

DECISION REPORT – GRANT APPLICATIONS

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Summary

This report considers two applications for grant funding submitted to the Bowbrook, Copthorne and Radbrook Local Joint Committee (LJC) for 2009/10.

A total of £38,000 has been devolved to the committee to fund projects in the local community served by the LJC. At the present time, funds have been allocated to three projects, totalling £8,750. This leaves £29,250 in the current year's budget.

The two applications now under consideration are for:

- Up to £7,820 for refurbishment of cricket nets, submitted by the Beacon Cricket Club and Shelton Cricket Club; and
- £2,618 for environmental and safety improvements, submitted by the Meole Brace Garden and Allotment Club.

Recommendations

It is recommended to the Bowbrook, Copthorne and Radbrook Local Joint Committee that:

A) The following application is approved:

- £5,000 to the Beacon Cricket Club and Shelton Cricket Club

B) The following application is not supported:

- £2,618 to the Meole Brace Garden and Allotment Club.

C) The Committee notes that the Time2PLAY Toy Library, whose application was deferred at the meeting on 14 January has obtained funding from an alternative source and the grant is no longer required.

Background

1. From 1 April 2009 Shropshire Council has created 28 Local Joint Committees to operate across the whole of Shropshire. These LJs are legally constituted decision making committees of Shropshire Council.
2. The LJC for Bowbrook, Copthorne and Radbrook has membership from Shropshire Council (3 members) and Shrewsbury Town Council (3 members) all with equal voting rights. Currently, 3 councillors represent the wards on both councils. In these circumstances, the 3 individuals each have 2 votes.
3. One of the main responsibilities of the LJC is to determine expenditure of the devolved budget. A budget of £38,000 has been made available to the LJC for the current financial year. Expenditure against this budget is agreed by the Committee after consideration of decision reports. Each member has 2 votes, with decisions determined by a simple majority.

Purposes of the funding

4. The funding devolved to the LJC can be used for a number of different purposes over the year. At the present time, the Committee has not allocated funds to any specific purposes but has indicated that it will receive applications from local organisations for eligible purposes. Funding by the LJC must comply with the general Financial Rules for LJs that are attached to this report. Applications must demonstrate compliance with the following criteria:
 - Expenditure must be consistent with achieving the aims, objectives and vision set out in Shropshire's Sustainable Community Strategy, the Council's Corporate Plans and local Neighbourhood or Parish Plans.
 - Expenditure must be for activity within the geographical area of the Local Joint Committee.
 - Expenditure must benefit the wider community and should not be used to fund a group which restricts membership based on views, beliefs etc. For example, it would not be appropriate to make a contribution to a religious group but a contribution to say, improvements to a church hall which is open for bookings from the wider community would be acceptable.
 - The budget must not be spent on mainstream council activities, but can be used to enhance mainstream activities.
 - The budget must not be a displacement of existing council funding. For example, a service cannot be reinstated from the local budget if the council has cut funding for it in the previous 3 years.
 - The budget should not be used to meet ongoing staffing costs of an organisation.

Decision-making procedure

5. The LJC elected Members will decide on applications for funding and their decisions will be taken in public, following the process below:

- a written report by the Lead Officer, setting out the details of applications received and recommending a course of action;
- a brief verbal introduction to the applications, by the Lead Officer, at the meeting;
- questions by the elected Members of the officers and/or the applicants (if present);
- elected Members take the decision.

A slightly different process will need to be taken if there are fewer than three elected Members present, as that is the number required to form a quorum.

Application by the Beacon Cricket Club and the Shelton Cricket Club

6. The two clubs wish to renovate the cricket nets at Racecourse Lane playing fields. Currently, the nets themselves and the whole facility are dilapidated and useless. The clubs have about 70 active members between them and actively encourage participation by young people. They provide structured coaching but also a fun activity.
7. The clubs have costed a range of proposals, ranging from the most expensive option at £7,820 to the cheapest at £5,885. They have requested a £5,000 grant, which, with labour supplied by club members, would enable them to refurbish at least 2 bays and hopefully 3. They hope to raise a further £1,500 in the summer to pay for matting.
8. The application is from two local sports clubs with a significant membership. The improvements would improve the local environment for the benefit of the community in general. Accordingly, a grant of £5,000 is recommended.

Application by the Meole Brace Garden and Allotment Club

9. The club occupies three nearby sites at Stanley Lane and Washford Road allotments. It proposes to improve the access to the Stanley Lane site and build, reinforce and resurface dilapidated roadways on the Stanley Road site to “commercial high standards”. The club regards this as important in fulfilling its obligations to members with accessibility problems, such as parents with push chairs, people with mobility scooters, as well as cyclists and walkers in general. It also wishes to improve the appearance of the site. The club organises a range of technical talks, demonstrations and open days and an annual show. It says that the improvements would allow it to explore a wider range of community-based projects in the future.

10. 27 of the 84 members live in the Radbrook and Bowbrook wards, with the remainder living in Meole/Column/Sutton, where the site is located. The club has applied to both this LJC and the Meole, Column and Sutton LJC. A pro-rata split of the £8,184 cost of the work would indicate £2,618 from this LJC. The club states that it would contribute £511 through volunteer labour.
11. Although the committee has previously supported a club based outside the LJC area, on the basis that many of its members resided in the area, in this case the proposed improvements would mainly benefit the environment of the neighbouring LJC area. It is considered that this scheme is expensive and the benefit to this LJC's residents and wider community would be very limited. Accordingly, it is recommended that this application is not supported.

Time2PLAY Toy Library

12. The application for £500 towards publicity costs by the Pre-school Learning Alliance was deferred at the last committee because it was considered to be a Shropshire-wide organisation and to enable alternative sources of assistance to be investigated. The need for funding has been resolved from an alternative Council budget and so the grant from this LJC is no longer needed.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)
1. Locality Working – Local Joint Committees Supplementary Report – Implementation Executive 19 March 2009.
Human Rights Act Appraisal
At this stage the recommendations are unlikely to result in any implications for the Human Rights Act.
Environmental Appraisal
Both of the projects would have a positive impact on the environment.
Risk Management Appraisal
The Council needs to address the risk of legal challenge to decisions through procedural or other errors. This has been carefully assessed. There are no risks specifically relating to the two applications.
Community / Consultations Appraisal
The community Planning Project has been the subject of previous discussions at the LJC and at a specific meeting. None has been carried out on the applications from the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

Cabinet Member

Gwilym Butler

Local Members

Peter Nutting, Peter Adams, Keith Roberts

Appendices

LJC Financial Procedure Rules