

KENNET DISTRICT COUNCIL

Meeting to be held on Tuesday, 22nd July 2008

GRANTS TO COMMUNITY-BASED LIBRARY PROJECTS

Report by the Interim Assistant to the Chief Executive

1. Introduction

At its meeting on 22nd April Council resolved to set aside funds to grant aid education-related community projects in partnership with the County Council, the County providing the expertise, and Kennet providing £3m from capital reserves. A report on this subject appears elsewhere on the agenda.

The purpose of this report is to introduce the idea of applying the same approach to the library service within Kennet and to recommend that £1.15m be set aside for that purpose to deliver two new libraries, at Pewsey and Ludgershall.

2. Financial Implications

If the recommendations made in this report are approved, then a supplementary capital budget of £1.15m would be required.

If all the projects currently included in the Kennet District Council capital programme were to be completed as planned, the balance of useable capital receipts at the end of March 2009 would be some £10m. That figure would be reduced by the amount set aside for education and library projects in partnership with the County Council. That figure is in addition to the Council's revenue reserves which are planned to be some £4.3m at the end of 2008/09. In reality the figure in both cases is likely to be higher because of under-spending in 2007/08 and 2008/09.

3. Staffing Implications

None.

4. Legal and Risk Management Implications

None

5. Discussions With the Head of the Library Service (HLS)

The Library Service has been involved with two community-led projects to deliver new libraries, in Ludgershall and Pewsey. In both cases the provision of a new library was dependent on other development taking place, in the absence of available capital funding. In both cases there is a serious risk that the developments will not deliver the desired outcome, and this is explained more fully below

In the light of the above situation, it was agreed that I would seek approval from the Council for a capital budget sufficient to deal with the individual projects discussed.

If the recommendations made in this report are accepted, then the matter will be put before the Wiltshire County Council cabinet.

It was recognised that the proposals for new libraries might not be capable of delivery by the end of March 2009, and that any sums awarded to fund them in the meantime would have to be ring-fenced for that purpose after the end of Kennet.

6. Ludgershall and Pewsey Libraries

The library at Ludgershall is currently located within the Memorial Hall. The intention is to relocate the village hall, (including the library) to a new site, using the possible proceeds from the sale of the Memorial Hall for development. Unfortunately, the difficult housing market has meant that the amount likely to be paid for the existing hall site will be insufficient to pay for the new hall and library. In that situation it is probable that the library part of the project would be excluded, leaving Ludgershall with no library. If the Council was to provide £350,000 to the hall relocation scheme this situation could be avoided, and indeed it would help to ensure the overall viability of the hall relocation scheme.

In the case of Pewsey, the current library is housed in an ancient mobile building that is barely fit for purpose. A substantial housing development in the village was to deliver a parcel of land for community purposes, plus a number of community assets, including a replacement library. Again, because of housing market conditions it is becoming increasingly unlikely that the housing scheme will be able to deliver all the desired community assets and the library might well be sacrificed in those circumstances. If the Council was to provide £800,000 this would allow a new library to be built on the existing library site. This would not only be a good thing in itself, but would also increase the chances of the rest of the community assets being provided by improving the viability of the proposed housing development.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

It is possible that, working in partnership with the Wiltshire County Council, two new libraries could be provided within the Kennet area, and that in turn would help to deliver wider community objectives

It is therefore **RECOMMENDED THAT, subject to the approval of the Wiltshire County Council to the substance of this report:**

- (1) a supplementary capital estimate of £1.15m million be approved for the purpose of funding new libraries in Pewsey and Ludgershall; and,**
- (2) delegated authority be granted to the Director of Community Services in consultation with the Head of Finance to agree the details necessary to achieve this objective.**

Frank Marshall