

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: Paul Claussen, Executive Member Place

To: Cabinet – 30 May 2017

Author: Clive Rayner, Grant Officer, Norfolk Community Foundation

Subject: Match Funding (large) application

Purpose: To consider the decision to award funding to Caston Village Hall

Recommendation:

- 1) That Cabinet approves the following grant award:
 - £20,000 (or 24.4% of the project costs, whichever is the lower amount) to Caston Village Hall to replace outdated kitchen and toilet areas and provide a new entrance porch.

BACKGROUND – Caston Village Hall

- 1.1 Caston Village Hall is seeking the maximum grant of £20,000 to contribute towards the cost of refurbishing the kitchen and toilet areas and creating a new entrance foyer giving better disabled access and improving heat retention in the building.
- 1.2 The village hall dates from the 1930s and has changed relatively little since it was built. Its structure is wood panelling on a brick base with a cement slate roof. Although it is showing its age and is in need of updating, a recent structural survey has indicated that there are no major structural issues. The hall does have a range of issues that require attention including a lack of insulation, small and cold toilets that are not suitable for disabled use and an out of date kitchen that struggles to cope with many events and poor disabled access. In spite of these shortcomings the hall has a good range of regular user groups including the Women's Institute, Caston Camera Club, a weekly drop in café, an Art Club, Gardening Club, yoga classes, Pilates club, upholstery classes, exercise classes and parish council meetings. It also provides a venue for village events such as quarterly whist drives and harvest suppers. Over the past few years the hall committee have been successful in increasing hall usage and activities now take place on most days with the hall estimating a monthly footfall of 800.
- 1.3 The existing kitchen and toilets are partly housed within a single storey lean-to extension and partly within the original building which it adjoins. The lean-to section will be demolished and rebuilt on new foundations on the existing footprint but to the same height as the main building. Within this new area the arrangement of the toilet and kitchen areas will be revised to provide a better layout. The external door from the kitchen will be relocated meaning that people using this exit will no longer emerge onto the roadway to the car park – thus improving safety. New kitchen and toilet fittings will be provided. The new entrance foyer will mean that users no longer enter the hall directly from the outside but via the foyer meaning that heat loss is reduced. The foyer area will also have space for coats. A new ramp will be provided to the entrance improving disabled access. As part of the works issues of dampness and a lack of insulation will be addressed leading to a more comfortable hall for users.

- 1.4 The village hall committee has consulted with local residents to obtain their views on what improvements were needed. 91 responses were received which highlighted that the kitchen, toilets and the entrance porch arrangements and resulting heat loss were priorities for improvement. Other priorities for the future have been identified including the construction of a rear extension which will be used for storing tables, chairs and other equipment when this is not in use.
- 1.5 The hall committee has provided copies of quotations/estimates from three contractors and favours an estimate from a Watton based company with which it has worked in the past. This identifies the costs for the main structural works as £54,450. To this the committee, with advice from the contractor, has added allowances for kitchen fitting, electrical and plumbing works, decorating and other minor works. It has also added a 16% contingency to the resulting £70,590 total giving a total project cost of £82,000. The other two quotes showed a significantly higher cost. The committee is confident from their previous experience of working with the preferred contractor that the project will be able to be delivered within this budget. The specification of fittings such as the kitchen can be adjusted if necessary to come within budget.
- 1.6 The village hall has already raised £50,000 towards the cost from a variety of fundraising events. A further £5,000 has been offered by Caston Parish Council in January 2017 subject to the village hall having sufficient funds to go ahead with the work. The village hall is also awaiting the outcome of a grant application to the Garfield Weston Foundation for £7,000. A grant from Breckland Council will enable the work to go ahead.
- 1.7 The project has planning permission from Breckland Council which is valid until February 2018.
- 1.8 This is a strong application in terms of the consultation, the level of use of the hall and the level of funding already raised by the village hall. The committee representatives with whom the Grants Officer met appear to be organising the project effectively. The only relative weakness is the uncertainty about the costs with the preferred contractor only providing an estimate rather than a fixed price quotation and most of the remainder of the works not being covered by any evidence of cost. The contingency allowance is also not fully explained. The age and structure of the building – particularly the lean-to section - mean that there are some uncertainties about what the contractor will find once work begins and this was the committee representatives' rationale for the contingency. It is possible that the project will be delivered for less than the £82,000 budget. If this happens the Council's contribution would reduce accordingly under the "£20,000 or 24.4%" criteria.

2) **OPTIONS**

- 2.1 Fully fund the application set out in the report
- 2.2 Part fund the application set out in the report
- 2.3 Do nothing

3) **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 3.1 The grant application meets the criteria of the scheme.

4) **EXPECTED BENEFITS**

- 4.1 Provide a suitable venue for a range of social, fitness, educational and recreational activities for residents of all ages.

5) **IMPLICATIONS**

In preparing this report, the report author has considered the likely implications of the decision - particularly in terms of Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues; Constitutional & Legal; Contracts; Corporate Priorities; Crime & Disorder; Equality & Diversity/Human Rights; Financial; Health & Wellbeing; Reputation; Risk Management; Safeguarding; Staffing; Stakeholders/Consultation/Timescales; Transformation Programme; Other. Where the report author considers that there may be implications under one or more of these headings, these are identified below.

5.1 **Financial**

- 5.1.1 The Match Funding reserves held by Norfolk Community Foundation have a current balance of £47,490 with one further application requesting £20,000 (Lyng Parish Council) recently agreed at Cabinet and still needing to be deducted from this balance. In addition Small Match funding applications with a combined value of £13,500 have been recommended by NCF for funding and are with Breckland Council for decision in May. The effective balance of funding is therefore £13,990 which is less than is needed to fund this application. NCF is currently awaiting a top-up of funds for 2017/18 from Breckland Council.

5.2 **Corporate Priorities**

- 5.2.1 The project aligns with the Breckland Council objectives of: 'supporting Breckland to develop and thrive' and 'enabling stronger and more independent communities.' The improvements to the kitchens and toilets will enable the village hall to provide an enhanced service and attract more users. The application comments that the hall provides a social hub for lonely, elderly and disabled. Attending the various activities the village hall thus assists people in maintaining their independence.

5.3 **Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales**

- 5.3.1 Breckland Councillor Philip Cowen has written in support of the project. He comments that he "wholeheartedly supports this bid to improve what is a thriving community hub that is used by villagers not only from Caston but surrounding villages as well. It is a project worthy of support."

6.0 **WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED**

- 6.1 All Saints & Wayland/Caston and neighbouring parishes including Griston and Stow Bedon.

7.0 **ACRONYMS**

- 7.1 NCF – Norfolk Community Foundation

Lead Contact Officer

Name and Post: Clive Rayner, Grant Officer,

Norfolk Community Foundation
Telephone Number: 01603 623958
Email: cliverayner@norfolkfoundation.com

Key Decision: No

Exempt Decision: No

This report refers to a Discretionary Service

Appendices attached to this report:
None.