

Report of the Assistant Director (Lifelong Learning & Culture)

ACCESSIBLE ARTS: APPROVAL OF LOAN

Summary

1. This report seeks approval to make a loan to Accessible Arts. Accessible Arts will use this to undertake further consultation and to prepare business and project plans in support of their bid to the Community Places programme of the Big Lottery Fund for funding to redevelop the Melbourne Centre.

Background

2. Accessible Arts have applied for a loan of £9k. Loans are one form of funding offered by the Learning, Culture and Children's Services Department to York's voluntary sector. They can be made to organisations who work in the areas of:

- Sport and Active Leisure
- Arts
- Heritage
- Open Spaces
- Children's play and young people's leisure
- Events and festivals that contribute to a vibrant and cosmopolitan city culture

and who wish to collaborate with us in one or more of our key outcome areas:

- Making York More Eventful: Enjoying, participating in, and taking the lead in cultural events and activities
- Engaging in Learning: Developing creative expression and talent, becoming more informed and acquiring skills for life
- Being Healthy: Enjoying good physical and mental health and having an active lifestyle
- Making a positive Contribution: Being involved with the life of the city and its many communities
- Taking Pride and Pleasure in the Environment: Appreciating and understanding the city and its surroundings
- Economic Well-being: Enjoying the economic benefits of a thriving cultural sector
- Staying Safe: Being protected from harm and neglect
- Infrastructure Planning: Improving the quality of the city's cultural infrastructure

3. Loans are interest free and can be given for new equipment, repairs or building work, feasibility studies, architects' or consultants' fees and / or administration costs related to a building or similar project. Repayments can be spread over a five-year period. Applications can be made at any time. Under the scheme of delegation loans of more than £5k are approved by the Executive Member.

The Project

4. Accessible Arts are a recipient of annual Service Level Agreement Funding from Lifelong Learning and Culture. They are an arts charity working to deliver high quality arts experiences for young people and adults with disabilities across York. One of their internationally acclaimed projects is the Hands and Voices singing and signing choir.
5. In 2005 Accessible Arts relocated, along with Cube Media, to the Melbourne Centre. They have since been working with the Methodist church, two local schools, key stakeholders and current centre users to develop a plan to convert the Melbourne Centre into an exemplary and sustainable Community and Media Centre. Following an initial needs analysis consultation the proposed Centre would have a specific emphasis on integrating provision for those with disabilities alongside mainstream activities.
6. The request for a loan of £9,000 is to allow this small organisation to buy in additional time and expertise to prepare a business plan and undertake further work on community consultation leading to an application to the Big Lottery Fund, in the first instance. Accessible Arts and their partners in the application will be contributing substantial additional in kind support in preparation for the bid.
7. The total amount of the proposed redevelopment work is approximately £2.3m, organised in 3 phases. The work on the Business Plan will help to project plan both the redevelopment proposal itself and the strategy for funding applications in support of the proposal.

Consultation

8. Consultation on the proposed redevelopment has already taken place with:
 - Fishergate Ward Community
 - Fishergate & St. George's Primary schools
 - York Gateway (youth club for young people with disabilities)
 - Cube Media & Accessible Arts
 - Various dance & sports groups e.g. York Breakdance and disability sports sessions run by CYC
 - Youth & Media Projects e.g. Basement, Bandstrand & Space 109
 - Other Youth Groups e.g. the Woodcraft Folk
 - Manor & Applefields Schools re Music & Media Training
 - Creative York / Science City for Business Start up Units

The Arts and Culture team have supported the consultation and will continue to work with Accessible Arts on further consultation throughout the proposal.

9. The Council is currently committed to spending £200k of the receipt from the sale of the Kent Street site (which is subject to planning permission) on community facilities in the area. Accessible Arts are one of the community organisations who could benefit from this fund. A further report will be brought on this in due course.

Options

10. The options available to the Executive Member are:
 - o To grant the loan
 - o To refuse the loan

Analysis

11. The loan will enable the preparation and consultation work by Accessible Arts, on behalf of the Melbourne Centre Partnership, can go ahead and lead to an application to the Big Lottery Fund (and other appropriate funders). If the loan is refused Accessible Arts is unlikely to be able to obtain the funding from any other source in the time available to them. It is therefore recommended that the application be approved.

Corporate Priorities

12. SLAs are given to meet the key priorities as detailed in paragraph 2 above.

Implications

13. **Financial:** Accessible Arts have requested a loan of £9k. The loans fund currently has £27,970 available in it and the request can therefore be accommodated.
14. The loan will be repaid at the rate of £1,800 per year beginning in 2008/9. However, if Accessible Arts are successful with their the Big Lottery bid they will receive an element in respect of preparation costs and it may be appropriate for them to use this to repay the loan early.
15. If the funding bids are successful then York will have an exemplary and fully integrated community centre in the heart of the city. This will substantially improve our provision of sports and arts facilities to the disabled community in the city. For the Council there are no human resources, legal, crime and disorder, or information technology implications arising from this proposal.

Risk Management

16. Successful applications to the Big Lottery fund can request financial support in respect of the preparation of their bid. However, if the bid is unsuccessful Accessible Arts have built in a loan repayment schedule of 5 years into their current business plan. Although our SLA to Accessible Arts is only £3,180, their annual turnover in 2006 was £34,471.

Recommendations

17. The Executive Member is asked to approve a loan of £9k to Accessible Arts.

Reason: So that the preparation and consultation work by Accessible Arts, on behalf of the Melbourne Centre Partnership, can go ahead and lead to an application to the Big Lottery Fund (and other appropriate funders).

Contact Details

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Report Approved

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Date 24.5.07.

Wards Affected: Fishergate

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers

Loan application file held by the author.