



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

D331

Cabinet 27 March 2013

Recommendations from the Grant Working Party: 5 March 2013 (Mar13/09)

Cabinet Member:
Cllr Robert Everitt

Chairman of the Working Party:
Cllr Sarah Broughton

1. Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme (RIGS): Application for Project Funding from Hopton Community Swimming Committee (Paper D317)

RECOMMENDED:-

That a grant of £10,000 be awarded to the Hopton Community Swimming Committee towards the refurbishment of the swimming pool and changing room facilities at Hopton Primary School, subject to the Head of Economic Development and Growth being satisfied that:

- (a) the leasehold of the facilities to Hopton Community Swimming Committee is in place for a minimum period of 10 years;*
- (b) permission has been granted to extend the opening hours of the swimming pool and facilities for use by the community; and*
- (c) all other match-funding is in place.*

An application from Hopton Community Swimming Committee for a grant towards the cost of refurbishing the swimming pool and changing facilities at Hopton Primary School had been considered by the Working Party on 11 December 2012. At that meeting, Members had felt that they did not have enough information from the applicant to make a decision and the application was therefore deferred until this meeting, in order that officers could liaise with the applicants to obtain more detailed information.

The additional information has now been supplied and, together with a copy of the original report, (Reference D219), was attached as Paper D317. The additional information includes a list of answers from the applicants to specific questions drawn up by officers with the Vice-

Chairman of the Working Party, estimated income and expenditure and estimated budgets for the project. The overall estimated cost of the project is £56,448.60, inclusive of VAT. Officers further reported that Suffolk County Council has agreed in principle to leasing the swimming pool and changing rooms to the applicants for a minimum period of 10 years, although the lease has yet to be signed. The County Council has been asked to contribute financially to the project through its Corporate Regeneration Fund (CRF) with the applicants asking for 20% of the cost. A decision on this CRF application is to be made later this month. Suffolk County Council has also provided officer time in assisting the formulation of the project. Officers from Suffolk County Council have confirmed that Hopton Primary School would be a user of the facility, as would other local schools who needed access to swimming facilities, and would not be contributing towards the maintenance costs. The applicants have confirmed that the initial planning application did not include the correct opening hours, however, they will be reapplying to request permission to extend the hours to Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm, and Saturday and Sunday, 9am to 5pm. A decision on funding from Sport England was still being awaited. In response to a Member's question advice was given that the cover for the swimming pool has been obtained from a redundant swimming pool at Tuddenham and the secondhand value of this has effectively saved £50,000 from the project costs. A concern was also expressed that there may be difficulty in meeting the future running costs of the facility and in this event it is suggested that help might be sought from local parish councils.

2. Streamlining Rural Grants Decision Making (Report D318)

RECOMMENDED:- That the following be approved:

- (1) all applications for Rural Initiatives Grant Scheme funding be dealt with via the e-mail system, as detailed in Section 4 of Report D318, subject to the provisos:***
 - (a) that in the event that there is no consensus of agreement in the case of an individual application a special meeting of the Working Party be called to consider the matter; and***
 - (b) the system be subject to annual review at the meeting of the Working Party held in December of each year which will also consider Core Funding Grants.***
- (2) subject to (1) above, the Grants Policy and the scheme of delegation be amended to reflect the use of the e-mail system for grants up to the maximum of £10,000.***

Report D318 was presented to the Working Party. This had been prepared further to the request made by Cabinet for the Working Party

'To look at ways of further streamlining the current process of handling applications for Rural Initiatives Grants, perhaps making more use of the electronic system, and reviewing delegations'.

Following preliminary consideration of this matter at the meeting of the Working Party on 11 December 2012, background information on the level of awards made from RIGS funding had been made available to Working Party Members and Substitutes and they had been asked to provide comments.

Two of the Members responding to the request had suggested extending the voting system to all applications for RIGS funding. The third response suggested that the work should be incorporated into the remit of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee.

Under the current Grants Policy, grant applications for up to £5,000 were circulated via e-mail and, provided a majority of Members including Substitutes where appropriate agreed, the grant was then approved by officers under delegated authority. This allows decisions to be made within 14 days of receiving a fully completed application. Where there was not a majority the application is then considered at the next meeting of the Working Party. On the only occasion when this has happened, the decision not to make an award was confirmed at the meeting of the Working Party.

All applications for sums between £5,001 and £10,000 were currently considered by the Working Party at its next meeting. If received shortly after the previous meeting there could be a delay of almost 3 months before it was submitted to the Working Party, and a further 1 to 2 months for the recommendations from the Working Party were considered/confirmed by the Cabinet.

Spreadsheets, attached as Appendices A and B to the report provided:

- (i) an overview of level of awards made over the whole life of the RIGS funding; and
- (ii) from the 2010/2011 financial year to date.

The figures at Appendix B showed that since April 2010, there had been seven applications in the £5,001 to £10,000 range requiring Working Party consideration while the great majority of applications, 31, had been dealt with via the e-mail system.