interest, it was agreed that the application relating to Belle Vue Sports and Youth Centre, recommended for deferral, be referred to Cabinet for

decision at the appropriate time. In addition members asked that references to Hartlepool Access Group Shopmobility be amended to Shopmobility in order that there be no confusion as to which aspect of the organisation would be receiving the funding.

Decision

- I. That £3,000 be allocated for directed lettings
- II. That Grant aid to those organisations recommended for approval in Appendix 2 be approved.
- III. That recommendations to defer those applications as detailed in Appendix 2 be approved while additional information is gathered
- IV. That an allocation of grant aid to groups known to be experiencing financial difficulties be released in monthly/quarterly instalments as appropriate in order to safeguard the Council's investment and minimise risk
- V. The rejection of applications from the groups as detailed in the report
- VI. That the remaining balance of the Community Pool be considered for allocation against bids at future meetings within the financial year (and any remaining carry over balance from the 2008/2009 budget).

The meeting concluded at 11.55am.

P J DEVLIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 2 MARCH 2009