

Committee: Community and Housing Committee

Agenda Item

Date: 18 June 2009

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Title: **THAXTED CENTRE FOR THE DISABLED –
COMMUNITY PROJECT GRANT 2008/2009**

Author: Sue Hayden – Community Development
Officer

Item for decision

Summary

- 1 This report gives details of a Community Project Grant which was allocated to the Thaxted Centre for the Disabled in 2008/09. The funding has been spent, however, the Centre does not have the adequate 50% matched funding in place and are requesting that members of the Committee agree to them receiving the full grant of £3,500.

Recommendations

- 2 That on this occasion, as the budget has already been allocated for 2008/2009, Members agree to the Thaxted Centre for the Disabled receiving the full grant payment of £3,500 on the understanding that this is a one-off and does not set a precedent for the future.

Background Papers

- 3 Appendix A – E-mail sent 6 April from the Thaxted Centre for the Disabled's Grant Funding Liaison Officer

Impact

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Communication/Consultation	None
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Finance	None funding for 2008/2009 already budgeted for.
Human Rights	None
Legal implications	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

- 5 Under the Community Project Grant Scheme 2008/2009 the Thaxted Centre for the Disabled was allocated a grant of £3,500 towards the cost of refurbishment to their existing disabled toilets, which they were duly notified of on 26 June 2008.
- 6 The Community Development Officer sent an e-mail to the Thaxted Centre for the Disabled on 20 February 2009 reminding them that under the terms of the grant, paid receipts/invoices needed to be presented to the Council by 9 March 2009. On 5 March 2009 a letter was received attaching receipts totalling £3,503.70 from the Centre's Organiser.
- 7 A telephone call was made to the Grant Funding Liaison Officer by the Council's Community Development Officer advising that the criteria states that if an applicants is applying for under £1,000 they must have 25% matched funding and over £1,000 50% matched funding. Therefore, the Centre needed to send further paid invoices otherwise they would only be eligible to receive £1,751.85 of the grant, £3503.70 as the total paid by the Centre for the works, receipts less the 50% matched funding. The Community Development Officer was advised the Centre would send further invoices.
- 8 On 31 March 2009 the Community Development Officer sent a follow up e-mail to the Centre asking if further paid invoices were being sent, if not, she would make arrangements to pay the £1,751.85. A reply was received on 6 April 2009 from the Centre's Grant Funding Liaison Officer (Appendix A) which stated that she had informed the Centre of the £3,500 grant allocation, however, neglected to state that matched funding was required in order to obtain the full allocation.
- 9 In the e-mail the Grant Funding Liaison Officer wrote that this has now put the Centre in a very difficult position financially, as funding from Essex County Council and the Community Partnership is no longer available to them. She says that "the mistake is hers and she must do what she can to mitigate the Centre's losses by seeking to make up the loss".
- 10 Although past recipients of grants, not fully meeting the matched funding criteria, have received less funding, the impact on the Thaxted Centre for the Disabled, particularly as they are a registered charity, at a time when their funding has already been reduced, would prove extremely difficult for them to make up. Also, as they are a community organisation dealing with disabled people within Uttlesford, it could give the District Council adverse publicity if we were seen to be taking funding away from them, albeit due to an error on their part.
- 11 The Thaxted Centre for the Disabled has not put in an application for funding for this financial year under the Community Project Grant Scheme.

Risk Analysis

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Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
That agreement to let the Thaxted Centre for the Disabled have the full allocation will set a precedent for future applicants	1 – The Community Project Grant Scheme has been running for many years and we have not come across this situation in the past.	1 – Groups may consider it unfair that in the past they have received less funding as they have not met the full matched funding criteria	Application form clearly states that matched funding is required. It will also be made clear in the letter recipients receive advising of them of their grant allocation.

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

Thaxted Centre for the Disabled

From: Hilary Kendall White [mailto:kendallwhite722@btinternet.com]
Sent: 06 April 2009 14:05
To: Sue Hayden
Subject: Re: Community Project Grant - CPG/08/011

43 Mill End, Thaxted, Dunmow, Essex CM6 2LT Telephone 01371 830283

Dear Sue

I have been ill and fuzzy-headed for some weeks but I have now re-read the original grant application notes.

I informed the Thaxted Centre for the Disabled that they would receive a grant of £3,500 but did not inform them that they were required to spend £7,000.00. I am deeply embarrassed that I did not realize that this was a match-funding grant. I just cannot think how it was that I missed such a vital condition, and I certainly would not have withheld something so important from the Centre Management. I have spoken to the Thaxted Centre Organiser who confirms that the works are completed and that they deliberately kept within the £3,500 which I had advised the Centre they would be awarded, so that there are no further receipts to come. The mistake is therefore mine and I must now do what I can to mitigate their losses by seeking to make up the unexpected deficit between the Centre's expenditure and your grant.

The revelation that they will receive only £1,741.75 has come as an unwelcome blow at a time when grant funding from Essex County Council has been denied to the Centre "because of other priorities;" nor is the Uttlesford/PCT Partnership funding any longer available. Mrs. Carmichael at the Centre told me that they would not have done the work at this time if they had been aware of the financial implications for the Centre given that the Centre is facing a hitherto unknown diminishing income period as a result of the major loss of historically reliable sources of grant-funding. Therefore as things stand now *vis a vis* your grant this is such an embarrassing blunder on my part that I feel personally obliged to try, how or from where I know not, to raise the shortfall between the anticipated £3,500 and the reduced sum of £1,741.75.

This is a desperately worrying time for the Centre because the capital works which they undertook were essential to avoid the loss of personal dignity of persons who need assistance to use the lavatory whilst at the Centre. I say 'worrying' because every week seems to bring news of yet another 'rug being pulled from under us' who work entirely without remuneration or expenses in the voluntary sector. The longevity tables indicate an average life-span of around 86 years for Uttlesford residents, and we have had many Centre users well over that age, and one who reached 100. These added years are invariably accompanied by complex needs which the Centre staff make every effort to meet with utmost courtesy, encouragement and good humour. The fact that addressing the needs of the disabled and ageing persons in our community is apparently being relegated to the very end of so many statutory budgets indicates

a worrying trend for Centres such as ours.

The Thaxted Centre is a precious resource for the Uttlesford Community, and I wish that those holding the funding purse strings would visit to see the sterling work being done there to support and encourage every possible modicum of independence, personal dignity and worthwhileness in the case of every individual Centre user. We know that without the opportunity to attend the Centre those who attend would be condemned to live out the remainder of their lives in the dreary confinement of their homes with no stimulation other than television, mostly with no opportunity to 'go out' and certainly with no possibility of social networks or occasional pleasant group outings to lunch or places of interest in the close care, company and support of 'hearts of gold' voluntary staff.

We do not envisage any reduction in the need for a resource such as the Thaxted Centre as we read that more and more vulnerable persons are scheduled to be sent out of warded care to "care in the community." One auxiliary nurse who will lose her employment in such an imminent move has described the proposed "care in the community" for those for whom she cares now as "becoming the forgotten out of sight out of mind" branch of the community. I hope that our Centre will still be there for them when they need us.

I would be grateful to you if you could possibly direct me, please, to any possible grant-funding source from which I can make urgent application in an attempt to make up the above shortfall to the Centre.

Yours sincerely
Hilary Kendall White