

# **Executive Committee**

## **25 April 2017**

### **Support for improved community arts facilities in Sherborne**

#### **For Decision**

##### **Portfolio Holder:**

Cllr Mary Penfold – Enabling

##### **Senior Leadership Team Contact:**

M Hamilton, Strategic Director

##### **Report Author:**

T. Hurley, Leisure Commissioning Manager

J. Allen, Cultural Development Officer

##### **Statutory Authority:**

Localism Act 2011 – ‘general power of competence’.

#### **Purpose of Report**

1. To present to the committee a request for funding for improvements to the West End Community Centre and to seek agreement as to the allocation of council reserves and developer contributions earmarked for the improvement of arts facilities in Sherborne.

#### **Recommendations**

2. That the committee agrees to award a grant of £200,000 from the council’s capital programme, allocated for improvements to community arts facilities in Sherborne, to the Sherborne West End Community Association (charity no. 301175) for the project to extend the West End Community Hall (planning application WD/D/17/000772).
3. That the Strategic Director and Corporate Manager Legal Services are given delegated authority to agree the terms of the grant agreements with the Sherborne West End Community Association in accordance with the recommendation (2) above.
4. That the council no longer seeks to accumulate up to £100,000 of developer contributions for recreation and community facilities in Sherborne for the purpose of contributing to the Sherborne Community Arts Centre project but instead liaises with local members and Sherborne Town Council to allocate any developer contributions to appropriate local projects.
5. That, subject to the agreement of recommendations (2), the remaining £337,123 allocated in the council’s capital programme for improvements to

community arts facilities in Sherborne, be allocated to other community arts facility projects in consultation with both local members and Sherborne Town Council.

## Reason for Decision

5. To enable the appropriate use of council resources to support community arts projects in Sherborne and ensure the appropriate use of developer contributions.

## Background and Reason Decision Needed

### a) Background

6. In March 2008, Sherborne Town Council and West Dorset District Council jointly commissioned a consultant to undertake the following tasks. The research concluded that there was an unmet need for:
  - a) visual arts workshop and exhibition space,
  - b) medium-sized hall for the performing arts
  - c) permanent office space for an arts organisation in the same building.
7. Following this research, the Sherborne Community Arts Centre Trust (SCACT) was formed with the support of the town, district and county councils in order to pursue the creation of a new facility near Paddock Gardens. The new facility was designed to meet the needs (listed above) and also provide new accommodation for the tourist information centre – which would also provide ‘front of house’ services for the venue.
8. Despite grants from the district council to help with its major fundraising programme, the SCACT was unable to make significant progress towards its target and the project was formally suspended by the trustees in April 2014. However, more recently, there is indication that this project may very well come to fruition through the support of a private benefactor.
9. The district council initially allocated the following sums to support the SCACT project:
  - £100,000 – allocated in the capital programme of which £37,123 remains unspent.
  - £500,000 allocated in the capital programme – all unspent.
  - An aspiration to accumulate up to £100,000 of Section 106 contributions for the SCACT project.

There is, therefore, still **£537,123** allocated in the capital programme for Sherborne community arts facilities and in addition significant sums of Section 106 funding held by the council and not yet released (see **Appendix A**)

### b) Progress with the Sherborne Community Arts Centre project

10. At present, the Sherborne Community Arts Centre Trust (SCACT) project is actively in development, and is in discussions with the town council with

regard to access to Paddock Gardens as an open space accessible from the new facility. The project is now fully supported by a private benefactor but has, perhaps, developed into a project with less space for community arts and crafts activities. However, the emerging proposals for the site indicate that it will be a high-quality facility with the potential to attract visitors from outside the region.

11. The SCACT project no longer requires any public sector support, however discussions are underway between the Trust and the Council for the potential relocation of the Tourist Information Centre service to the new facility in exchange for a one-off grant. This may provide a long-term future of the service within a high-profile visitor attraction.

**c) Progress with the Digby Hall project**

12. At its meeting in February 2016, the Executive Committee responded to a request from Sherborne Town Council for the re-allocation of the capital funding for arts facilities to the Digby Hall refurbishment project. At this point, the SCACT project seemed to have been abandoned and no longer required public funding.

13. As a result, and following the development of a business plan for the refurbished Digby Hall (jointly commissioned with the town council), the Executive Committee agreed to:

- provisionally allocates up to £500,000 to the Digby Hall project, subject to the submission of both full costings and details for the project and on the condition that the project provides both improved arts facilities for the town and a tourist information service.
- that the Executive Committee reviews the provisional allocation of up to £500,000 to the Digby Hall refurbishment project in 12 months' time.

14. However, after careful consideration of this offer of support from the district council, the town council decided in June 2016 not to proceed with the major refurbishment of the Digby Hall as it was not able to accommodate the TIC in the Hall. The town council decided, therefore, to request that the district council reallocate the £500,000 but to involve the town council in any decisions as to which projects it should be used to support in Sherborne.

15. The town council remains keen to ensure that the money allocated by the district council should still benefit arts facilities in Sherborne and suggested that investment in both Tinney's Youth Centre and the West End Community Hall could fulfil this aspiration. Although at its meeting in June 2016, the town council did agree to pursue more modest improvements to the Digby Hall.

**d) Reallocation of capital funding**

16. There is, therefore, a need for the district council to reconsider the use of the £537,123 allocated in the capital programme for the improvement for

arts facilities in Sherborne. This sum is no longer required by SCACT and the town council is no longer requiring it for a major enhancement of the Digby Hall.

17. The need for improved community arts facilities in Sherborne remains a need to be addressed – even if the SCACT project comes to fruition. In addition, the district council is unlikely to be able to continue any revenue funding for ArtsLink beyond 2019 (currently £23,642 p.a.) due to budget constraints and possible changes to local government. It would be beneficial, therefore, if any capital investment by the council can provide facilities that will help make ArtsLink more sustainable in the long-term.
18. As highlighted by the town council, support for improvements to the West End Community Hall could help to provide improved community facilities for arts and crafts activities. The Sherborne West End Community Association is actively pursuing a project to extend the Hall and provide a new and larger kitchen, a small meeting/function room, and new toilets (male, female and disabled) – planning application reference WD/D/17/000772. These facilities will enhance the capacity of the Hall to host community arts activities such as workshops and classes.
19. This extension project is estimates to cost £328,496 (including VAT) and the Association has requested a capital grant of £200,000 from the district council. As match funding, the Association will draw down a grant offer of £53,995 from Viridor Credits Environmental Company and has offers of £52,000 from other sources including The Simon Digby Memorial Trust. A business plan and detailed cost estimates have been provided in support of this request.
20. It is proposed, therefore, that the council awards a grant of £200,000 to the Sherborne West End Community Association for its extension project and for this grant to be derived from the £537,123 allocated in the capital programme for arts facilities in Sherborne. Any grant will need to be subject to a grant agreement based on standard documentation used by the council's Legal service.
21. It is also proposed that the council enters in to dialogue with the Sherborne Town Council and other key stakeholders to develop firm proposals for the allocation of the remaining £337,123 in way that benefits the community and enhances cultural activities for the benefit of the town and its hinterland. Following these discussions, a report will need to be presented to the Executive Committee later in 2017 to seek confirmation for the allocation of resources.

**e) Reallocation of developer contributions**

22. In order to support the SCACT project, the Executive Committee agreed in July 2011 to allocate up to £100,000 of developer contributions to support the SCACT project. The amounts of developer contributions currently held by the council are listed in **Appendix A**. Certain categories have been earmarked for the SCACT project (£44,736 to date) although other amounts have already been allocated to on-going projects following member consultation – particularly the town council's project to create a new adventure play area at Blackberry Lane.

23. Given that the SCACT project no longer requires public subsidy, it is proposed that the Executive Committee relinquishes the aspiration to collect up to £100,000 of developer contributions for this project and instead seeks to allocate these funds in the usual way, through consultation with local members and the town council. Relevant local projects will be invited to submit detailed applications and funding will be awarded following scrutiny of the submissions.

## Implications

24. **Corporate Plan.** *Empowering Thriving and Inclusive Communities.*
25. The district council's *Arts & Museums Support Plan 2012-17* (adopted in 2012) highlights key capital projects that will help to promote the Plan's objective of improving public access to high quality facilities.
26. **Financial.** The council still has an allocation of £537,123 in the capital programme to support improved arts facilities in Sherborne. The grant of £200,000 to the West End Hall Community Association will need to be derived from this allocation.
27. **Equalities.** It is important to health and wellbeing that cultural and community facilities are sufficient to meet the needs of the growing community and are in accessible locations.
28. **Economic Development.** Cultural facilities make a significant contribution to the local economy both as employers and as tourist attractions. The enhancement of these facilities can, therefore, benefit the community not only in terms of education and wellbeing, but also from an economic perspective.
29. **Risk Management (including Health & Safety).** The council will need to ensure that no funding is released until the community hall project is in progress and its deliverability is certain. The phased release of the council's funding may be appropriate.

## Consultation and Engagement

30. The portfolio holder for Enabling (Cllr Mary Penfold) and the ward members have also been consulted on the proposals set out in this report. In addition, discussions have taken place with Sherborne Town Council with regard to these matters. Cllr Peter Shorland has been consulted on the report and he is also President of the Sherborne West End Community Association.

## **Appendices**

31. Appendix A - Developer contributions held by the council for community infrastructure improvements in Sherborne.

## **Background Papers**

32. *Arts & Museums Support Plan 2012-17*. West Dorset District Council.

## **Footnote**

33. Issues relating to financial, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

**Report Authors:** Tony Hurley (Leisure Commissioning Manager), Jude Allen (Cultural Development Officer)

**Telephone:** (01305) 252317

**Email:** [thurley@dorset.gov.uk](mailto:thurley@dorset.gov.uk) [jallen@dorset.gov.uk](mailto:jallen@dorset.gov.uk)