

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Abingdon and North East

Area Committee

held on Tuesday, 13 March 2018 at 7.00 pm

at the Meeting Room 1, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Milton, OX14 4SB



Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Ed Blagrove (Chairman), Alice Badcock, Gervase Duffield, Katie Finch, Robert Hall, Dudley Hoddinott, Vicky Jenkins, Bob Johnston, Monica Lovatt, Sandy Lovatt, Chris Palmer, Helen Pighills, Judy Roberts and Catherine Webber

Officers: Carole Cumming, Susan Harbour and Harry Gable

Number of members of the public: 7

Ab.20 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Debby Hallett and Mike Badcock.

Ab.21 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 12 December 2017 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting, subject to a minor amendment, and were signed by the Chairman.

The following text was added to the minutes under 'Declarations of interest': "Councillor Sandy Lovatt declared that he was a member of the Abingdon Royal British Legion but was able to keep an open mind in relation to their application".

Ab.22 Declarations of interest

Councillors Emily Smith and Judy Roberts declared that they had supported Branches Young People's Support Service in their application and would stand down from the committee and join the public speakers when their application was considered.

Councillor Ed Blagrove declared that he was acquainted with the applicant representing Kennington Village Hall, but was not predetermined and would approach the item with an open mind.

Councillor Bob Johnston declared that he was the county councillor for Wootton and attends Wootton Parish Council meetings, but was not predetermined and would approach the item with an open mind. He also declared that he was familiar with Kennington Village Hall, but was not involved with their application.

Ab.23 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

Councillor Ed Blagrove announced that he would step down as Chairman of the Abingdon and North East Area Committee after this meeting due to his responsibilities as a Cabinet member. He stated that a successor would be appointed at the Council's annual meeting in May.

Ab.24 Public participation

Speakers representing the applicants were present for all of the applications. They also had the opportunity to respond to questions of clarification from the committee. They would speak when their application was under consideration:

Branches Young People's Support Service: Dave Goodspeed and Diane Long

Kennington Village Hall: Peter Biggs

Abingdon Vale Cricket Club: Paul White

Wootton Parish Council: Ian Bristow and Alex Parker

Ab.25 Community Grants

Branches Young People's Support Service

The officer introduced the application by Branches Young People's Support Service for a New Homes Bonus (NHB) grant of £9,047 towards a £18,094 project to assist in staffing and equipment costs in the establishment of a new young person's café in Botley.

The officer explained that this project was not recommended for funding during this round, because the application was for the same items that they had been awarded funding for in 2016, and as such any further grant would be contrary to policy. There was also concern over the application's ability to meet the criteria of benefitting the community for at least five years, since the applicants did not have a secured lease to operate from (at the time of application) and had only produced a business plan for the first 18 months of operation. Finally, the officer noted that the applicants may have to secure change of use permissions for the building that they intended to lease, which increased the uncertainty over the viability of funding the project at this time.

Additional information had been received since the publication of the report which demonstrated that the applicants had now secured a lease for premises in the West Way area, but only for up to 18 months. Therefore, this did not change the officer's recommendation.

Dave Goodspeed and Diane Long, of Branches Young People's Support Service, spoke in support of the application and answered questions from the committee. They outlined the vision for the café, which would be open to the general public and benefit the community as a whole, whilst offering targeted opportunities and assistance to young people of secondary school age. This would include workshops, advice sessions and opportunities to get involved in the running of the café. Financially, they stated that they had already received significant funding from Oxfordshire County Council and other private donors, and hoped that the café would be a long-term benefit to the community, extending well beyond the 18 months detailed in their business plan.

The committee debated the item. It unanimously agreed to award the applicants 75% of the requested amount, subject to the applicants submitting a robust 5-year business plan, no later than 6 months after the café opens. For the avoidance of doubt, the grant could be paid in the meantime, but if a satisfactory business plan was not received within six months, any grant paid out must be returned to the council.

The committee recognised that this was against officer and policy recommendation, but stated the following justification:

- The applicants had been awarded funding for this project before, but since this money was never actually paid due to the collapse of a previous lease agreement, it would be unfair to withhold a grant on these grounds.
- Without being given the funding they require to get the project off the ground, it was unrealistic to expect the applicants to be able to submit a long-term business plan at this time. This could only be done if funding was awarded.
- The fact that the applicants had now secured a lease made the project far more viable, and reduced the risks of awarding a grant.
- The Botley area was in desperate need of more community venues, and this café could help to solve this problem, while also helping young people to thrive.
- If funded, the café would become one of the main contributors to the West Way Community Employment Plan.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To approve the officer's recommended score of 7 points out of a possible 12.**
- 2. To award a grant of 37.61 per cent of the total cost, capped to £6,805, £2,242 less than the amount requested by Branches Young People's Support Service.**
- 3. To require the applicants to produce a robust 5-year business plan, not later than 6 months after the café opens.**

Kennington Village Hall

The officer introduced the application by Kennington Village Hall for a New Homes Bonus grant of £4,500 towards a £12,523 project to replace the boiler at the village hall.

Peter Biggs, representing Kennington Village Hall, was present to answer questions from the committee. He explained that current facilities were ageing, and maintenance costs for the village hall were increasing.

The committee debated the item.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To approve the officer's recommended score of 6 points out of a possible 12.**
- 2. To approve the officer's suggested grant of 26.95 per cent of the total cost, capped to £3,375, £1,125 less than the amount requested by Kennington Village Hall.**

Abingdon Vale Cricket Club

The officer introduced the application by Abingdon Vale Cricket Club for a New Homes Bonus grant of £1,694 towards a £3,389 project to upgrade the changing facilities at the cricket club, by installing a movable shed and port-a-cabin.

Paul White, of Abingdon Vale Cricket Club, was present to answer questions from the committee. He outlined the need for the funding, explaining that, in the past, female members had been dissuaded from continuing to play cricket because of the lack of appropriate changing facilities.

The committee debated the item.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To approve the officer's recommended score of 6 points out of a possible 12.**
- 2. To approve the officer's suggested grant of 37.47 per cent of the total cost, capped to £1,270, £424 less than the amount requested by Abingdon Vale Cricket Club.**

Wootton Parish Council

The officer introduced the application by Wootton Parish Council for a capital grant of £5,000 towards a £10,844 project to upgrade existing play area facilities and provide new pathways in the park. A recommended condition was added to advise the applicants to arrange a play inspection prior to the release of funds.

Ian Bristow and Alex Parker, of Wootton Parish Council, spoke in support of the application. They presented their vision for a socially inclusive community park that could help to build a cohesive community identity, and outlined how this funding would help to realise this.

The committee debated the item.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To approve the officer's recommended score of 8 points out of a possible 9.**
- 2. To approve the officer's suggested grant of 46.11 per cent of the total cost, capped to £5,000, the amount requested by the parish council. This award was subject to a play inspection being carried out soon.**

The grants officer explained that this was the final round of funding for the year for both schemes, and that the remaining budgets of £5,053 (NHB) and £568 (capital) would return to the council's general financial reserves.

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm