

SE.6

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SOUTH EAST AREA COMMITTEE

HELD AT THE CIVIC HALL,
WANTAGE ON TUESDAY, 23RD
OCTOBER, 2007 AT 7.00PM

Open to the Public, including the Press

PRESENT:

MEMBERS: Councillors Jim Moley (Chair), Joyce Hutchinson (Vice-Chair), Terry Cox, Andrew Crawford, Richard Farrell, Terry Fraser, Sue Marchant, Bill Melotti, Zoë Patrick, Julia Reynolds, Margaret Turner and Reg Waite

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Steve Culliford, Lorna Edwards and Toby Warren

NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 3

SE.12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jenny Hannaby and Anthony Hayward.

SE.13 MINUTES

The minutes of the Area Committee meeting held on 31 July 2007 were adopted and signed as a correct record.

SE.14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Terry Fraser declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 7 'Community Grants', in particular in relation to the application from the Vale and Downland Museum Trust as he was its Chairman (minute SE.18 refers).

SE.15 URGENT BUSINESS AND CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair announced that the South East Area Forum meeting would be held on 7 November 2007 at 7pm in Wantage Civic Hall. The Forum would discuss the Issues and Options document as part of the Community Strategy review and the preparation of the Council's Local Development Framework.

SE.16 STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 32

The Committee noted that two requests had been received to make statements under Standing Order 32.

- (1) Mr Tony Hadland made a statement on behalf of the Vale and Downland Museum Trust in support of its grants application. The museum provided a complex range of services to the community. Around 70% of the costs were funded directly by income. The museum was very popular, attracting more

visitors than many other local museums. The improvements to the museum were being carried out by a contractor. About a year ago, part of the ceiling had fallen down and revealed some structural failure in the roof. A plan of improvements was drawn up but health and safety regulation changes had increased the costs by approximately £30,000. This had strained the Trust's ability to fund the work. Assistance had been sought to help raise funds. If these could not be found there was a risk the museum might have to close. To help ensure the continuation of this award winning facility a grant was sought from the Area Committee.

- (2) Councillor Terry Fraser also made a statement on behalf of the Vale and Downland Museum Trust in support of its grant application. The museum had a full repairing lease from the District Council for its premises in Church Street at a peppercorn rent. The extension to the premises had been undertaken with voluntary labour and problems were being experienced where the extension adjoined the original building. Financial assistance was needed to pay for the remedial work.

It was noted that the revised Code of Conduct allowed a Member with a personal and prejudicial interest to make a statement to the meeting as a member of the public but also to answer any questions the Committee might have. The Committee took the opportunity and asked Councillor Fraser a series of questions for clarification. He responded as follows:

- No other grants had been received apart from those set out in the officer's report
- Grove Parish Council had awarded a grant of £550 based on a formula of financial support determined by the original Trust agreement
- The District Council had approved the works
- A copy of the 2006/07 accounts were now available

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Councillor Terry Fraser left the meeting room at his point.

SE.17 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 32

None

SE.18 COMMUNITY GRANTS

(Councillor Terry Fraser declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item and in accordance with the Code of Conduct he made a statement to the meeting under Standing Order 32 (minute SE.16 refers) and left the meeting immediately after making his representations and before this debate.)

The Committee received and considered report 86/07 of the Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer which set out the Committee's community grants budget position and set out details of one application for financial assistance.

Members raised some questions about the application from the Vale and Downland Museum Trust. Members asked if a copy of the most recent accounts was available

for 2006/07. Members also asked why there had been a downturn in trading and whether the County Council had contributed towards the project. In accordance with Standing Order 27(3) the Chair adjourned the meeting for a short period to allow questions to be answered by the applicant present at the meeting and to allow a copy of the most recent accounts to be provided.

On reconvening the meeting, the Committee gave support to the application for a grant as the funds sought were for improvements to the museum premises. This would help maintain the fabric of the building to allow the facility to continue operating. Members considered that the museum provided a good facility that had proved very popular. However, Members were concerned that the Trust's balances were reducing. It was suggested that the Trust should consider a public appeal to increase its income to allow it to continue. It was also suggested that the Council's Communications Team might be able to offer advice on how to conduct such a campaign.

RESOLVED

that the following application be approved:

<u>Applicant</u>	<u>Scheme</u>	<u>Grant</u>
<i>Vale and Downland Museum Trust</i>	<i>Major refurbishment to premises</i>	<i>£7,500 and offer advice to the applicant on conducting a public appeal to boost Trust funds to allow the museum to continue operation (by 11 votes to nil) (Environmental Agenda, Town and Village Vitality priority)</i>

Exempt Information Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972

None

The meeting rose at 8.00 pm