

GRANT APPLICATION FOR ST BARBE MUSEUM & ART GALLERY, LYMINGTON

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The District Council has received a request for a construction grant of £65,000 as a contribution towards the cost of a refurbishment project at St Barbe's Museum and Art Gallery, Lymington.
- 1.2 The overall cost of the project is estimated at £2.345m with an approved Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) award of £1.8m.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 St Barbe's Museum is owned by New Forest District Council and is leased to The St Barbe's Trust under a peppercorn rent agreement.
- 2.2 The building originally housed the Council's Visitor Information Centre but this closed in the Spring of 2012 and the District Council retained the lease on this part of the building. As a consequence of the closure, the Trust was offered (unconditionally) use of the whole building, which was accepted. At that time the District Council awarded a grant of £17,000 to assist with improvements and alterations to the front of house.
- 2.3 In approximately 2012 the Trust embarked upon developing design plans, seeking planning permission and submitting an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- 2.4 The lease was not amended at the time but it is currently close to agreement. Planning permission for the development works have been approved by this Council and a Licence to carry out the works is in an agreed format with this Council's solicitors, but remains unsigned and is subject to the approval of this grant.
- 2.5 The Trust has secured a grant of £1.8m from the Heritage Lottery Fund and has committed themselves to raising an additional £545,000 from local authorities, charities and benefactors. Correspondence between the Trust and the Council over an extended period of time resulted in agreement that the Trust's application would be considered by Cabinet with an outcome in February 2016.
- 2.6 Mark Tomlinson (Director of St Barbe) has stated that the grant from the Council is necessary as they need to show documentary evidence to the Heritage Lottery Fund of this funding in order to receive permission to start.

3. PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The Council owns the building and freehold and provided these facilities to the Trust free of charge with the expectation that the Trust will provide a museum and art gallery. The Trust now wishes to extend these facilities and extend the opportunities for access to the local community and visitors.

3.2 The key elements of the development include:-

3.2.1 Flexible new exhibition space and national standard galleries

3.2.2 Public archive search room and storage

3.2.3 Front of house café and shop

3.2.4 New Museum entrance

3.3 By extending the facility, the Trust will have more space to display a wider selection of their 18,000 items and be able to improve awareness and access to the wider Community. The Trust believes it will increase visitor numbers from 29,000 to over 40,000 and improve their financial resilience long term.

4. COUNCIL POSITION

4.1 Through the Annual Revenue Support Grant process the Council has awarded £9,000 (2016/17) to support their continued delivery. This grant meets the Trust's projected deficit and has been awarded since 2006.

4.2 As the owners of the building and an enabler of the Trust there is an expectation from the Trust for some financial support from the District Council with this project. However, it was questioned at the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel (19 January 2016,) whether the Council should support both the construction application grant as well as the revenue application grant.

4.3 The revenue application for 2016/17 of £9,000 has been approved. A decision is required with regard to the capital bid of £65,000.

5. TIMESCALES

5.1 The project will run from March 2016 to March 2021.

5.2 The Trust was due to meet with the Heritage Lottery Fund on 1 March to discuss progress with the hope that they will receive their permission to start.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 A grant of £65,000 would be awarded by the Council, payable over a period of two years (2016/17 and 2017/18)

6.2 Should the Council continue to make an annual revenue grant it is possible that the sum requested will reduce should the Trust's financial performance improve as a result of this investment. This is likely to take effect from 2021 when the building is completed and re-opened to the public.

6.3 Responsibility for the funding of any future over- spend on the project requires clarification and officers are awaiting clarification from the Trust at the time of writing.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 All environmental implications have been considered within the planning application process.

8. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no specific crime and disorder implications other than the improved opportunities to access the facilities of St Barbe's Museum and Gallery to provide meaningful activity and education for the Community.

9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no equality implications.

10. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

- 10.1 I will be interested to watch this project progressing.

11. CONCLUSIONS

- 11.1 The opportunity exists for the significant development of St Barbe Museum with support of the Heritage Lottery Fund.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1 (a) That the Council be recommended to make a capital grant award of £65,000 to the St Barbe's Trust through the contribution grant application process as a contribution towards the cost of the planned development project that has attracted funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund; and
- (b) That should be capital grant be paid, it be agreed in principle that no future revenue support grants shall be paid.

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Background Papers:

Grant application