

# TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

<b>Report to:</b>	Executive Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	18 November 2020
<b>Subject:</b>	Wormington Village Hall Grant Update
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Finance and Asset Management
<b>Corporate Lead:</b>	Deputy Chief Executive
<b>Lead Member:</b>	Lead Member for Community
<b>Number of Appendices:</b>	None

## **Executive Summary:**

In January 2020, the Executive Committee received an update on the progress of the remaining capital grants including one awarded to Wormington Village Society for the proposed development of a village hall. At this point, Members were advised that as the project had not been forthcoming, the grant awarded in principle, should be withdrawn. Following discussion, Members agreed to a six-month extension to this grant to enable the Deputy Chief Executive to engage with the parties concerned with a view to establishing whether the project would come forward.

The Deputy Chief Executive has held discussions with both a representative of the Wormington Village Society and the Chair of Dumbleton Parish Council over recent months. Unfortunately, these discussions have not resulted in a change to the current position, and therefore the project coming forward. Consequently, this report recommends the withdrawal of the offer of a community grant to the society.

## **Recommendation:**

**That the Executive Committee APPROVE the withdrawal of the £57,700 offer to Wormington Village Society.**

## **Reasons for Recommendation:**

The grant offer was first made in March 2013 but the project to build a new village hall has failed to proceed in the last seven years. It is difficult to see how the project can successfully move forward at this point in time and it is therefore recommended that the grant offer is withdrawn.

## **Resource Implications:**

The capital allocation of £57,700 will be held within the capital receipts reserve pending further allocation. Given that Council has agreed the capital expenditure as part of a larger capital sum allocated to deliver community grants, the monies will be held as being available for community allocation pending the identification of a new use and beneficiary.

**Legal Implications:**

For grant offers, each scheme is required to sign a formal grant agreement, registered against each property (unless the recipient is a local authority). The Wormington Village Society grant document has not been completed due to the title issues. The Council would therefore be unable to secure its grant against the property, and in any event the Society would be unable to carry out the proposed works.

If the Council proposes withdrawing the grant offer to Wormington, it must act reasonably, in particular, giving reasonable notice to ensure that the applicants are not put to wasted expense.

**Risk Management Implications:**

There is a reputational risk to the Council both in continuing to support the grant award, given the age and issues, and withdrawing support. In addition, there is a risk that worthwhile community capital projects may not be supported due to insufficient capital balances if the Council continues to earmark monies for projects which have yet to progress.

**Performance Management Follow-up:**

Formal notification will be given to the Wormington Village Society following approval of the recommendation by Committee.

**Environmental Implications:**

None.

**1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 In January 2020, Members received the second annual update on capital grant schemes which remain outstanding since the Community Grants Working Group, which approved the applications, was disbanded. In the absence of a Working Group, the Executive Committee took back responsibility for overseeing and managing each remaining grant until their conclusion.
- 1.2 One of the updates presented to Members was a grant offer to Wormington Village Society to support the development of a village hall in Wormington. The Community Grants Working Group had originally considered and awarded this grant in March 2013.
- 1.3 Since the grant offer was made, the Wormington Village Society has been in discussion with Dumbleton Parish Council regarding the use of land where it was intended to build the new village hall. The land identified is in the ownership of Dumbleton Parish Council. Following the receipt of independent legal advice, a number of legal constraints were identified by the Parish Council, in relation to the use of this land for the proposed village hall, which has meant the scheme has been unable to proceed. Meetings and exchanges of correspondence have taken place between the two parties, but no agreement has been reached.
- 1.4 In considering the information presented in January 2020, Members agreed to a six-month extension to the grant offer to allow the Deputy Chief Executive to engage with the parties concerned to establish whether the project could come forward.

## **2.0 DISCUSSIONS WITH STAKEHOLDERS**

**2.1** In recent months, the Deputy Chief Executive has met on a one to one (remote meeting) basis with a representative of both Wormington Village Society and the Chair of Dumbleton Parish Council. In each case, the meetings focussed on trying to understand the obstacles associated with the project and whether those obstacles could be overcome to allow the village hall to be developed. In summary, how likely would the project be to come forward or develop significant traction, within the six-month extended time period agreed in January 2020.

**2.2** It is clear from the outcome of these discussions that Dumbleton Parish Council has a firm position, supported by independent legal advice, and are not in a position to deviate from the advice given. Given this position, it cannot be seen how the proposed village hall project can progress at this point in time and it is therefore recommended that the grant offer of £57,700 is withdrawn.

**2.3** Clearly if agreement or further negotiation between both parties changes this position, there is no reason why Wormington Village Society could not look to make a future bid to the community grant scheme, should such a scheme be in existence. Having supported a grant application historically, whilst any new application would be assessed on its merits, there is clearly a principle of agreement of the Council for grant support for a new village hall.

## **3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

**3.1** Members could agree to grant a further extension to the grant offer to allow for further discussion to take place. It is not envisaged that a further extension would lead to a difference in the current position.

## **4.0 CONSULTATION**

**4.1** As detailed within the report.

## **5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES**

**5.1** None.

## **6.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

**6.1** None.

## **7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)**

**7.1** None.

## **8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)**

**8.1** The withdrawal of the grant offer will mean that there is no improvement to local social facilities.

## **9.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)**

**9.1** None.

**10.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS**

**10.1** Executive Committee – 8 January 2020.

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**Background Papers:** None.

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**Appendices:** None.