

Abingdon Area Committee



Report of Head of Corporate Strategy

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To: Abingdon Area Committee

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REPORT NO:

2014/15 New Homes Bonus (NHB) Grants

Recommendations

- (a) that the Abingdon area committee considers the five applications received for NHB funding and awards grants in line with the agreed policy.
- (b) that the committee considers what suggestions, if any, it has for improving the policy to feed into a review early next year.

Purpose of report

1. To give the committee the information it needs to award NHB grants for their area and suggest improvements to the policy for a review early next year.

Strategic objectives

2. We have a corporate priority to support local communities through grants to voluntary and community organisations who are delivering projects/services that support our objectives or those in need.

Background

3. We opened the scheme between 16 July and 15 September 2014 and received five applications for the Abingdon area, requesting a total of £17,700 against a budget of £15,000.
4. Officers have summarised the applications in appendix one, highlighting any concerns and/or points of note in their comments.
5. The main aim of this scheme is to help support communities that have accommodated new housing, to integrate new and existing communities. With this in mind officers have produced a table, attached in appendix two, showing each

parish's percentage of the area committee's overall growth and its percentage increase in size between September 2012 and September 2013.

6. The interim NHB policy attached in appendix three expires on 31 March 2015 and the cabinet member for finance would like the area committees to feed into a review of the scheme before agreeing a new policy. Any feedback the committee gives will be considered as part of that review.

Financial implications

7. In June 2014 the Abingdon area committee was allocated £15,000 of the 2014/15 NHB community grant budget. As per the agreed policy these grants can fund either revenue or capital projects.

Legal implications

8. The council's legal powers to award these grants are contained in Section one of the Localism Act 2011 that gives a general power of competence for local authorities.
9. In June 2014, the cabinet member for grants delegated authority to the four area committees to determine NHB funding applications in their respective areas.

Risks

10. As we usually pay NHB grants when they're awarded and not when the projects complete there's a risk that we can't recover any money given to projects that for whatever reason don't go ahead or need the full amount. There is also a risk that projects we agree to fund don't achieve the desired results.

Conclusion

11. That the committee awards New Homes Bonus grants in line with the approved policy and makes any suggestions for improving it to feed into a review early next year.

Background papers

APPENDIX ONE – APPLICATION SUMMARIES

Ref no.	Organisation	Scheme	Town / Parish	Total cost £	Amount requested	% of area growth	% of growth in parish
NHBA\1	Music for Autism	Two Music for Autism workshops at Kingfisher school, Abingdon	Abingdon	£2,400	£1,200	74.76	0.43
NHBA\5	Abingdon Lawn Tennis Club	Build a seventh tennis court	Abingdon	£34,500	£9,000	74.76	0.43
NHBA\7	Abingdon town band	Purchase six new band blazers	Abingdon	£1,500	£1,500	74.76	0.43
NHBA\8	Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council	Fun in the park and music in the park (one day event)	Abingdon	£18,700	£2,000	74.76	0.43
NHBA\10	SOFEA	'Get to Work' training programme	Sutton Courtenay	£9,400	£4,000	19.30	1.39
				Total	£17,700		
				Budget available	£15,000		

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Music for Autism	Ref	NHBA\1
Two Music for Autism workshops at Kingfisher school, Abingdon		

Financial

Total project cost	£2,400		
Amount requested	£1,200		
Organisation's contribution	£200	Organisation's latest bank balance	£7,687
Other funding Including a town/parish council:	£1,000 £ unspecified		

Previous grants received – 2013/14 NHB £1,200 towards eight workshops around Abingdon.

Officer (and any consultation) comments

<p>General comments/concerns</p> <p>These workshops will both take place at Kingfisher school for their pupils so offers little community benefit or integration between new and existing residents.</p> <p>We awarded the organisation a NHB grant (£1,200) last year towards eight workshops for autistic children, dementia patients and their carers at various venues around Abingdon. However according to the information provided by the applicant only Kingfisher School has benefited so far.</p> <p>The school, which appears to be the sole beneficiary, is not contributing towards the cost. The organisation is contributing £200 and they have approached the town council for an undisclosed amount.</p> <p>They recently applied for a £1,000 festival grant but were asked to re-apply closer to the time of the events. If that bid is not successful there is a risk the workshops will not go ahead.</p>

Applicant responses

<p>Please give some details of your project.</p> <p>Two more workshops at the Kingfisher School. 'Music for Autism' and 'Moving Music' provide specially tailored workshops aimed at involving autistic children and their families and dementia patients and their carers in the live music making experience, and also adults with learning difficulties. They offer stimulation and enjoyment, in whichever way is appropriate, in a safe and supportive environment. Musicians perform in special schools, day care centres and small venues. In an initiative led by John Lubbock and Christine Cairns, a quartet of musicians give their time to play for children inhibited from social interaction. Not your ordinary concert-hall atmosphere. The children are encouraged to get up and conduct. Most find the experience incredibly empowering, with a new feeling of control as they conduct with their arms and move in time. The tones and rhythms appear to touch the soul where words can fail, and children lose their inhibitions.</p>
<p>Statement about any financial constraints on their bank balance affecting their contribution.</p> <p>All our current reserves are committed to future workshop projects. Essentially demand exceeds our ability to fund and arrange all the workshops we are invited to hold.</p>
<p>Statement about town or parish council support</p>

Town council - we applied in 2014 and didn't hear from them. We will apply again for 2015.

How does your project deliver best value for money?

We are the only organisation in Bucks/Beds/Berks/Oxon who runs this type of project. We are very experienced. We do not include any overhead costs.

Which housing development(s) have affected your community and what impact did they have?

Recent housing developments in Abingdon (including Springfield Drive, the Old Gaol, the old Renault garage site on Drayton Road , two recently opened residential homes for elderly people – Bridge House by Waitrose and Fleur-de-Lis, Wootton Road) have focussed on increasing provision (social housing, private rental and owner-occupied) for younger families and, at the other end of the age-range, retirement housing. Increasing the numbers in these groups will provide additional demand for support services of many kinds, including those we offer.

How will this specific project or service help integrate people from the new development and the existing community?

The planned series of sessions of music experience, involving John Lubbock and his supporting musicians, will enable children and adults with special needs to share together their engagement with music. The sessions will take place in local venues, including Kingfisher School. Integration will be achieved through the encouragement given to school age groups, and to adults with special needs, to become involved. Sessions are emotionally charged; the experience is mutually rewarding for the musicians as they use their skills to make a difference. A far more intense interaction than that experienced with the usual audience. Orchestra of St John's is committed to orchestrating stronger lives through music for autism. These projects make a tremendous difference to the lives of individuals with autism and their families.

What recent evidence can you provide to show that the local community supports your project?

Their 73 pupils enthusiastically received our 2014 workshop at Kingfisher. They are keen to arrange two more in 2015. They work with groups of children who need individual and special education. Email from Head Adrienne Martin: "The children and students in the school were able to access a workshop with John and his musicians who were most sensitive to the individual needs of our children, tailoring the programme to suit need and engage the young people. It was a privilege to watch their very special response to the music and it engaged some of our most hard to reach pupils. Music is a vital part of our provision at Kingfisher and elicits a response in our in our children that that few other curricular activities do, engaging them at a deep and drawing responses that we rarely otherwise see. Thank you sincerely for the very special day.

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Abingdon Lawn Tennis Club	Ref	NHBA\5
Build a seventh tennis court		

Financial

Total project cost	£34,500		
Amount requested	£9,000		
Organisation's contribution	£20,500	Organisation's latest bank balance	£40,794
Other funding Including a town/parish council contribution	£5,000 £0		

Previous grants received - None

Officer comments

Benefit to new and existing residents is limited to those wishing to play / watch tennis.

According to Lawn Tennis Association guidance the club has sufficient courts for 360 members (110 more than they currently have), and based on its growth rate should be enough for around seven years. The Vale's (draft) leisure strategy doesn't identify a need for more tennis provision in Abingdon and lists five other sites in the town offering tennis facilities.

They have applied for a CCG grant during this round requesting a total of £14,000 over both schemes. They are contributing £20,500 themselves and will cover the £6,900 in VAT, which leaves just £3,393 once their £10,000 running costs are deducted. They have not identified any other sources of funding.

Since their unsuccessful NHB application last year the club hasn't identified any other sources of funding or updated the quotes so the costs are likely to have increased, which could add to their financial pressures.

Applicant responses

Please give some details of your project.

To provide an extra court to meet growing demand. Membership of the club has increased by over 50% in the last two years (75% over 5 years), and we have a resource limited junior programme at weekends.

Statement about any financial constraints on their bank balance affecting their contribution.

Most of the club's income comes through annual subscriptions in April, and expenditure runs at approximately £1200pcm, so the current balances includes approximately £10k to cover running expenses for the remainder of this financial year. If the project goes ahead, there will be a further £6900 for VAT. So the percentage of the project cost inc VAT requested is 21.7% rather than the 26.1% displayed above.

Statement about town or parish council support

No. What sources of funding are available?

How does your project deliver best value for money?

We need more courts. We have gone for the cheapest and most durable playing surface (porous tarmac, lifetime of 10-15 years), as other desirable surface options, such as synthetic clay or artificial grass, are approximately £15000 per court more expensive and so are outside our projected budget.

Which housing development(s) have affected your community and what impact did they have?

The club serves a large area around Abingdon, and we have new members who have moved to new housing in Drayton, Sutton Courtenay, Didcot, and the area around Waitrose. We already have members from older developments such as the brewery area, Drayton Road and the Marina, and expect to see members from the Old Gaol development. The proposed new Drayton Road development is likely to have a large impact on Southern Town Park facilities and saturate our facilities at peak times.

How will this specific project or service help integrate people from the new development and the existing community?

Court space limits activities at peak times, and an extra court will ease this. New members are welcomed at Club nights, beginners and returnee course, Saturday morning supervised junior sessions and at junior and adult coaching sessions. There is an active social life revolving around tennis into which new members are rapidly assimilated. We actively encourage beginners of all ages.

What recent evidence can you provide to show that the local community supports your project?

The two clearest pieces of evidence of support are the growth in membership (from 137 in 2007 to about 250 at present) and the money contributed by members to the club. Over the past four years, £114,000 of this money has been used in refurbishing the existing courts and clubhouse.

Abingdon town band	Ref	NHBA\7
Purchase six new band blazers		

Financial

Total project cost	£1,500		
Amount requested	£1,500		
Organisation's contribution	£0	Organisation's latest bank balance	£8,354
Other funding Including a town/parish council contribution of	£0 £0		

Previous grants received - Previous community grants totalling £8,750 in six awards between 2003/4 and 2011/12

Officer comments

While purchasing uniforms doesn't directly integrate or benefit the community, they may benefit indirectly from performances. A professional appearance will also make the band more appealing to event organisers as well as potential band members.

The band isn't contributing to this project and has requested 100 per cent of the costs as they are saving for work to their band hall.

They haven't asked the town council for funding for this project but they have received other funding from them in the past.

Applicant responses

Please give some details of your project.

The band needs to have a suitable, matching set of uniform jackets to wear when performing for the public - as our membership changes over time these are reallocated to new players. However, it is inevitable that we will not always be able to fit existing spare jackets to new players and we need to purchase some new ones.

Statement about any financial constraints on their bank balance affecting their contribution.

Our key financial commitments are for instruments and insurance, to fund practice rooms and new music. In addition we have allocated funds towards works to our band hall which is badly in need of repair

Statement about town or parish council support

We have not approached the Town council for funding on this occasion for this specific project, however the Town has provided support to us in the past and we will be seeking funding from them for some new music stands

How does your project deliver best value for money?

We will seek quotes from a number of specialist providers of this type of jacket to ensure that we get the best price possible whilst still maintaining a good match with existing jackets. However, we do need to ensure that the jackets are an exact match for our existing set so this will reduce the number of suppliers we are able to use, and may mean that we have buy from our existing supplier.

Which housing development(s) have affected your community and what impact did they have?

All new housing development leads to an increase in the population of Abingdon and therefore an

increase in the number of people attending events in the Town where most of our performances are undertaken

How will this specific project or service help integrate people from the new development and the existing community?

Most of our performances take place in Abingdon and surrounding villages. Many of these are a core part of special and civic occasions in the Town e.g. bun throwing, proms in the park, remembrance day parades. This type of event brings all of the community together to celebrate or commemorate special occasions; and most are free or low cost to members of the community. This type of event attracts significant numbers of people and help to make Abingdon the vibrant community that it is. It is important to the band to look our best at these and all of our performances and so we need to replenish our stock of jackets so that we have one to fit each band member

What recent evidence can you provide to show that the local community supports your project?

The number of people attending events of which we are a core part e.g. proms in the park, remembrance services, historical events, bun throwing and the reception the band receives demonstrates that the people of Abingdon support what we do

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Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council	Ref	NHBA\8
Fun in the Park and Music in the Park (one day event)		

Financial

Total project cost	£18,700		
Amount requested	£2,000		
Organisation's contribution	£6,450 (£3,434 is 'in kind' staff time)	Organisation's reserves at 31 March 2014	£1,344,962
Other funding	£10,250		

Previous grants received – community grants: £17,250 between 2003/4 and 2009/10 towards twinning, £5,000 towards the Old Gaol and £1,000 for the museum.

Officer comments

The town council has applied for funding towards this event through the NHB scheme as town and parish councils currently can't apply to the festival and event scheme.

The event will help to integrate new and existing residents of the town by introducing them to some of the groups and activities it has to offer.

The town council is contributing £3,000 in cash, £3,434 in staff time and will raise the majority of the balance through ticket sales and pitch fees on the day. They have confirmed they will cover any shortfall in funding from their reserves.

The council has substantial reserves, but this includes a significant amount earmarked for the Guildhall improvement project.

Applicant responses

Please give some details of your project.

This is a community festival which brings all the residents of Abingdon-on-Thames and the surrounding hinterland together for a fun day of music, traditional fete stalls, and information about community groups, charities and volunteer work. It is split into two parts (daytime and evening event) so that a charge can be made for the evening entertainment but the daytime can be free so that it is accessible to all in some form. In the evening, the numbers have to be limited for health and safety reasons and the ticket sales help to pay for part of the event costs. It has become increasingly popular over the past five years and is an important part of the town's annual cycle of events, and an event which has been noted to attract a broad cross-section of society.

Statement about any financial constraints on their bank balance affecting their contribution.

I am advised by the Treasurer that there are sufficient reserves to provide full cover in the event of poor ticket sales or stall pitch sales. Our stated amount in the bank balance section is the Annual Return Balance. This year just gone has not yet been audited so I am not able to send it. Therefore we have quoted last year for now and will be able to add to this information as soon as audit has been completed. The figure quoted is the balance brought forward not including short term investments (Box 7 on the annual return).

Statement about town or parish council support

We are the Town Council. Our contributions are based on £3000 cash and £3432 of estimated staff costs. We are also the organisation that will fund any shortfall due to bad weather or unforeseen events

clashing reducing the popularity of the event.

How does your project deliver best value for money?

We have also considered letting an outside company run this event for us but were not satisfied after running due diligence checks that the organisations we have so far spoken to will provide a suitable service for the Town Council. We remain open to discussions with outside bodies on this but will insist on high standards as this event is a flagship event for the town. Our present plans all involve keeping the event management in-house.

Which housing development(s) have affected your community and what impact did they have?

Information still to be entered here

How will this specific project or service help integrate people from the new development and the existing community?

Providing a single focus summer event for the whole of Abingdon-on-Thames is very important in giving new residents a sense of identity and belonging. Whilst neighbourhood events are also important in helping the physical integration of people who live close to each other, an event which operates at a parish or town level offers the chance to link in to local organisations such as hobby clubs, political organisations, volunteer groups and charities. It also provides the chance to meet residents from all across town who are active in creating events and running campaigns, who help others and who keep the lifeblood of the town generally flowing. It is also an opportunity to learn more about the rich heritage of the town which is a source of great pride to many who live not just in the town but also nearby.

What recent evidence can you provide to show that the local community supports your project?

Attendances at the day and evening events have grown steadily in past years even with weather conditions not always being in our favour. Last year the daytime attendance was 6 000+ Tickets for the evening event sold out on the preceding Thursday

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SOFEA		Ref	NHBA\10
'Get to Work' training programme			
Financial			
Total project cost	£9,400		
Amount requested	£4,000		
Organisation's contribution	£2,400	Organisation's latest bank balance	£12,698
Other funding Including a town/parish council contribution of	£4,500 £unknown		

Previous grants received - none

Officer comments

General comments/concerns
<p>This project trains mainly young unemployed people (16-18) with the aim of getting them into or back to work. The training includes warehousing and logistics work, business skills, English and maths.</p> <p>Their catchment area is a mix of Vale and SODC residents (50/50 split between the districts based on last year's figures) with the majority of Vale users coming from Abingdon.</p> <p>They have approached Didcot town council for a grant (unspecified amount). If they secure all the other funding listed they would only need £2,500.</p> <p>Officers recommend that, if awarded a grant, we don't release payment until their other funding is confirmed and that the grant reduces depending of the amount secured elsewhere.</p>

Applicant responses

Please give some details of your project.
<p>SOFEA takes oversupplied food from supermarket distribution centres in the local area and diverts that food to members of the community who need it. In order to do this we have a warehouse based on Trident Business Park, in which those people who are unemployed and seeking work - including the young unemployed - gain work experience while receiving and delivering the food.□□This grant will help to provide a specific service to those on work experience, focusing on working with local employers to address the specific skills required to be successful through their recruitment processes.□□This will assist those on the programme, but it will also assist those employers who are currently struggling to find sufficient employees to fill vacancies.</p>
Statement about any financial constraints on their bank balance affecting their contribution.
<p>Although reserves appear high, the project we are applying for is one part of what SOFEA does. These funds are committed to the overheads of the larger organisation including rent, rates and leasing of equipment.</p>
Statement about town or parish council support
<p>We have approached Didcot Town Council, as some of the participants and employers based in Didcot. The Town Council is due to consider our application on the 29th September.</p>
How does your project deliver best value for money?

There is no other training provision of this type in the local area. The benefits of getting people into work are very large, particularly for this client group. In addition to the employability training, the participants will be making a significant contribution to reducing landfill and providing food to those in need as part of the programme.

Which housing development(s) have affected your community and what impact did they have?

Great Western Park. The development on Great Western Park has brought more people into the area. While many are prospering, there is a group, particularly of young people aged 16-24 who are not. There is no provision like this in the local area for young people with low or no qualifications to prepare themselves for work in the local economy. There is also no similar provision for older people seeking to get back into the labour market.

How will this specific project or service help integrate people from the new development and the existing community?

The focus of the programme is to develop specific employability skills for people disadvantaged in the labour market, so that they understand and can respond to the needs of local employers who are seeking new ways to recruit. While employment levels are high in the local area, there are a significant number of people who are disadvantaged in the labour market, because of mental health issues, physical health problems, personal circumstances or age related. At the same time, large employers are reporting difficulties in recruiting to fill vacancies. Our project aims to address this by preparing people to successfully navigate the recruitment processes and then be able to perform the job successfully. This will help provide more people with the opportunity to play a positive economic role. This is in the context of the charity reducing landfill and providing food to those in need.

What recent evidence can you provide to show that the local community supports your project?

Ed Vaizey has indicated his support for the programme. The environment committee of Didcot Town Council has minuted its approval of the programme. SOFEA is working closely with Job Centre Plus, the Early Intervention Service, the Youth Offending Service, MENCAP and others to recruit participants. Asda, Tesco and Rapier are all supporting the programme - Asda are on the Advisory Board, Tesco are supplying food and SOFEA is supplying recruits to Rapier.

APPENDIX TWO – AREA GROWTH DATA

We took all figures from the council tax breakdown referred to in the 2014/15 NHB grant policy. It shows the band D equivalent increases (or decreases) during the period.

Abingdon Area

Town/parish	% of total growth in area	Number of new properties	Percentage increase of parish housing
Abingdon	74.76%	61.56	0.43%
Sutton Courtenay	19.30%	15.89	1.39%
Appleford	3.78%	3.11	1.85%
Drayton	2.16%	1.78	0.17%
Total	100.00%	82.33	0.49%

APPENDIX THREE – CURRENT NHB POLICY

Interim New Homes Bonus Community Fund Policy and Procedure 2014/15

This scheme seeks to support community initiatives in areas that have accommodated new housing. The council will consider applications from groups for funding towards a variety of community projects aimed at improving local facilities or services, or integrating new communities.

Budget

The council set a budget of £100,000 for this scheme at its budget setting meeting in February 2014. This budget has been split amongst the area committees according to its areas' proportion of the district's increase in band D equivalent properties (in per cent) between September 2012 and September 2013. This approach directs the funding to the areas where the new homes bonus was generated, and follows on from the last round, which included the figures up to September 2012. The splits are as follows:

Committee	Percentage budget split	New homes bonus community fund budget
Abingdon	15%	£15,000
Abingdon	26%	£26,000
West	12%	£12,000
South east	47%	£47,000

Funding criteria

The area committees will normally only consider applications for funding in 2014/15 against the following criteria:

- from constituted voluntary community groups and town and parish councils for revenue and/or capital funding
- for projects **with the necessary** planning and/or listed building consents in place
- for projects that will benefit the communities where housing growth **has taken place since September 2012**, unless the scheme is under subscribed when the committees can consider applications for other projects within their areas.

The area committees will not consider applications for retrospective projects or those that other organisations would be expected to fund.

Application and decision dates

The scheme will open on 16 July, following an advice workshop on 15 July. It will close on 15 September so the area committees can consider any applications at their November meetings.

Conditions of grant awards

The following standard terms and conditions will apply to the successful grants:

- the project must be completed within one year of the area committee awarding the grant and comply with all relevant statutory regulations and consents
- council staff must be allowed to inspect the work being carried out, at any time, in line with any necessary health and safety requirements
- the organisation must acknowledge the council's support in any publicity on the project receiving a grant.

Area committees may also apply specific conditions to the grants they agree to award.

Equalities

The council is committed to promoting equality and diversity and welcomes applications from organisations representing minority or vulnerable groups.

Payment of grants

The council will normally pay the grants as soon as possible following the area committee meetings. The organisation receiving a grant will be required to sign a declaration, confirming it will only spend the money on the project described on the application form and will return any unspent money after the 12 month award period.

Monitoring of grants

Organisations receiving a grant will be asked to provide evidence that they've spent it on the project described on the application form, when it's complete.