

# Minutes

OF A MEETING OF THE



Listening Learning Leading

## Community Grants Panel

HELD AT 9.30 AM ON THURSDAY 12 DECEMBER 2024

MEETING ROOM 1, ABBEY HOUSE, ABBEY CLOSE, ABINGDON, OX14 3JE

### Present:

Councillors: Tony Worgan (Chair), David Bretherton, Mike Giles and Ali Gordon-Creed  
Officers: Becky Binstead (Democratic Services), Cheryl Reeves (Community Enablement Team Leader), Jayne Bolton (Community Wellbeing Manager), Madeline Swaine (Community Enablement Officer), Samuel Wheeler (Community Enablement Officer).

### Remote attendance:

Susie Royce (Broadcasting Officer).

### 27 Chair's announcements

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, outlined the procedure to be followed and advised on emergency evacuation arrangements.

### 28 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ken Arlett, Denise Macdonald and Andrea Powell.

### 29 Minutes

**RESOLVED:** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 29 February 2024 as a correct record and agree that the Chair sign these as such.

### 30 Declarations of interest

Councillor Tony Worgan declared an interest, noting that he had previously issued a grant award to Wallingford Rowing Club as part of the 2023 Councillors Grant Scheme. However, he confirmed that this was not a conflict of interest and therefore would remain on the panel to discuss and vote on the applications.

### 31 Urgent business

There was no urgent business.

### 32 Public participation

A list showing members of the public who had registered to speak had been sent to the panel prior to the meeting.

### **33 South Oxfordshire Capital Grant Scheme 2023/24**

The panel reviewed and noted the submitted grant applications and received representations from supporters of the following applications:

#### **Lewknor Parish Council for the installation of solar panels**

Duncan Boulton, councillor from Lewknor Parish Council, spoke in support of the application.

The representative clarified that the total estimated cost of the project was £12,200. The application requested an award of £6,100, as Lewknor Parish Council was now in a position to make the additional £6,100 contribution.

The panel requested clarification from the representative regarding the comment from the Parish Council's auditors warning of low reserves. It was explained that the Parish Council operated within a tight budget and the auditors had recommended that the general reserves be increased to cover unexpected expenditure. The £6,100 contribution from the Parish Council was under a ring-fenced budget for the Jubilee Hall.

The panel agreed to note the application of Lewknor Parish Council.

#### **Thame Sports Club Limited for solar panel installation.**

Ian Rutherford, Committee member of Thame Sports Club Limited, spoke in support of the application.

The panel asked the representative about the biodiversity score. In response, it was explained that there was already a significant number of trees on-site and hedging surrounding the tennis courts. The representative expressed openness to suggestions for further biodiversity efforts but noted limited space for additional planting due to surrounding trees and the proximity to Queens Road.

Members enquired into the capacity of the proposed solar panels, specifically their ability to store excess energy. The representative confirmed that the proposal included battery storage for energy use in the evenings, particularly for lighting the clubhouse during winter months. However, it was noted that the floodlights were on a separate electrical supply and would require a second set of solar panels.

The representative noted that the National Lottery application for funding was unsuccessful, due to the high level of applicants. Moreover, the sports club funds had decreased since the initial application due to the seasonal nature of the business.

Further questions were raised about the intention to sell excess power back to the National Grid. The applicant confirmed that this was part of their plan and that they were working with Time Green Living for advice on securing a better tariff to sell excess energy.

The panel agreed to note the application of Thame Sports Club Limited.

**Wallingford Rowing Club to purchase two new pairs/doubles boats**

Geoff Brown, Katie Greves, Judy Collins, representatives from Wallingford Rowing Club, spoke in support of the application.

The panel asked the representatives how they cater to individuals with disabilities. It was explained that there were limitations on the club's facilities. Fully adaptive rowing was challenging due to space constraints at the current location. However, the club had made adaptations to accommodate children with autism and ADHD.

The representatives noted that they had submitted a pre-application to South Oxfordshire District Council for changes to their facilities to better accommodate individuals with physical disabilities.

The panel agreed to note the application of Wallingford Rowing Club.

**Tiddington with Albury Parish Council for the playground upgrade**

Luci Martin, representative of Tiddington with Albury Parish Council, spoke in support of the application.

The panel asked the representative about environmental considerations in the playground's design, such as providing shade or incorporating wildflower meadows. In response, the representative explained that there was a focus on maintaining natural elements, including bushes and an existing tree. The embankment along the railway was lined with trees, which would also provide shade along the length of the playground. Furthermore, it was noted that the Parish Council participates in "No Mow May", which would leave a section of the land unmown to promote biodiversity. In addition, the supplier for the playground equipment had green credentials and prioritised the use of eco-friendly materials.

On a question regarding the status of the National Lottery funding, the representative clarified that they were waiting on a response, as the application process takes up to 16 weeks. They were expecting a response by 4 January 2025. It was acknowledged that the project may need to be scaled back if the National Lottery funding was not secured, but any changes to the project scope would need to be discussed prior to making any decisions.

Members asked about accessibility in the playground's design. It was noted that additional benches were planned and the seating would be accessible for those with prams, pushchairs and wheelchairs.

The panel agreed to note the application of Tiddington with Albury Parish Council.

**Long Wittenham Parish Council for the Acklings playground upgrade.**

Peter Rose and Steve Brown, councillors from Long Wittenham Parish Council, spoke in support of the application.

The panel asked for clarification on the consultation process and whether children were engaged. The representative answered that parents responded to the consultation on behalf of their children. It was noted that there had been several community meetings where the village was consulted on various developments, including the playground as part of the neighbourhood plan. In these meetings, residents were presented with designs and invited to comment.

Members raised concerns about playground suppliers offering uninspiring equipment for children. The representative acknowledged this concern and assured the panel that one of the most requested features, the zip wire, had been included in the design. Consideration had been taken to incorporate community feedback.

In response to a question on the financial aspects of the project, the representative explained that part of the village's Neighbourhood Plan had outlined several potential projects, some of which had already been funded using local funds. Despite having other projects planned, they prioritised the playground project as it met a significant community need. The parish was anticipating additional Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds from a new housing development, which would help fund future initiatives.

The panel asked about accessibility in the playground's design. The representative clarified that a wheelchair access route from the cycle path into the recreation ground would be incorporated. Efforts would be made to ensure good circulation paths for those with mobility issues. The parish council also planned to buy and build accessible benches, working with a local wood charity to construct these.

The panel agreed to note the application of Long Wittenham Parish Council.

### **River & Rowing Museum Foundation for solar PV panels: A Greener Future**

Steve O'Connor, Director at the River and Rowing Museum, spoke in support of the application.

The panel asked whether an independent energy audit had been conducted as part of their sustainability efforts. The representative clarified that a full energy audit had not yet been carried out, but they had completed an electricity usage audit of the building. The next steps in their energy efficiency plan included conducting a detailed audit focused on the boilers and overall energy usage. Due to the museum's location on a floodplain, implementing air source or ground source heat pumps was not a straightforward solution. As such, they were implementing a phased approach, starting with work that will quickly reduce energy consumption.

In response to a question on the possibility of selling excess electricity back to the grid, the representative explained that the plan is to consume all electricity generated on-site.

The panel agreed to note the application of the River and Rowing Museum.

### **The Berin Centre for the community café landscaping, furnishing and decoration**

Laura Harte, representative from The Berin Centre, spoke in support of the application.

The panel asked the representative about the designs for the outdoor space. It was explained that they would provide a patio area with seating that extends into an existing garden.

Members enquired about the balance between the café's operation and its availability for community group hire. In response, it was clarified that the café would be open three days a week, with the community having input on the most suitable days and times. The remaining days and times would be reserved for other activities or community group rentals. Additionally, there would be an opportunity for local micro-enterprises, such as catering businesses, to operate pop-up events in the evenings.

In response to a question on whether there were plans to offer the space as a co-working area, the representative explained that there was concern about limiting cafe space for other customers. To address this, they were considering offering dedicated tables for co-working, while reserving other tables purely for cafe patrons.

The panel agreed to note the application of The Berin Centre.

Note 1: A break was taken from 10.43 to 11:04

### **Little Milton Parish Council for the installation of solar panels on the Little Milton Shop/Post Office building**

The panel received and noted the application of Little Milton Parish Council.

The panel discussed the applications and devised recommendations to be sent to the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing about which grant applications should be funded.

### **The Berin Centre**

Officers recommended increasing the financial sustainability score to a four, based on the information given during the Panel meeting.

The panel discussed the projects criteria scores and agreed that the score should be 30 out of 30 and recommended that the requested amount be fully funded.

### **Long Wittenham Parish Council**

The panel discussed the projects criteria scores and agreed that the score should be 26 out of 30 and recommended that the requested amount be fully funded.

### **Little Milton Parish Council**

The panel discussed the projects criteria scores and agreed that the score should be 21 out of 30. As the panel believed that the project was valuable for the community and as the requested amount was under £10,000, the panel recommend to fully fund the requested amount.

### **Thame Sports Club Limited**

Regarding community benefit, the panel agreed to increase their score by a point to a total of five, due to the detail they provided around night usage. Therefore, raising the total score to 22.

The panel discussed the projects criteria scores and agreed that the score should be 22 out of 30 and recommended that the requested amount be fully funded.

### **River & Rowing Museum Foundation**

Officers recommended increasing the financial sustainability score to a three, based on the confirmation of match-funding and a planned fundraising evening.

The panel discussed the projects criteria scores and agreed that the score should be 22 out of 30 and recommended that the requested amount be fully funded.

### **Lewknor Parish Council**

On community benefit, the panel agreed to increase their score by a point to a total of four, due to the project benefiting a significant proportion of local residents.

On financial sustainability, the panel agreed to increase their score by two points to a total of four, due to the ring-fenced funding provided by the Parish Council.

The panel discussed the projects criteria scores and agreed that the score should be 22 out of 30 and recommended that the requested amount be fully funded.

### **Tiddington with Albury Parish Council**

On action on climate change, the panel agreed to increase their score by a point to three due to the detail they provided around supplier for equipment.

The panel discussed the projects criteria scores and agreed that the score should be 19 out of 30. It was recommended that £10,000 of the requested amount be awarded.

### **Wallingford Rowing Club**

On action on climate emergency, the panel agreed to increase their score by a point to a total of three due to their consideration to climate impacts and biodiversity.

Regarding financial sustainability, the panel agreed to increase their score by two points to a total of four, due to their fundraising plans, budgeted ongoing maintenance and five percent contingency.

The panel discussed the projects criteria scores and agreed that the score should be 19 out of 30. It was recommended that that £10,000 of the requested amount be awarded.

Overall, the panel agreed with the approach and therefore recommended to the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing:

- 1) That the following applications ranked as high priority receive full funding of their requested amount:
  - The Berin Centre for the community café landscaping, furnishing and decoration
  - Long Wittenham Parish Council for the Acklings playground upgrade
  - Thame Sports Club Limited for solar panel installation
  - River & Rowing Museum Foundation for solar PV panels: A Greener Future
  - Lewknor Parish Council for the installation of solar panels
  
- 2) That the following application ranked as medium priority receive full funding of their requested amount as they were justified as important projects for the community that were under £10,000:
  - Little Milton Parish Council for the installation of solar panels on the Little Milton Shop/Post Office building
  
- 3) That the following applications ranked as medium priority are awarded £10,000 at the discretion of the panel:
  - Tiddington with Albury Parish Council for the playground upgrade
  - Wallingford Rowing Club for the purchase of two new pairs/doubles boats.

The meeting closed at 11.38 am

Chairman

Date