

Minutes



Listening Learning Leading

OF A MEETING OF THE

Community Investment Fund Panel

HELD AT 9.30AM ON 14 JUNE 2011

AT COUNCIL OFFICES, CROWMARSH GIFFORD

Present:

Mr A Rooke (Chairman)

Mr R Bell, Mr B Cooper, Mrs E Gillespie, Mr W Hall, Mrs A Midwinter, Mrs P Slatter, Ms R Wallis

Apologies:

Mrs P Dawe, Mr N F Harris, Ms E Hodgkin

Also present:

Mrs A Ducker, Leader of the Council

Officers:

Mrs J Bolton, Mr E Nieburg, Mrs J Thompson, Mr T Warren

3. Briefing

Mrs Bolton, grants team leader, outlined the procedure for the meeting.

4. Bids for funding from the Community Investment Fund

The committee listened to presentations from each organisation applying for more than £25,000 in capital funding from the Community Investment Fund in 2011/12. Each organisation made a presentation of not more than ten minutes, followed by questions from the Panel members and from the Leader of the council.

1. Henley Town Council – refurbishment of synthetic turf pitch at Henley outdoor sports centre.

Mr M Kennedy, Henley Town Clerk, Mr S Hercus, Nexus, Mr C Baker, Henley Hockey Club, and Mr T Howell, AFC Henley presented the application.

The district council's leisure facilities strategy identified a shortage of all weather pitches and Henley as an area where these should be provided.

The project would provide a replacement Astroturf pitch with markings for hockey and football; street snooker area; a four lane sprint track; and a jogging lane - refurbishing the dilapidated and uneven pitch and providing new sports facilities

Current users included 200 hockey club members and 300 AFC Henley members. A running club could be set up based around the new sprint lanes and jogging track. Consultation had included questionnaires and a Facebook group as well as discussions with the users and police. The police were strongly of the view that improved facilities would reduce antisocial behaviour in the town.

Useable parts of the existing turf would become part of the proposed walkway and used in Henley AFC's dugouts; the remainder of the turf would be recycled into garden furniture; and useable sand would be reused.

Tenders had been prepared, bids received, and the order was ready to be placed.

The town council would provide half the funding and the CIF bid requested the other half. Normally, district councils would provide leisure facilities of this size. The cost per Band D property in Henley would be £35 for £100,000 added to the precept, or about £1.40 per year to cover loss of interest if reserves were used. English Hockey, the Football Foundation, and the Sports Council were reluctant to fund replacement pitches.

The town council would provide ongoing funding for maintenance and staff costs via an agreement with Nexus who would manage the site. Charges for outside groups were £30/hour maximum, and the pitch was in use every evening and at weekends, and by schools for periods during the school day.

2. Christ Church Community Centre, Henley – new community room

Mr T Carberry and Mr D Grubb of Christ Church Community Centre presented the application.

The centre provided social care and community work, had worked in partnership with the district council for ten years, and hosted 10,000 people annually (including 3,500 regular users) through the 11 regular charity user groups, one to one services, 16 regular hirers, casual users, and community events. About 30-35 charity groups used the centre for 66% of the available time.

The bid would fund redevelopment of a dilapidated area to provide a self-contained area with its own disabled access and an external children's play area, increasing space by 30%.

The centre had a full time manager and three staff plus numerous volunteers. It opened for up to 14 hours a day, seven days a week. Rents ranged from around £22/hour for a commercial booking to £6/hour for Bluebells day centre. Financially, the centre had broken even up until 2009 when it made a manageable loss due to the difference between unavoidable costs (such as utilities) and income. There was a limit to how much rent the centre was prepared to charge charity groups supporting

their vulnerable clientele and could charge business and community groups without becoming uncompetitive.

Additional space would allow the centre to provide more space, increase the number of users, generate more income to return the centre's finances to a break-even position, and reduce the need to charge existing charity groups more.

The project had 70% of the funding in place. The centre was confident the rest could be raised, if necessary by a loan repaid from extra income. However a grant from the CIF would convince a lender that the centre had a local authority partner and reduce the borrowing and hence the need to pass costs onto the client groups and charities using the centre. Land next to the church had been given to the state in 1910.

3. Goring Village Hall

Mr A Matthews, Chairman of the village hall committee, Mrs S Bridle and Ms P Williams presented the application.

The hall is well used by community groups, casual hires, and for community events. The village won the award for Best Village in the south-east and the judges were impressed by the community involvement, activity and enthusiasm in the village. The hall was a focus for community users from Goring and 14 surrounding villages.

The project would transform a leaky storage room (the 'Black Hole') into a useable space. If this was not done, the hall would have unacceptable and inadequate changing facilities, would not be able to respond to legislation on segregated changing for male/female/adults/children, the holiday club would be overcrowded, and facilities such as a crèche could not be offered. The current space was limited. The newly refurbished toilets could not be considered as adequate changing rooms; and touring theatre groups had had to change in the kitchen. The space would be used for rehearsals and to allow speakers for events to prepare, as well as a small meeting room for groups or businesses. The floor levels would be the same throughout the building and external access would be level with the path. An access audit has not highlighted a need for a ramp.

The hall committee had spent £20,000 refurbishing the toilets and had £24,000 towards this project raised over 14 months from ongoing income from users and from fundraising. The parish council had offered support and £250. Fundraising was going well but the project was too large for the community to fund without grant assistance. The committee had not approached Chiltern LEADERS as they had little money available. A survey of residents about improvements to the hall had highlighted better toilets as top priority and this room as second priority. Project management may be provided by a committee member with experience in this.

4. South Stoke Parish Council – recreation ground improvements

Mr K Flynn, Ms C Foley and Mr R McMillan presented the application.

The project was to renovate the recreation ground to provide a much-needed social focal for the village to give people a place to gather and interact. The play equipment needed replaced; there was no seating; and the range of users was narrow because there was just an empty field. The village hall was used but lacked many features of a modern hall. There was wide community support for better facilities as not all houses had large gardens, and there was a need for a good quality open space. The project had evolved as the community contributed to developing the plans and assessing their needs. The Village Plan survey identified improvements to the recreation ground as the top priority (jointly with a shop) for the 83% of residents who replied.

The design included a variety of activity spaces accessible for the whole community with play equipment, tables and chairs, space for sports, and parking to allow access for disabled adults and children. The neighbours were supportive of the planned parking.

The project had a £2000 Play Design grant towards preparing the plans. The working group had applied to WREN and CIF funding would help raise other funders' confidence in the project. The main focus so far had been on planning and finding funding sources but fundraising was at an early stage. The parish council had contributed £2000 to the project (18% of the precept) and did not want to increase the precept unnecessarily. £1000 had been raised towards ongoing maintenance costs from the parish council. The project would continue without the CIF grant but options would have to be reviewed.

5. Brightwell-cum-Sotwell - St Agatha's Parochial Church Council extension

Mr D Greasby and Mr A Lascelles presented the application.

The extension to the church would increase community use by providing a multi-purpose room, toilets, baby changing, kitchen, with separate external and internal access. The village plan had highlighted the need for community facilities and the church's plans had taken account of the community's comments. The extension would increase the community's ability to use the main church building for events; the weekly coffee morning could expand; the toilets would enable more people, including residents of the two care homes, to access events; internet access would enable businesses to rent the room for meetings or work. The room could be used for a crèche and to provide a suitable place to hold the newly established Sunday school.

Planning consent was granted and diaconal consent (faculty) would be granted once funding was in place. The local community had supported the project with donations, pledges and fundraising over the last two years. The parish council was supportive but had been committed to funding the village shop project. So far the church had raised 50% of the funding and their award of £20,000 from the LEADER fund was dependant on obtaining the CIF grant.

Running costs would be covered by a £15 per session rent and commercial rents for business users. Potential users did not all use the large village hall but would use a small room. The village hall was well used. Weekly church attendance was around 50 people.

6. Wallingford Sports Trust – upgraded flood lighting

Mr R Knight, Mr J Atkins and Mr J Pebworth presented the application. The 26-acre park was run by the Trust to provide affordable sport to the wider community. The volunteer trustees employed a full-time sports manager to run the facility for the 5 outdoor and 2 indoor clubs, 1400 members, plus 2000 casual users including hockey and football clubs and for StyleAcre's disabled users. South Oxfordshire District Council were the Trust's landlords and the leisure strategy designated the facility as Level 1. The Trust was recognised as providing an important facility but could not improve this without help.

The synthetic pitch had been renewed with a CIF grant in 2008. This was used mainly in the evening. Rising electricity costs and the age of the floodlights (installed in 1995) prompted this project to replace the lanterns, wiring and switching. This would reduce light spillage, reduce electricity costs, and save 33% of the current energy use. The new lamps would focus light more directly onto the pitch and the switching would give variable intensity and control over each half of the pitch.

As the hockey club did not own the pitch, the national body would not provide funds. The trust had applied to the Robin Greaves Foundation for funding using the lowest quote (now £36,000). Although the Trust's finances and management were stable, the surplus was not sufficient to fund this project when costs were increasing, building maintenance was on-going, and revenues decreasing as clubs' incomes also reduced. The Trust raised income from social use, pitch hire, and club fees but as the aim was to provide affordable sport to all they could not raise prices too high. The goal, if possible, would be to reduce club affiliation fees to zero.

7. Wallingford Rowing Club – new club house

Mr A Wheel and Mr R Turnbull presented the application.

The project would provide the club with a new gym building, built sustainably, in an accessible location, and which would enhance the conservation area. Planning permission had been obtained for this project but the club were seeking planning permission for an amended scheme.

The new gym would provide twice the floor space of the existing building, provide more and more varied exercise equipment, and allow more use by non-rowing members, classes, sports clubs and private users after a suitable induction. Clubs had approached the rowing club but couldn't be accommodated due to lack of space. Non-rowing memberships allowed use of the gym and with more space these could be actively advertised. The project should be assessed on massive community

participation, the council's leisure facilities strategy, and the provision of a much needed facility in a green building in a sustainable location.

Currently there were toilets in the building and disabled toilets in the car park. The new building would house running and rowing machines suitable for general use. Volunteers would give instruction and supervise use during club hours, and safety rules and training would enable members to use the gym outside these hours. Land based training was used to improve rowers' technique and fitness before going on the water and to improve technique over the winter.

Over the last 40 year the club had grown to 300-plus adult members and 70 junior members with a wide range of abilities amongst the rowing and non-rowing members. Non-rowing memberships cost a third of a private gym membership and half that of a Nexus gym membership.

The project had support from the county councillor, Wallingford School, GoActive, the MP and complies with the town council's vision for the Wallingford. The club had received over 200 letter of support. South Oxfordshire District Council's leisure facilities strategy identified the need for more sports facilities. The new building would help the club attract people to the town in the evening and visitors during events such as the Wallingford regatta. The club provided the best facilities for access to the river for Wallingford and Didcot.

The club was seeking substantial funding from the Robin Greaves foundation, had raised £50,000 from members and £25,000 in pledges, and was seeking £25,000 from other funders. No application had been made to the LEADER fund yet.

8. Abingdon Gymnastics Club

Mr N Moulster and Mr P Mabbutt presented the application.

The club was well established, registered as a sports club with HMRC, and accredited by the British Gymnastics Association (BGA). The project gave more opportunity for sports participation and to create a centre of excellence in the county.

The club moved to the Berinsfield premises in 2008 to set up a gymnastics centre. The original building was leased from Jennings on favourable terms and the adjoining unit leased when this fell vacant.

The project would put new equipment and a large foam pit into the new building to provide the necessary safe pit to teach advanced skills, allowing the club to run more classes and develop as a high-performance centre. The nearest such centres were in Milton Keynes and Basingstoke and the district's higher-level gymnasts had to travel long distances. The BGA was supporting the project as part of their south-east development plan. All equipment would make use of this pit. This would provide a better facility for the nearly 400 children and allow the club to expand and reduce its waiting list.

The pit required a large excavation into the building floor. Jennings, the owners, had agreed to this work. Specialised work was needed to ensure the pit did not become damp and eventually unusable. The next nearest pit was in Sonning Common at a smaller girls-only club. Abingdon charged £5.70/session with hardship cases assessed individually.

The club had applied for £40,000 from the Robert Greaves Foundation and for money from the BGA but had not had confirmation. There was no reason for the BGA to refuse to contribute a relatively small sum for a large gain. Jennings provided 3-year leases with break clauses such that the tenant could give up the lease but Jennings could not, and Jennings had invested in the club, so the club's future was secure. Financial projections showed that the club would break even and afford to replace equipment.

9. St John the Baptist Church, Stadhampton – community building project

Ms A Stead and Mr D Fordham presented the application.

Stadhampton and its neighbours Chiselhampton and Newington were a mixed community who came together for community events. The aim of the project was to build a community not just a building.

The project would provide a new community hall by modifying the existing church to provide a flexible worship space and a community space available all week; renew the floor and provide flexible seating; connect utilities; provide car parking; preserve the listed building; and provide a small meeting room with IT connections for small groups or business meetings. Solar panels in the valleys on the church roof and energy-efficient heating would reduce running costs.

The hall would provide a space for people of all ages to meet. The only indoor community space was the pub. The school hall was largely used by the school during the day and the only regular evening meetings held there were the WI and the parish council. There was a great need for a community focal point to help develop an integrated local community and help people look out for each other. While not all young people would use the hall, they would be encouraged to join activities. Residents were willing to organise activities and set up new clubs. Consultation showed a need for a village hall and the consensus was that modifying the church was the best way to provide this. A quarter of residents responded to a questionnaire, two open meetings had been held, and regular updates were provided.

The church had raised £25,000 towards the project and had a restoration fund of £25,000 for emerging problems. Several funders were very supportive but wanted a higher percentage of funding in place before committing. If funding was in place, detailed tenders would be sought and the project could start by February 2012. Raising the £75,000 shortfall would be hard but there was a clear strategy for this.

10. Garsington Village Hall – new building

Mr A Townsend and Mr D Baker presented the application.

The village hall required modernisation to provide a place for everyone in a prominent and accessible location in the centre of the village. The new facilities would encourage new groups to use the hall. Options had been explored for 50 years and a new hall was needed now. The project would provide a large and small room; catering kitchen; better facilities; an outdoor space; green heating; improved energy conservation; and better access. Car parking would be provided in agreement with the nearby pub. The architect had been over-optimistic in including the trees shown on the plan. A booking clerk and volunteers ran the hall.

Having been saving for many years and supported by the parish council, £177,000 (75%) of the funds were in place including money from WREN, LEADER, the parish council and fundraising; planning permission obtained; and consultations completed including a referendum of the whole village. The LEADER grant of £30,000 had been agreed in principle and all remaining documentation had been supplied to them; WREN considered the project viable and were prepared to release funding. The hall committee had a five-year financial plan. Local people with relevant expertise had drawn up the plans which were going out to tender. The project would take about seven months to complete once funds were in place.

11. Thame Town Council – Queen Elizabeth Circle recreation ground

Mr R Goss, Mr N Dixon, and Mr P Faulkner presented the application.

Queen Elizabeth recreation ground was in the densest housing area of Thame and the only recreation ground in this area of the town. The play equipment was reaching the end of its life and the park area needed more paths to encourage walking.

Thame Town Council's management plan identified this as the next area for development and identifies the need for a new layout to meet current and future needs as the town expands. The project would make use of the whole space to provide more paths and seating, a fitness trail, more varied play equipment for the whole age range, an enclosed toddler area with wet pour and sand surfaced areas, and equipment suitable for all abilities. The existing mound would be used as a basis for some equipment. A sports area would provide climbing rocks and nets.

Approximately 70% of the area would remain as green open space. The older children's area was visible from the bypass. Notification signs had been ordered and would be installed at the council's seven play areas.

The local community had been consulted on the initial design and detailed proposals had been discussed with residents, schools, and at the town hall. Six companies had tendered and presented their designs and rationale. HAGS had been chosen as the supplier. The town council had a history of successfully managing such projects. The town council was not aware of any S106 money they could use and their bids to funding bodies in Thame had been unsuccessful. The money could be raised without a CIF grant but other projects would be delayed.

12. Tetsworth Memorial Hall - extension and improvements

Ms C Cann, Chairman of the village hall committee, presented the application. The hall was in good condition for its age and recently refurbished but had inadequate toilets and no disabled toilet. A number of potential users had not hired the hall because of inadequate facilities. The project would provide new toilets, a disabled toilet, a small meeting room, and more adequate access. The proposals would ensure the hall had improved facilities and met the requirements of its access audit, such as external lighting to the footpath because the village had no street lights. The second planned phase would further improve and extend the hall. The improvements would benefit the 10 existing user groups and 10 potential users plus give the potential to provide space for business meetings or smaller drop-in events. The heating dated from the 1970s and replacing the whole system rather than running two heating systems would be advantageous.

An experienced architect/project manager and two committee members were overseeing the project. £35,000 had been raised within the village. As well as funds, the parish council had helped with the planning application and administration. Formal costings had started four years ago and the quotes had been updated for this bid: final tenders had yet to be sought. Hire charges were increased annually and were now £30/evening, £25/half-day, and £50-£60/weekend session but could not be raised much for such poor facilities.

13. Aston Rowant Parish Church - extension and refurbishment

Mr J Wyatt and Mr F Flynn presented the application and circulated a brochure explaining their plans.

The project would provide a multi-purpose village centre in the church by constructing an annex with toilet and kitchen and refurbish the Lady Chapel to provide better facilities, better access, and flexible community space for the church and residents. There was no other community space in the village.

The church has held open days, published detailed plans in the parish newsletter, issued a consultation leaflet and questionnaire, and talked to the parish council, school, and at several meetings with residents to gauge interest and potential use. Every villager had been consulted about potential uses of the hall via leaflet in March and the response had been good.

The church was Grade II* listed. The scheme had planning permission and the faculty from the diocese would be given when funding was in place. The contract had been awarded and the cost reduced to £110,000 of which 30% was funded by the church, 30% by Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust and the Garfield Weston Foundation; and 30% requested from the CIF. As the church had raised £30,000 they were confident they could raise the balance of £3,000. Professional fees were high because of the need to have appropriate expertise to deal with the building, diocese, and English Heritage at the planning stage. The church accounts showed £160,000 of unrestricted funds, but the church was a small part of the parochial church

council's remit and the funds had been spent on Sydenham church and St Andrew's Hall at Chinnor. The bank statements showed the actual cash in hand.

14. Oxfordshire Association for the Blind (OAB) – resource centre

Mr C Cure presented the application.

The OAB's aim was to increase the number of visually impaired people using the services offered and to increase the range of services. A purpose-built centre had been requested by service users in 2008 and a recent survey of South Oxfordshire service users showed they thought the centre was a good or very good idea. The project would provide a resource centre and linked reception area. OAB had links to community groups and support groups in Didcot and Thame. The centre also provided counselling; support for businesses in supporting visually impaired people; and could expand its awareness training courses and secure delivery contracts to raise revenue.

People travelled to the centre by Red Cross hospital transport services or transport provided by support groups. Just under 500 people attended the centre and were helped with independent living skills, but this number could be increased.

Building work had started but OAB needed to secure the remaining funding and were confident this could be achieved or enough economies made to complete the project. The Oxfordshire Stronger Communities Fund had given a grant, as had parish councils who contributed £1500. OAB had raised over £400,000 and needed less than £100,000 to complete the building and equip the resource centre; plus £200,000 to cover the extra running costs associated with the first year.

15. Cholsey Parish Council – new village hall

Mr M Gray declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this application as a member of the district council but spoke on the application in his capacity as a member of the public under Section 12 (2) of the councillor's code of conduct.

Mr M Gray, Chairman of the parish council, and Ms V Bolt presented the application. The hall would be a landmark building at the heart of the community. In the parish plan published in 2007 the community requested a community-run library (currently operating), doctors' surgery, a dedicated youth room and play equipment (provided separately). A large hall was available at the school. The Fairmile development may in time provide community space. The proposed hall would provide a mid-sized hall, permanent place for a library, a youth club room, kitchen, suite of small rooms, and a medium hall with large storage area.

Other potential uses included a café and a homework club in the youth room next to the library. The parish council and Oxfordshire County Council were discussing plans for a permanent library, but regardless of County Council help there was strong support in the village for the community library. The PCT would not provide a doctors' surgery but the small rooms would provide space for weekly surgeries for other health professionals.

Planning permission had been granted. CIF funding would help draw in other grants and the parish council could take out a loan if necessary. Three quotes had been obtained but no formal tenders because of the costs involved. However, the project could be started within the year provided funding was in place.

5. Closing Briefing

Mrs Bolton, grants team leader, outlined the procedure for the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 4.00pm.

Chairman

Date