

HEREFORD CITY COUNCIL

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GRANTS MEETING 28 November 2022

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: Councillor Sue Boulter (Chair) and Councillors Kath Hey (part), Cat Hornsey, Aubrey Oliver, Rob Owens, Paul Stevens and Brian Wilcox

Attending: Steve Kerry, Town Clerk; Dave Tristram, External Funding and Community Support Officer

CD2022/23.49 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were noted from Councillors Jacqui Carwardine, Ange Tyler and Rob Williams

CD2022/23.50 SUBSTITUTIONS

None. It was noted that Councillor Milln had sent apologies for being unable to substitute for Councillor Tyler as arranged.

CD2022/23.51 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hornsey reported a non-pecuniary interest in the item CAB Annual Report as she is a volunteer with the organisation.

C2022/23.52 ANNUAL REPORTS

a) Herefordshire and Worcestershire Citizens' Advice Bureau - £10,000

The Chair welcomed Sonya Gregory and Ann Lambert from H&W CAB to the meeting. The representatives thanked the City Council for their past support over many years. They had sent a written report including a number of anonymised case studies and produced some summary data of their work. With over 6,500 transactions with 1,100 people last year it is clear that multiple issues and problems are far more common than they were. The group had achieved £600,000 in benefits and £362,000 in debt solutions for clients. 52% of clients are disabled or have long term health issues. The top issues were Personal Independence Payments, Attendance Allowance, fuel or utility debts and council tax arrears. Emerging issues are around crisis support, access to food banks, fuel vouchers and household support funds. The worst crisis seems to be around the compulsory installation of pre-payment meters which have no seasonal cost spreading and make the winter crisis worse for the most vulnerable. There are many first time clients. The service has got back to face to face appointments post Covid and the drop ins have been overwhelmed by pent up need. The City's funding supports city clients who are the main users of the centre in St Owen Street, the market town outreach is funded by them.

CAB have taken on eight new volunteers now fully trained and need nine more next year to keep up with need. They have a wide variety of core funders, and some specific schemes are supported by external funding in addition.

Councillor Hey arrived at this point in the meeting.

Finally, they asked for members to note that the £2,500 pa energy cap is an average not an absolute limit, and some needs require households to spend a good deal more than that. In answer to questions some additional points were noted. Training takes about twelve weeks and is very comprehensive with support in the early days of deployment as a volunteer. It

takes place in Hereford. The case referred to in the study on re-employment on deleterious terms was now with ACAS pending Employment Tribunal. Their stats show if a person is raising an issue for the first time, not necessarily if that person has visited CAB before. Satisfaction surveys indicate about 90% of people are happy with the service they receive. The pandemic led to pent up demand which is shown in the 10% increase in calls and visits in almost every category. Food bank referrals are up 50%. The Household Support Fund has helped people but has increased CAB workload. Finally, it was confirmed that then installation of SMART meters is going ahead unilaterally and NACAB are campaigning to outlaw this practice.

The Chair thanked Sonya and Ann for their presentation.

b) Hereford in Bloom - £10,000

The Chair welcomed Kevin Knipe to the meeting and he introduced the annual report. Kevin drew members' attention to the brochure already distributed.

In answer to questions, he confirmed that the Southbank planting scheme promoted by Councillor Tyler was ready to go as soon as HiB heard from Nick Jones the local organiser. Within the portfolio of projects some are entirely the work of HiB some are done with additional local groups. The beds outside Morrisons and the Ledbury Road rose garden are HiB's own projects. They will be involved in greening the station area if and when that project gets going. They have also been planting bulbs along Ledbury Road and near the Nuffield Hospital. The group has twelve active volunteers, the City funds are spent when contractors are needed, for example ACER for watering and pruning on the roundabouts. Churchill Gardens have been improved but doing everything on the wish list would have been prohibitively expensive. They have asked for help from the EPICs but Community Payback no longer operates in the City.

Although some feel that the city centre could do with a lot more flowers, it is too expensive to have three or four plantings a year. The beds are now planted with forestry species that are more sustainable. They work with the BID who undertake city centre watering.

The Chair thanked Kevin for his answers.

CD2022/23.53 SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS

a) Courtyard Theatre - £29,863.75 over 3 years

The Chair welcomed Clare Wychbold and Ian Archer to the meeting who presented a report and proposal regarding the Workshops for Children. These have run for three years with the majority of children coming from Barrs Court School. They would like to continue to run them as the need clearly remains. This is therefore an application for a three year Service Level Agreement at £29,863.75. They are now funding the Family Festival through ticket sales; the Council has previously funded this element of their work. The Courtyard is proud of its history of worthwhile community projects and is well embedded into the local arts scene. They only propose projects with substantial and tangible community benefit.

In answer to questions the following additional points were noted. The activity is not free to all children but there is a bursary to those who cannot support the small charge that is made. The presenters undertook to provide more information about that charge. Children with complex needs can be admitted to sessions although sometimes they need to remain with

their specialist carers throughout, depending on the needs they present with, sometimes the Courtyard provide support staff. Inflation has been allowed for at 4% which is now unrealistic. It was noted that if inflation on this project rises above what was a reasonable assumption when the application was drafted the Courtyard will subsidise the project from other revenues. Current funding lasts until March 2023 so a full Council decision in January is acceptable.

Workshops are normally attended by between six and ten children and health needs do impact on consistency so not all children attend all three sessions in the course. Children in Need do not encourage ongoing support applications so their funding will cease. Staff are recruited from the Marches Family Network as well as locally from the City. The workshops are run at Easter, May bank holiday, October half term and there are some summer ones. The group will check if details of the bursary are on the website.

The Chair thanked Clare and Ian for their answers.

b) Borderlines Film Festival - £9,000 over 3 years

The Chair welcomed Naomi Vera-Sanso to the meeting and she handed around copies of last year's film festival brochure. This had been the first festival post Covid and was affected by nervousness about coming to crowded places, but attendance was still much better than expected. It was noted that the famous Edinburgh Film Festival and many smaller cinemas have closed post Covid. They are looking for a light hearted uplifting film menu to reflect the need for some feel good entertainment. The opening weekend is at Malvern but the majority of showings will be at the Courtyard, despite restrictions on access to the main house. They aim for 200+ screenings next year and around 17,500 viewers.

In answer to questions the following additional points were noted. The British Film Institute application for £42,000 will be decided tomorrow; they have funded the event over the past eleven years. The Guardian recently wrote up Borderlines as the best film festival in the country. About 11% of the audience are from outside the county, so the festival does contribute to tourism. It might be possible to get some big screen showings of the remarkable footage from the James Webb telescope from NASA. Last year was a hybrid with some online showings and some traditional cinema venues; the focus now is to get people to venues as that is what the venues want and films for online viewing are becoming much more expensive. In order to achieve coverage in pre-Christmas publicity, if members recommend this to Council, that will go to a meeting in December.

CD2022/23.54 SMALL GRANT APPLICATIONS

a) Rainbow Nursery - £2,951.31

The Chair welcomed Heather Klein and Janet Reeves to present their application.

Rainbow has operated for some thirty years in the Scout Hut which is now being completely rebuilt. They were a pack away nursery but needed a new home and are now using the Vennture building in St. James Road, formerly the (W)RVS building. This gives them the opportunity to become an early years' community hub without having to pack everything away and to buy some new equipment for the thirty families that use them regularly and others that come in crisis. The new building gives them options to expand into afternoon and early evening sessions and to develop a toy and equipment library. They are not sure if they

will go back into the rebuilt scout centre but the Scouts have made it clear they would be very welcome.

In answer to questions the following information was noted. Vennture charge a rent of £900 a month for the use of two rooms and a toilet area. They want to change from rental to a more formal lease. They have only one room that is secure for their exclusive use. It was noted that Councillor Milln had done good work in persuading Vennture to drop a demand that Rainbow raise £100,000 to reconfigure the building as a nursery. It was noted that if Vennture want to make use of some of the equipment listed in the application, such as the vacuum cleaners it would have been good to see them making some contribution to costs. The nursery will approach Children In Need who may be able to help with some costs. Most funding in the past has come from local fund raising initiatives and in kind support like a printer donating a huge amount of paper used for art work when he was closing down. They also use St. James School forest garden and the church's community garden.

The Chair thanked Heather and Janet for their answers.

b) St. John's Methodist Church - £660

The Chair welcomed Revd. Phil Warrey to introduce his application.

Phil explained that during Covid he had been a Street Ambassador and had noticed how many lonely and isolated people there were. To respond to this St. John's has started a Place of Welcome initiative open every Saturday morning sometimes with up to eight people visiting, sometimes fewer. St. Owen Street has a lot of passing foot fall, but publicity does not always reach the groups it is aimed at. The Warm Places initiative started in several northern towns and they have registered their scheme with the national initiative. It is run by members of the church, with support from the Quakers and the Cathedral congregation. He mentioned a couple of clients who come regularly one after sudden and devastating unemployment and the other after a bereavement.

In answer to questions the following additional points were noted. It was amazing how much was being raised from the donations of attenders at the Church. The project does not require a TV license as the church already holds one. This is not for the homeless, it is for people who have homes but cannot afford to heat them and eat. The grant will cover mobile phone chargers as these are vital for people to keep in touch with society. There are possible linked with St. Martin's food share and the Talk Community hub schemes and these will be followed up. Volunteer expenses referred to mainly cover Saturday parking or bus fares. The service is run by ten or twelve volunteers, there are only a few free parking spaces and these are often taken by local residents who have been asked not to, but still do. The group would be welcome to use our social media to support their appeal for second hand board games, books etc. The Chair thanked Phil for his answers.

c) West Mercia Learning CIC - £5,000

The Chair welcomed Debb Thomas, Lauren Holder and Caroline Phillips and invited them to present their application.

The ladies are trying to open an independent special school using the motto Growth Encourages Motivation. They work with children who are out of school because of mental

health issues and follow a recognised therapeutic programme which copes with behaviour and capacity. They registered just before the pandemic and have had some notable successes such as a child who could not attend school at all who now has five GCSE passes. They are keen to work from Trinity House on Moor Farm Estate. Their status would be a new independent special needs school, following the national curriculum but with bespoke programmes for each child. When the school isn't open they want to make facilities available to the local community as a way of raising revenue. Through links with other groups the learning programme will include volunteering and engagement with the wider local community. They get no government funding but Big Lottery wouldn't support the scheme as they feel it should be government funded. The landlord has let them have the building rent free for now but wants rent from the New Year. Avaro Foods have offered to fund landscaping the gardens for growing food. Once set up they have an agreement with the local authority to teach ten children as a minimum but they can take up to thirty on the premises. The grant application is for furniture to create a welcoming set up, including a tepee so a child can retreat but still be in class. They have taught children from Brookfield who found that school setting too challenging.

In answer to questions the following additional points were noted. Opening depends on completion of plumbing work and then passing an Ofsted inspection. They are aiming for February half term. There will be a mixture of full and part time students. The age range is from eight to eighteen years. The application is for ten sets of furniture, as numbers grow they will be able to self-fund their expansion. They work with local colleges to ease the transition into further education from eighteen and also with local schools as some children are able to return to mainstream school after a while. It was noted that funding originally planned to support this within Herefordshire Council had been reassigned to other special needs educational projects. The County will pay for students who attend but not for upfront costs to get the school established. £60,000 of the project cost has come from the founder and they have a ten year full repairing lease. Referring to the phrase "provision for Herefordshire" in the bid the applicants stated they expected most of the children to come from City families. The rent is £4,500 per month. Children in Need won't support this as they require three non-related directors and Big Lottery believe special needs education is a state responsibility and should be government funded. They have some links with Barrs Court but the student demographics are very different. They work with the Cart Shed, Echo and Action for Children.

They start at Year Three Key Stage 2 and children have Education and Health Care Plans. They will cope with children with learning ages two years below their peers, mild learning difficulties are no problem, moderate possible but severe not within their scope. For additional specific equipment a child would need a statement of needs in their referral. Good liaison with the colleges was important to enable the transition at eighteen to further education and vocational training if this was to work well.

The Chair thanked the presenters for their answers.

CD2022/23.55 RESOLUTIONS

a) Herefordshire and Worcestershire Citizens' Advice Bureau

It was noted that demand for the service is continually increasing and that the EF&CS Officer is meeting with them about another large bid to the Henry Smith Foundation. They will have

a plaque outside their door and we advertise to help them find volunteers which helps with attribution of our support.

It was proposed by Councillor Owens, seconded by Councillor Oliver and, with Councillor Hornsey abstaining having declared a non-pecuniary interest,

RESOLVED To accept the annual report and authorise release of the annual payment of £10,000 to support the work of the CAB.

b) Hereford in Bloom

Some concern was expressed about the lack of attribution in the brochure to the efforts of other groups and the need to improve liaison with the BID. It would also be good to have more details on how the annual grant is spent and a detailed breakdown of expenditure would be requested with the grant completion form.

Having noted these points it was the proposed by Councillor Wilcox, seconded by Councillor Stevens and unanimously

RESOLVED To accept the annual report and authorise release of the annual grant of £10,000 to Hereford in Boom.

c) Courtyard Theatre Trust

The only concern expressed was regarding the accessibility of funding for parents if they had to stay on with the children on site because it isn't a respite break. Nonetheless this is very much needed and greatly appreciated by families that use it.

It was proposed by Councillor Wilcox, seconded by Councillor Oliver that the Committee recommends to Council and unanimously

RESOLVED That a three-year service level agreement be recommended to Council at £10,000 a year, a total commitment of £30,000.

It was also noted that the Council should write to the Courtyard urging them to do more to try and accommodate the launch event.

d) Borderlines Film Festival

It was noted that a decision on this year's funding would be within the powers of the committee and would enable the Council to receive acknowledgement in next year's brochure if it was agreed now.

It was proposed by Councillor Hornsey, seconded by Councillor Hey and unanimously

RESOLVED To make a one year grant of £3,000 for the 2023 festival and to recommend to Council a two year service level agreement for the two subsequent years of £3,000 per annum, a total commitment of £9,000.

e) Rainbow Nursery

It was noted that this as a very good application but there was some disappointment with the attitude of Vennture. The application is to enable them to camp out at the current location and move on when they need to. Mobility is important to them. It was noted that the rent demand from Vennture is now reasonable after some discussions which the EF&CS Officer has been involved in. A possible proposal to make the funding conditional on closer working between the two charities and for the Clerk to release the funds when he was satisfied that was taking place was discussed but not formally moved.

It was proposed by Councillor Hey, seconded by Councillor Wilcox and unanimously

RESOLVED To award Rainbow Nursery a grant of £3,000.

f) St. John's Methodist Church

This was felt to be an excellent scheme and without further comment it was proposed by Councillor Stevens, seconded by Councillor Boulter and unanimously

RESOLVED To award St. John's Methodist Church a grant of £660 for their Warm Places initiative.

g) West Mercia Learning CIC

There was considerable discussion about whether this should be supported by Herefordshire Council or by central government although it was also noted that we have funded projects that arguably should not require voluntary funding from a parish council before. There was also discussion about whether this project had sufficient special merit to go beyond the usual £3,000 award level and justified an application for up to £5,000. It was also noted that the group do not yet have planning approval for the conversion of the building and local members are aware that there is some opposition to this, so it is not certain to be approved.

It was proposed by Councillor Hey, seconded by Councillor Hornsey and, with one abstention

RESOLVED To award West Mercia Learning CIC a grant of £5,000 subject to them receiving planning consent for their proposed independent special needs school at Trinity House.

CD2022/23.56 DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Tuesday 17 January 2023 at 6 pm main agenda (including a progress report re Vennture and the Night Shelter)

Monday 6 February 2023 at 10 am grant agenda.

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed.

Signed

Date