

**Castle & Priory, St. James' and St Thomas' Community Forum – Monday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021**

**Report of the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing**

**Community Forum Funding**

<b><u>Purpose</u></b>	
1.	To consider the allocation of expenditure from the community forum funding budget for the 2021/22 municipal year.
<b><u>Recommendations</u></b>	
2.	It is recommended that the forum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• considers the new applications referred to in the report and makes an appropriate recommendation to the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, and</li> <li>• notes details of the funding it has allocated since the last meeting of the forum held on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020, prior to the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.</li> </ul>
<b><u>Background</u></b>	
3.	The ten community forums are responsible for allocating expenditure from the delegated community forum funding budget. The Cabinet, in March 2018, approved a new set of criteria to replace the previous guidelines against which allocations from the delegated budget should be considered, and these are attached. Criteria for any remaining funding available through the High Street Innovation and Empty Shops Grant are also attached.
4.	Copies of the new applications referred to in this report have been e-mailed to Members prior to the meeting.

	<b><u>Applications for consideration at this meeting</u></b>
5.	<p><u>The What? Centre, Dudley</u></p> <p>An application has been received from The What? Centre which provides a wide range of support and advice to children and young people aged from 9 to 25 from its premises in Dudley and Stourbridge town centres. It has applied for £4,966.00 to fund essential repairs to the roof of its Dudley town centre premises on Priory Street. The application has also been referred to the Netherton, Woodside &amp; St Andrew's and Quarry Bank &amp; Dudley Wood Community Forum to consider providing 50% of the requested funding. This forum is therefore asked to consider allocating £2,483.00.</p> <p>The organisation has not received any community forum funding within the last three years.</p>
6.	<p><u>Genesis Education and Tutoring Consultancy Community Interest Company</u></p> <p>Genesis Education and Tutoring Consultancy CIC, based at Destined to Reign Church on King Street, was incorporated in June 2021 and aims to carry out activities which develop young people as good citizens and to provide education, training, mentoring, counselling and support to improve the life chances of people at risk of social or economic exclusion.</p> <p>The organisation is requesting funding of £5,000.00 to run a 'winter warmth pilot project' to continue working with children who attended its Holiday Activity Fun summer scheme by providing an after-school homework club, linked to preparing children for SATS, and catch-up lessons following the Covid-19 pandemic, aiming to build up their confidence and academic skills for tests. The funding requested would cover the cost of tutors (£2,400) and venue hire for 6 months (£1,500), volunteer expenses, laptop and printer, various materials and snacks/drinks.</p> <p>The organisation has not received any community forum funding within the last three years.</p>
7.	<p><u>Christmas trees and lights</u></p> <p>Each year community forums are asked to contribute to the costs of Christmas trees and lights in their areas from their ward allocations. The contribution requested for 2021 from the Castle &amp; Priory, St. James's and St. Thomas's Community Forum is £4,144.70 for Christmas trees/lights in Stone Street Square and the Market Place, Dudley town centre. Castle &amp; Priory and St. James' wards have agreed to allocate a third of the cost with a decision awaited from St. Thomas' ward.</p>

**Funding allocated since last meeting**

8. Community forum meetings were suspended from mid-March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but funding remained open to voluntary and community organisations to apply for. During the period since the last meeting of this forum, the following funding has been agreed:

Friends of Green Park – £8,000.00 towards designing, purchasing and installing play equipment for Green Park (April 2020).

Redhill Allotments Association – £1,300.00 for fencing panels and grids to improve the security of the allotment (April 2020).

Centre for Equality and Diversity - £3,500.00 towards the replacement of IT equipment and to employ a sessional worker for 6 months (April 2020).

Black Country Community Radio - £1,927.24 for two items of equipment for its new studios at the Waterfront (April 2020).

Mata da Mandir - £3,500.00 towards the start-up costs of a club for young people including musical and sports equipment and room rental (April 2020).

New Path of Life CIC - £2,000.00 towards the costs of a multicultural celebration held in Dudley town centre in July 2021 (April 2020).

St. Thomas' Community Association - £2,609.46 for a gate and concrete bollards at a garage site in Ardley Close (July 2020)

Dudley Town Football Club – £1,500.00 for footballs, goals and training equipment for expanding the club's junior football teams (August 2020).

Arts of Change Trust - £3,000.00 towards the Creative Orchid Project and the costs of artists, therapists, materials, administration and management (August 2020).

Gayatri Picture Framing - £2,673.40 (Empty Shops and High Street Innovation Fund) for fencing and the clearing of land to the rear of retail premises on Wolverhampton Street, Dudley (October 2020).

Christmas tree and lights 2020 - £3,575.60 for Christmas trees/lights in Stone Street Square and the Market Place, Dudley (October 2020).

Friends of Russells Hall Park - £5,000.00 for litter bins, benches and a picnic table for the park (January 2021).

Friends and Residents of Buffery Park - £3,523.75 for a picnic bench and 4 educational play panels (June 2021).

Priory Community Association - £4,725.00 for a summer holiday scheme for local children and families, including coach hire, safari park admission, food and drink, games equipment, volunteer expenses and entertainment (June 2021).

Churches Housing Association Dudley and District – £3,070.00 for plants, seeds and equipment for the garden area at New Beginnings Refuge (August 2021).

**Finance**

9. Each community forum receives an annual allocation of £10,000 per ward. The balances currently available to spend are as follows:

£	Balance Bfwd from 20/21	Annual Funding 21/22	Actual Spend 21/22	Committed	Balance to award
Castle & Priory	17,572.70	10,000.00	4,725.00	2,574.97	20,272.73
St. James'	21,578.16	10,000.00	1,000.00	16,748.79	13,829.37
St. Thomas'	9,660.21	10,000.00	1,000.00	6,178.69	12,481.52
<b>Total</b>	<b>48,811.07</b>	<b>30,000.00</b>	<b>6,725.00</b>	<b>25,502.45</b>	<b>46,583.62</b>

10. Empty Shops Grant and High Street Innovation Fund - one-off funding was made available in the 2014/15 financial year for projects which improve the appearance or economic vitality of an area, with preference to the borough's centres and high streets. The remaining value of this funding allocated to the community forum is £2,917.62, of which Castle & Priory has £2,858.81 and St. Thomas' £58.81. Guidance about the criteria to be used in making decisions about the allocation of this funding are attached to this report.

**Law**

11. The Localism Act 2011 gives the Council a power of general competence to act in the interests of the Community. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables the Council to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive to or incidental to, the discharge of its statutory functions.

<b><u>Risk Management</u></b>	
12.	There are no significant risks involved in the proposal.
<b><u>Equality Impact</u></b>	
13.	A wide range of voluntary and community organisations across the borough have been awarded community forum funding. Beneficiaries have included, for example, people from across all age groups, from different ethnic and religious backgrounds and groups of disabled people. An equality impact assessment of community forum funding has been completed.
<b><u>Human Resources/Organisational Development</u></b>	
14.	A review of community forums was carried out in 2016/17 with a range of recommendations approved by the Cabinet in May 2017 for developing forums as part of the council's commitment to working more closely with local communities.
<b><u>Commercial/Procurement</u></b>	
15.	There are no significant commercial or procurement implications.
<b><u>Council Priorities</u></b>	
16.	<p>Community forums contribute to objectives within the Borough Vision, the Council Plan and the Future Council Programme which focus on healthy, resilient, safe communities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing an opportunity for local people, elected members and partners to work together to identify and progress priorities for their local area</li> <li>• supporting people to be actively involved in their community by identifying community assets, connecting people and resources, and enabling people to share ideas and make positive things happen in their communities</li> <li>• providing opportunities for local people to influence plans and services which will impact on the local area</li> <li>• providing a forum to deal with wider community issues rather than individual complaints</li> <li>• providing funding to groups who demonstrate that they are working alongside local people and utilising existing community assets wherever possible</li> <li>• focusing on approaches which support people to be more self-reliant, independent and co-ordinated in order to increase community resilience</li> </ul>

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**List of Background Papers**

- The application forms on which this report is based have been emailed to Members prior to the meeting, but contain exempt information under the terms of part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.
- Criteria for considering funding applications attached.

## **Funding criteria for applicants – Community Forum funding**

1. Voluntary or community organisations based in Dudley borough, or which benefit people in the borough, can apply for up to a maximum of £5,000 per year. The same project will not normally be funded more than once in every three years (see note 1).
2. Applications should be for local projects i.e. in a particular ward/small number of wards and not borough wide. Applications should be from a parent organisation rather than, for example, an individual team within a sports club.
3. Applications should demonstrate how they will contribute to Dudley Council's aim to support local people and organisations to work together to improve the local community or area and encourage local people to be active citizens.
4. Applications may be for capital and/or revenue expenditure (see note 2), but revenue costs must be one-off or strictly time-limited; ongoing revenue costs will be the applicant's responsibility and will not be funded by the council.
5. Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate match funding or efforts to obtain funding elsewhere/share resources with other organisations.
6. Applications are to be submitted at least 21 days before a forum meeting in order to be considered at that meeting. Later applications will be held over to the next available meeting. Genuinely urgent applications may be considered between meetings at the discretion of community forum members.
7. Once an application is received, where appropriate a council community development worker will arrange to meet the applicants to provide advice and support with the application before it proceeds.
8. Applications will only be considered if the application form is completed fully and the requested documents submitted (see note 3).
9. If appropriate, applications may be recommended for, or redirected to, funding from other sources.
10. Applicants will need to attend the forum meeting at which their application is considered to share what they plan to do and answer any questions.
11. A recommendation on the application will be made by the forum's elected members to the council's Director of Public Health and Wellbeing.
12. A funding approval may be given with particular conditions attached e.g. equipment purchased to be shared with other organisations.

Notes:

Note 1. Individual community forums reserve the right to make exceptions depending on the circumstances of the application.

Note 2: Capital – one-off expenditure on buying equipment, vehicles, land or buildings, or carrying out improvements or new build. Revenue – expenditure on running costs of projects or activities, including staff costs and purchase of consumable items or services.

Note 3: an alternative way to apply will be available to people who may have difficulty in completing the application form because of a disability

## **Terms and conditions of funding**

Payment will usually be made once work or an activity has been carried out and/or goods/equipment purchased and related paid invoices or receipts provided to the council.

### **If approved, funding will be provided on the basis that:**

1. The funding is spent within nine months of approval by the community forum i.e. paid invoices/receipts are submitted to the council within this timescale. If (in exceptional circumstances) funding has been provided in advance, paid invoices/receipts must be provided to the council within three months or the money will need to be repaid to the council.
2. A representative of the organisation attends a meeting of the community forum within twelve months of the application being approved to share feedback about the difference the funding has made.
3. The organisation uses the funding only for the purpose stated, agrees to provide any extra information that the Council may require and allows Council officers to inspect goods/equipment purchased, if required.
4. Any goods/equipment funded are sufficiently insured.
5. The Council's internal and external auditors have the right to inspect documentation relating to the funding application.
6. If funding has been awarded based on misleading or inaccurate information, or the organisation receives funding for the same items from another source, the organisation will repay part or all of the allocation as required by the Council.



## **Elected members, when considering community forum applications:**

1. should apply the funding criteria for applicants in considering applications; the council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, and the council's legal powers must be complied with in dealing with applications;
2. should declare any interests that they have in any of the applications to be considered;
3. will make recommendations on applications for community forum funding to the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing who has delegated authority for community forum funding;
4. are free to decide whether to pool their resources across wards or to use each ward allocation only for applications relating to that ward;
5. may wish to identify with the local community some priorities for their areas on an annual or other basis and invite grant applications which relate to these;
6. should allow applicants, who will be asked to attend forum meetings, to present their applications, and successful applicants, who will be attending a future meeting, to provide feedback. This will help in establishing accountability and a clear audit trail for expenditure, as well as sharing learning and inspiration with other community groups; and
7. have discretion in dealing with applications at meetings in the absence of the applicants.

## High Street Innovation/Empty Shops Grant Funding Applications

1. One-off funding has been made available in the 2014/15 financial year for projects which improve the appearance or economic vitality of an area, with preference to the Borough's Centres and High Streets.
2. The Council will decide which source of funding successful applications will use, but as guidance for applicants High Street Innovation/Empty Shops Grant funding will be considered for the following:

### Eligible proposals

- Proposals will be considered either for Capital or Revenue activities.
- Proposals are preferred for projects within the Borough's defined Principal or Local Centres, but applications may be considered in any location where benefits to the local economy or environment may be demonstrated.
- Proposals that show a partnership approach (between for example business and the Community will be preferred).

### Ineligible proposals

- Proposals which create ongoing revenue costs for the Council. Proposals must demonstrate how any improvements will be maintained.
- Proposals which are required as a direct result of a planning condition, enforcement action or any other statutory consent.
- Proposals that do not have the agreement of the owner or occupier of land or property affected.
- Proposals that do not have a realistic prospect of being granted planning permission.

### Suggested areas of expenditure

- Proposals to improve the appearance or condition of empty commercial or retail premises.
- Proposals to improve vacant or unsightly land.
- Match funding to support funding bids for the above.
- Activities and events to support centres economic vitality.

