

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

DECISION

Agenda Item No 13

meeting date: 27 JANUARY 2015
title: VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION GRANT APPLICATION
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
principal author: LAWSON ODDIE

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider a revised application for a voluntary organisation grant that has been received from Gisburn Festival Hall

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The council operates a voluntary organisation grant scheme, for which applications are invited on an annual basis.
- 2.2 Applicants must clearly demonstrate that the purpose of the grant sought is to provide services or facilities that will meet the needs of communities in the Ribble Valley or directly benefit our residents.
- 2.3 The 2014/15 grant applications were considered by the voluntary grants working group and ultimately approvals were made by this committee at its meeting in March 2014.
- 2.4 The total budget for Voluntary Organisation Grants for the year is £101,810. There were 16 applications made which totalled £177,563, including the original application made by Gisburn Festival Hall. Of these grant applications a total of £96,750 was approved, leaving a residual balance of £5,060, offering the Council flexibility to support any further grant requests which may be received during the course of 2014/15.

3 RESUBMISSION OF APPLICATION BY GISBURN FESTIVAL HALL

- 3.1 The application previously submitted by Gisburn Festival Hall as part of the above grant application process for 2014/15 was not recommended for approval by the council's working group.
- 3.2 We have since received a letter from them as at Annex 1, asking for reconsideration of the original application (Annex 2), taking into account the further information provided in their letter.
- 3.3 Members are asked to consider the contents of the application and letter and the request for a voluntary organisation grant.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:
- Resources – Approval of the request would incur £2,200 of expenditure. There is an unallocated balance on the Voluntary Organisation Grants budget of £5,060 to support any further grant requests that may be received during the course of 2014/15
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal – None.
 - Political – None
 - Reputation – None

- Equality and Diversity – Equality and Diversity issues are examined as part of the application process

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 5.1 Consider the contents of the application (Annex 2) and letter (Annex 1) and whether to approve the resubmitted request for a voluntary organisation grant.

HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

PF11-15/LO/AC
15 January 2015

Gisburn Festival Hall

5 Burnley Road, Gisburn, Clitheroe, Lancashire BB7 4ET

Mrs T. Holderness
Ribble Valley Borough Council
Church walk
Clitheroe
BB7 2RA

16 October 2014

Dear Trudi,

Re: Voluntary Organisation Grants

You will recall that in December 2013 I submitted a bid on behalf of Gisburn Festival Hall for funding from the above programme for an internet drop-in and gateway centre at our village hall.

Unfortunately the bid was rejected and the feedback we received was that although our bid met all the criteria for funding, other bids were considered more suitable.

However, you will also recall that not all the money was allocated and a sum of £5060 was held back to support further grant requests which may be received during the course of 2014/15.

I am therefore writing today on behalf of our Management Committee to ask that the Council reconsiders our bid, as now revised, taking into account the further information below.

The purpose of our project is to promote the village hall as a community hub: a place of energy that generates community activity, promotes inclusion, builds community spirit and confidence, and provides support and services for local people.

Our project will provide a drop-in community café with internet access and volunteers will be on hand to help people get on-line and get information they would not otherwise be able to access. The banner for our project is 'Meet, Eat, Connect!' We will also provide training and workshops for those who need it.

People in rural areas already have difficulty accessing local services and as the Government pointed out a few months ago, older people in particular are in danger of being left behind as more and more services are being delivered on-line.

As the Council has now decided to axe the 'Services To A Neighbourhood' (STAN the Van) people in Gisburn have lost that means of access to services. Whether or not that was the the best way to deliver services to the village, I understand that there is nothing to take its place.

Whilst our project will not be able to deliver all the services previously offered by STAN, it will provide support and guidance as to how people can get the advice and information they need.

Our previous bid for £9,300 was to cover the purchase of all the equipment we needed to start up the centre and also the ongoing broadband and line rental costs.

As we considered this project so important, we have recently installed a phone line and business Wi-Fi internet hub at the hall and have also bought some new tables. This has been paid for from our own resources from community fundraising events.

We have formed a partnership with AgeUK Lancashire who have funded the purchase of some new chairs and they have also agreed to provide IT training.

We have a number of volunteers who are not only proficient in IT but also have a wealth of knowledge and experience that can help guide people towards the advice and information sources they need.

We have run the community café at our monthly Farmers' Market and it has been very well received, not just as a place to eat but as a place for local people to get together socially. The feedback has been very positive and some are asking why we don't do it more often.

However, in order to properly start the internet access side of the project we need to buy some IT equipment. Many people at the moment bring their own devices to the hall to access the internet but this project is aimed at those who either cannot afford to buy their own equipment or do not have the technical know-how to get started. It is these people who are in danger of being left behind.

We wish to provide people with experience of different types of equipment and therefore we wish to buy a desktop computer, 2 laptops, a tablet, a printer and large screen wall mounted monitor for presentations and training purposes.

We acknowledge that IT equipment has a limited life-span but the main purpose is to get people used to using a variety of equipment in the hope that they will eventually come round to wanting to buy their own. We will however still need to provide equipment in the future for those who do not have the means to buy their own and the cost of updating equipment will be met from our own resources.

The total cost of the equipment we wish to buy will be approximately £2,200. A full breakdown can be provided should that be required.

A report to the RVBC Policy and Finance Committee dated 24 March 2014 said:

'Improving accessibility to services for residents living in rural locations is an issue, which needs to be addressed urgently, to avoid impacting on the cost of delivery of health and adult social services in these areas. People are living longer. If frail, older people are to continue to lead independent lives in their own homes they need to be able to access services and activities locally. This helps avoid isolation from the stimulus of social contact leading to repercussions for mental health.'

Through our village hall facilities and volunteers we are able to help to deliver this service at no cost to the tax-payer other than requiring a little support from Ribble Valley Borough Council.

The project is supported by Nigel Evans MP who visited the hall recently and commended the work we were doing, saying:

'The internet drop-in centre will ensure that no-one in Gisburn need be wi-fi deficient. So much is done on the internet these days that this drop-in centre will be very well used. This proves that rural does not have to mean deprived and the festival hall will become a busy hub for locals to have access to all the services the internet offers, backed up by expert advice to those who are new to the internet and how it works. This is a great service for the local community.'

It is clear that there is considerable support and an identified need for this project in Gisburn and I would therefore ask that the Council consider funding the purchase of computer and presentation equipment at a total cost of £2,200.

I attach a copy of our previous bid for your information but should you need anything further then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

David Waters
Secretary

Ribble Valley Borough Council

Voluntary Organisation Grant Application Form



(Please read the grant criteria on the reverse of this form before answering the questions)

Organisation details	
Name of Organisation	Gisburn Festival Hall
Charity number (If applicable)	1060898
Contact name	David Waters
Contact address	[REDACTED]
Daytime telephone number	[REDACTED]
E-mail address	[REDACTED]
<p>Please state the aims and objectives of your organisation.</p> <p>Gisburn Festival Hall provides a meeting place for local groups and a venue for social functions and fundraising events. It also acts as the focal point of village life bringing together the various groups for village-wide activities.</p> <p>The hall aims to improve the health and fitness of local residents by providing/ hosting a range of fitness activities for all ages and levels of fitness. Through our planned cookery classes and our community café we aim to promote healthy eating and an awareness of food safety.</p> <p>In accordance with the Trust Deed the hall is for the use of everyone “... <i>without distinction of political religious or other opinions...</i>”. Not only does the Management Committee uphold this but extends it to ensure it is inclusive and does not discriminate unfairly against anyone on the grounds of race, gender, creed, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, age or disability.</p>	

Please give a brief description and history of your organisation.

The Festival Hall was donated to the people of Gisburn in 1951 for their use as a village hall for social and recreational purposes. A management committee was established and this became a Registered Charity in 1996. A copy of the Trust Deed is attached.

How does the work of your organisation benefit the residents of Ribble Valley?

Gisburn is a small rural village on the extremities of the Ribble Valley and due to its lack of amenities and the lack of public transport residents can often feel isolated from mainstream activities. The village hall acts as a community hub providing social, leisure, meeting and recreational facilities for local people. In making this application we want to extend the range of facilities, opportunities and services to improve the quality of life of the villagers.

Size of organisation

The Management Committee consists of 16 members but other local people offer their help and support on an ad hoc basis, organising social, recreational and fund-raising events.

Justification for application

Purpose for which the grant is requested

The Management Committee wants the village hall to become a community hub; a place of energy that generates community activity, promotes inclusion, builds community spirit and confidence, and provides support for local people. The hall is already used by a wide range of groups for organised activities but we wish to extend the facilities by providing a 'drop-in' type centre offering computer facilities, WI FI internet access, a signposting centre for advice on other services available (eg Local Authority or CAB services) TV and a community café. Many people may not have a computer or internet access at home, particularly older people, or they may be unsure how to use IT. Many services are only available online and the Government is moving more towards accessing services in this way. Volunteers would be on hand to help people use online services and point them in the right direction for advice. Or villagers can just pop in for a cup of tea and a chat in a friendly environment. It is also an opportunity to promote volunteering by encouraging people to share their skills and knowledge with others. If successful, the grant will be used to buy 2 desktop computers, printer, office software, photocopier, computer chairs, tub chairs, table, TV, aerial and installation, installation of phone line and broadband, 3 years' rental payments to BT for phone line and broadband, purchase and installation of intruder alarm and upgrading of internal doors for security of the equipment.

Is this a new application or have we supported previously? This is a new application.

If previously supported please give details.

Please describe who will benefit from this grant

The Festival Hall provides facilities for everyone in the local area and whilst most people are from the Parish of Gisburn others from nearby villages such as Rimington, Paythorne and Tosside also use the facilities. Current user groups are accross the whole spectrum of ages from toddlers to the more mature adults. The hall has disabled access and disabled toilets. The management committee is committed to ensuring events and facilities are inclusive so that everyone can benefit from what is offered.

How many people will the grant benefit?

There are approximately 500 people in the village of Gisburn extending to around 1700 in the Gisburn and Rimington ward area and all will be able to benefit from the facility.

Please give an indication of the number of Ribble Valley residents that will specifically be supported.

It is anticipated that most people being supported by the facilities will be from the village. Current use of the hall exceeds 200 in number and this is increasing. We anticipate this will increase further with the benefit of the provision of IT, an information centre and casual social facilities. All current users will be supported but more people will be attracted by the new facilities and we expect at least 50 more people will use this than at present.

Please describe, where appropriate, how the grant will:

- Protect and enhance the quality of life in Ribble Valley villages and towns

The village of Gisburn is relatively isolated and has few local amenities. There is a small café and shop in the village but the pub is currently closed and the Strawberry Fields café closed 2 years ago. There is therefore nowhere else for people to gather socially. Although it is on a main bus route, buses are infrequent and finish early in the evening. Many people, particularly the elderly and the young or parents with young children, those who are less abled and those who do not have access to their own transport, are at risk of rural isolation and exclusion from mainstream activities. They may also have difficulty in accessing services, advice and information. Whilst the hall can be booked for meetings or gatherings there is currently no facility for people just to drop in for social interaction. Also some people do not have access to a computer or the internet and so are not able to benefit from online services, communication and information. This may be through a combination of lack of knowledge, lack of funds and a fear of the unknown.

Through our drop in centre we aim to provide a social environment where people can just pop in for a cup of tea and a chat, where they can obtain information and where they can be shown how to access online services.

- Make people's lives safer and healthier

Local people will not have to travel to access local services as we aim to provide a range of 'signposts' to help villagers obtain the information, advice and services they need. Volunteers will show them how they can obtain what they need online. Through our community café, which is part of the drop in centre, we will be promoting healthy eating and providing advice on food safety.

We will provide a range of leaflets published by recognised bodies on health, community safety, fire safety, nutrition, food hygiene, but the emphasis will be on making the most of online services and information.

- Improve access to services

There is nowhere available locally where residents can get advice or information about their rights, responsibilities or how they can access services. Whilst our volunteers will not normally be qualified to give advice, we aim to provide a 'signposting' service where we will be able to direct people towards experts who can give them the advice they need. We will have information leaflets available and anticipate inviting advisors from organisations such as CAB to provide people with advice. We would also aim to link in with the services provided by 'Stan the Van' to help improve service delivery. The centre will also be an opportunity for volunteers to share their own skills and knowledge and also enhance their own profile.

Financial Information

What level of financial support are you requesting from this council?

£ 9300

Is the financial support for revenue or capital expenditure?

£2160 revenue (3 yrs BT rental) £7140 capital

Please note if the amount you require is greater than £10,000, we will require a 3-year financial plan. This will enable us to determine a 3-year grant. However the second and third year grant will only be paid once you have submitted a report on how the first year grant has been used and how Ribble Valley residents have specifically benefited.

Please supply details of any other applications for grant aid that has been made to any other local authority or public bodies.

Organisation	Amount requested	Approved	Refused	Pending
Lottery Funding	9736	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RVBC	10000	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RDPE	36000			
Big Lottery Reaching Communities	48000	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please attach a copy of your latest audited accounts. (Please note applications for grants over £1,000 will not be considered if not supplied.)

Name of auditors PM + M Solutions for Business LLP

Address of auditors Lodge House, Lodge Square, Cow Lane, Burnley, BB11 1NN

Please give us any information you feel is important.

The Festival Hall Management Committee is working to a 3 year strategic plan to make the hall sustainable for the future. This involves reducing outgoings, increasing income, increasing use of the hall and increasing the number of volunteers.

The funding already received from RVBC and RDPE, as outlined above, has been used to buy and install an air sourced heat pump, underfloor heating and associated works and to insulate the external walls and roof-space to conserve energy and reduce carbon emissions. Whilst the work was only completed in August this year, it is already proving to be energy efficient and based on our recent energy consumption we anticipate halving our annual expenditure on fuel. We are considering installing solar panels at the hall in order to make better use of renewable energy and have submitted a stage one bid to the Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund to finance this project, as well as other building work and employment of a development/administration assistant. If we are successful at stage one we will be invited to make a more detailed bid, so the outcome of this application is uncertain at the moment.

The second strand of our strategic plan is to increase income. We are achieving this

partly due to the improved facilities and environment that has resulted from the recent grant funded improvement works and partly through the involvement of more people in helping organise events. Since the hall re-opened in August we have held a jazz night, cabaret night, table top sale, Christmas Fair and Christmas Market and more events are planned for next year. These events not only provide a social environment and entertainment for the villagers but they also provide a good income for the upkeep of the hall. Bookings of the hall for private functions has also increased following the renovation works as people see that it is now a good venue. This also helps generate income. The Christmas Market was a prelude to our planned monthly Farmers' and Producers' Market due to start in April 2014. It was a great success bringing in income of over £250 for the hall funds and traders and customers alike are eagerly awaiting the April market. Along with the Market we will be running a café which we expect to generate an additional £100 per monthly market. We plan to hold 8-10 markets per year which should give us an income of around £2600 to £3250. The £10000 Lottery Funding already received is for the purchase and installation of a commercial catering kitchen at the hall in order to comply with food hygiene and health and safety regulations. Work is due to start on this in January 2014. This will be our community and market café as well as providing proper facilities for catering at fund raising events. It will also be a big attraction for people wishing to hire the hall for private functions thereby increasing our revenue.

[REDACTED]

Declaration: please sign this application and state your position in the organisation

Signature

Name (print) David Waters

Position Secretary

Date 28 December 2013

POLICY AND FINANCE VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION GRANT CRITERIA

1 The Overall Aim

Through the awarding of a voluntary organisation grant the Council wishes to:

- (i) Ensure the provision of services is based on identified need.
- (ii) Sustain a strong and prosperous borough.
- (iii) Help make people's lives safer and healthier.
- (iv) Protect and enhancing the environmental quality of the borough.
- (iii) Matching the supply of homes to identified housing need.

2 General

- (i) Applications must clearly demonstrate that the purpose of the grant that is sought is to provide services or facilities that will meet the needs of communities in the Ribble Valley or directly benefit residents of the Ribble Valley as a whole. Applicants must demonstrate that they support or develop community action in a way that is sustainable and contributes to local community life.
- (ii) Applications will only be accepted from parish/town councils and properly constituted organisations operating on a non-profit making basis. A valid constitution or memorandum and articles of association, which clearly indicates the voluntary or charitable status of the organisation, must accompany all applications.
- (iii) Applicants should demonstrate that they abide by the rules of their constitution, they are democratic and make efforts to involve users in a significant way in the decision making process of their organisation. The organisation must be able to demonstrate that membership of their organisation is open to all members of the community and that the organisation does not discriminate unfairly against anyone on the grounds of race, gender, creed, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, age or disability.
- (iv) Applicants should demonstrate that their organisation is financially sound and well managed and that any project or proposed project is properly planned and organised. Applicants must demonstrate value for money and evidence of their own fund raising activity and ability to attract funds from other sources. Applicants should demonstrate that they have planned for the longer-term financial sustainability of their organisation as a whole and for any specific activity or project that they are applying for, i.e. they should have a business plan.
- (v) Applications will only be considered if they include a statement showing how much an organisation has in all its bank accounts. If the organisation has significant balances and/or generates significant surpluses then a full justification for the amount of grant being sought will be required. Applicants seeking grants of over £100 will be required to submit their most recent set of accounts. Applicants seeking grants of over £1,000 will be required to submit audited accounts and to enter into, if required, a service level agreement with the Council.
- (vi) The Council's grants scheme will not normally fund the following:
 - ❖ Capital projects on which work has already started or in aid of expenditure already committed or paid.
 - ❖ Commercial organisations/businesses.
 - ❖ Any activity that is designed to promote political party politics or influence government policies.
 - ❖ Applications from the County Council or other government agencies.
 - ❖ Applications from religious organisations unless there is a clear broad community benefit.
 - ❖ Schemes that can be funded by the Council's other grant aid schemes.
- (vii) Applications should not contravene the policies and principles of this Council. Organisations receiving grant support will have to provide details as to how they will publicise the Council's support.

- (viii) Applicants who have received funding from the Council should provide, if required, a year-end report to the Council showing how the grant has been used.
- (ix) All grants must normally be claimed within twelve months of the offer being made.
- (x) All maximum levels of grant funding will be reviewed annually.

3 Capital Grants

Note: Capital grants refer to buildings infrastructure or equipment with a life expectancy of not less than two years and have a purchase value of not less than £1,000.

- (i) The level of grant awarded from the fund for any individual capital project will not normally exceed 50% of the approved costs up to a maximum of £5,000. The Council may review these limits under exceptional circumstances.
- (ii) Where, in the opinion of the Budget Working Group, a major capital scheme is of such strategic importance to the district and will complement policies and plans identified in the Council's Community Strategy or Corporate Plan then recommendations for financial support over £10,000 will be made to Policy and Finance Committee for inclusion in the Council's capital programme.
- (iii) Premises, land or equipment in respect of which a grant is given must either be in the ownership of the applicant or secured by a long-term lease (not less than 10 years)
- (iv) Applicants must demonstrate that all licences and consents have been obtained, including planning and building control approvals, and that the balance of funding is in place (or soon will be).
- (v) Applicants must demonstrate that provision has been made for ongoing running and maintenance costs once the project has been completed.
- (vi) Three written estimates of building and/or purchase
- (vii) Grants will be paid in arrears, either in full or part, following the submission of completed claim forms and receipts or invoices relating to the equipment purchased or services provided.

4 Revenue Grants

- (i) Revenue grants will be available for items of expenditure providing the applicant demonstrates that any such scheme is sustainable.
- (ii) Where possible, applicants should display evidence of partnership with the local community and, where appropriate, with relevant sections of the Council and other agencies demonstrating links to other relevant initiatives.

For further information please contact:

Director of Resources
Ribble Valley Borough Council
Council Offices, Church Walk, Clitheroe
Lancashire
BB7 2RA
Telephone: 01200 414436