
Meeting of the Executive Member for Leisure Culture and Social Inclusion Advisory Panel

15 July 2008

Report of the Assistant Director (Lifelong Learning and Culture)

Investment in Community Facilities: £200k fund

Summary

1. This report asks the Executive Member to agree to allocate the £200k fund for investment in community facilities to two community organisations in the Fishergate and Guildhall Wards.

Background

2. The £200k fund is a Leisure and Culture capital programme scheme. The money will come from part of the proceeds of the sale of the Kent Street site to Barbican Venture York Limited. (Now that planning permission has been granted for the site that sale is nearing completion).
3. The Council chose to take the £200k from the developer in lieu of the developer being required to build a new community facility on the redeveloped Kent Street site. The following criteria were agreed by the Executive for the money:
 - ❖ It should be invested in existing facilities to improve community access and / or the quality of service offered
 - ❖ Facilities must benefit residents in the immediate vicinity of the Barbican
 - ❖ Priority will be given to schemes that benefit those groups most disadvantaged by the loss of facilities on the Barbican site
 - ❖ Preference will be given to schemes that lever in funding from other sources
 - ❖ Investment must be in the form of capital, not revenue
 - ❖ Schemes must be sustainable (there must be no requirement for ongoing funding from the Council)

Consultation

4. All the community organisation and stakeholders in Guildhall and Fishergate wards were first written to in May 2006 to inform them about this fund and invite them to submit project or investment ideas that would meet these criteria. It was also advertised through the ward committee meetings and newsletters. This process was repeated in February this year. Outline ideas were sought capable of demonstrating:

- ❖ That the organisation is in support of the idea
 - ❖ That the project is broadly feasible – e.g. any necessary land or other assets are available or can be acquired
 - ❖ Broadly how much it will cost
5. A public meeting was held on 6 May. Five community organisations were represented and there was a round table discussion with local members about the potential ideas. Consideration was given to whether there were any common themes or approaches emerging but the conclusion reached was that the ideas were in fact quite separate. Following the discussion organisations still interested were asked to submit formal proposals by 6 June.

Options: The Bids

6. 3 bids were received. These were from:
- the Melbourne Centre
 - Space 109
 - UpStage Youth Theatre, 41 Monkgate

The Melbourne Centre

7. In August 2005 Accessible Arts and Cube Media relocated to the Melbourne Centre, Escrick Street, (formerly a youth club) enabling the centre to be preserved as a resource for the local area. There has been an eight fold increase in the number of groups using the building since 2005, covering a diverse range of cultural, sport, play, community, and extended schools activities. The building remains run-down, however, and the space needs to be redesigned to make the most use of it.
8. A working party has been developing a 3 year strategy to develop a sustainable future for the centre and how it can best serve the local community. They are in the process of completing the second phase of a Big Lottery Fund (BLF) bid under the Community Building Programme, having been successful at stage one, and being offered a £25,000 development grant to carry out the necessary legal and construction checks prior to submitting their phase 2 bid.
9. The plan is to make the building more sustainable, environmentally sound and the first community centre to ensure that people with disabilities can use the space in a fully integrated manner. Key elements are:
- Replacing the existing main / stepped entrance by a new structure on two floors that will include a fully accessible entrance and seating area.
 - Redesigning the internal spaces to be able to accommodate more than one user group at a time.
 - Creating a community learning and media workshop
 - Making the building more accessible, safe and secure for all users
 - Improving acoustics and soundproofing, especially in the main hall.

- Improving the external spaces in consultation with Fishergate Primary School
 - Putting in a new heating and ventilation system to make the building more cost-effective to run.
10. The centre is currently breaking even but the planned rebuild will greatly strengthen the revenue business plan as it will allow more than one group to use the centre at a time.
 11. The total value of the scheme has yet to be finalised is likely to be between £450k and £500k. The bid to the Lottery is for £250k and the centre is currently aiming to raise £56k from other sources. The more match funding that the centre can use within their BLF bid, the stronger this bid will be. The Centre could therefore justify a bid for the full £200k.

Space 109

12. Opened in July 2006, Space 109 is Walmgate's community arts venture. It aims to provide a meeting place to discuss the needs of everyone in the community, and offers creative activities such as film making, drawing, painting, photography, music, drama, comedy writing and digital story telling. Over the last 6 months the centre has also hosted Youth Arts nights, Residents' Association meetings, knit and natter evenings and events for young mums.
13. Space 109 want to develop the shop next door as space for their community arts centre. This would make a larger space with more facilities and a lot more potential for users. It would also provide an office space, a larger studio space, a computer suite, and a disabled toilet (which would allow adult education sessions to be held). A business plan has been drawn up with prudent estimates of the potential income generation from the additional space showing that this will cover the additional rental.
14. The scheme is subject to Space 109 being able to acquire the lease of the next door property. They are currently working to acquire this and the Ward Committee will consider providing support for the rent for this property in the period before it can be remodelled and knocked through into the existing property.
15. The cost of the work excluding fixtures and fittings is estimated at £20,800 although Space 109 would like to be considered for a grant of £25k in order to allow for some contingency.

UpStage Youth Theatre, 41 Monkgate

16. 41 Monkgate submission states that for many years it has been run on the basis of very limited finances. They have therefore made the best of the available spaces without having the opportunity to look at fundamental changes. They have dealt with maintenance on an essentials-only basis, and let space to community groups, charities and the council to generate income. They have not had luxury of time or money to sit down and ask questions about "what would we do with the building if....".

17. The organisation would therefore like to commission a feasibility study. This would allow them to get the management, trustees, users of the building and any other interested parties together to develop ideas for possible futures for the building and occupants, develop thought-through proposals, address issues of environmental sustainability, and identify possible funding sources.
18. The study would result in a range of phased proposals to bring improvements for the users of the building, which is made up of a cross section of York's Community. These improvements may include things like "making it a better place to work" through to "making it a better place for visitors/audiences" and "making it easier to rent out space for greater income- therefore helping self sustainability for the future".
19. The Centre is applying for £4,918.75 in order to undertake the feasibility study.

Analysis

Melbourne Centre:

20. This scheme meets all the criteria. In particular it will lever in significant external lottery funding. The Centre's plans show clear evidence of community involvement and the plan was explicitly supported by the Fishergate School governor representative at the public meeting.

Space 109:

21. This scheme broadly meets the criteria. Although it is not yet clear whether the scheme will lever in external funding the organisation is looking for further external sources of funding. The centre is clearly meeting a wide range of community needs though there has not been a formal user consultation about these plans.

UpStage Youth Theatre, 41 Monkgate:

22. The chief difficulty with this proposal is that the facility is not in the immediate vicinity of the Barbican. Furthermore, this is not a capital bid (although it may lead to a capital development in the future). It does not lever in external funding at this stage.

Conclusion

23. It is proposed that the Melbourne Centre is granted £180k and Space 109 £20k.
24. It is not proposed to make a grant to Upstage Youth Theatre. The Council's client officer, together with the Grants and Partnerships officer, will, however, work with the organisation to try to identify alternative sources of funding. (The organisation is also one of the Lord Mayor's charities this year).

Corporate Priorities

25. These grants will support the 5 Lifelong Learning and Culture Plan outcomes, especially supporting stronger and safer communities.

Implications

Financial:

26. The Leisure and Culture capital programme contains £200k for this scheme in 2008/9. If the schemes are not at a point where they are ready for funding during 08/09 it will be possible to carry the funding forward into 09/10.
27. There are no human resources, legal, equalities, crime and disorder, property or IT implications.

Risk Management

28. To protect the Council's interests payment of grant will be subject to:
 - All necessary permissions for the schemes (e.g. planning permission) being in place
 - Security of tenure being obtained through appropriate leases
 - All other match funding such as lottery funding being secured
 - Agreement by the Council to the detailed construction plans
 - Approval by the Council of final revenue business plans
 - Approval by the Council of the form of tender and selection of contractor
29. These conditions will be enshrined in a formal legal agreement. Should either scheme be unable to fulfil these terms by 31 March, 2011 the offer of funding will be withdrawn and a further report will be made to the Executive Member.

Recommendations

30. The Executive Member is asked to agree to the £200k fund being spent on grants of:
 - £180k to the Melbourne Centre
 - £20k to Space 109

subject to the conditions set out in paragraphs 28 and 29.

Reason: To provide excellent community facilities in the vicinity of the Barbican in line with the Council's approved Leisure Facilities Strategy.

Contact Details

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Report Approved

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Date 30 June 2008

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Wards Affected: Fishergate, Guildhall

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Leisure Facilities Update: Report to the Executive of 2 May 2006.