

# Item 6

## AREA 2 FORUM

26<sup>th</sup> June 2007

### Report of the Head of Strategy and Regeneration

#### Sedgefield Borough Local Improvement Programme

#### Application - Modernisation of West Cornforth Community Centre

This report highlights a Local Improvement Programme (LIP) application submitted to and initially appraised by the Strategy and Regeneration Section. The report provides information to the Area 2 Forum for their consideration and comments, which will be used to further develop the project proposal prior to it being taken through Sedgefield Borough Council's decision-making process.

The Area 2 Forum has been allocated £836,000 of LIP capital resources between 2006 and 2009. A total of £278,700 has been allocated to the year 2007/08 of which £5,000 has been allocated to date. A number of projects have been allocated in the previous year for this area, and there is some additional under-spend resulting from last year, which will be available to the Area Forum for project activity.

#### Project Background

- **Name of Project:** Modernisation of West Cornforth Community Centre
- **Name of Applicant:** West Cornforth & District Community Association

**Brief Description of Project:** The aim of the project is to modernise and refurbish West Cornforth Community Centre, serving the people of the village of West Cornforth and surrounding area. The project will aid the regeneration of the village by creating a high quality facility that meets the needs of the local community and improves access to services. The proposal aims to expand the available use of the community centre to more community organisations.

- **Requested from LIP:** £85,600 (39%)
- **Total Estimated Project Cost:** £216,800 (Capital)
- **What will the LIP be used for:**

The overall refurbishment will include,

- Renew the present electrical wiring
- Renew essential fire, smoke, intruder and call alarms
- Refurbishing the toilets facilities including appropriate disabled facility,

- Complete fencing around the perimeter of the grounds.
- Renew the present inefficient heating system,
- Replacing the roof.

LIP will fund a percentage of the above work; other external funding is also being applied for.

- **Impact of the Project:**

The applicant has stated that the Community Centre is currently in a poor state of repair; there are significant areas of damage to the interior that has resulted in a decrease in community use. Several groups who have used the hall regularly in the past years have now ceased to use the hall because of its condition. The roof is intact but at risk of damage in storm conditions. There is no roof felting, which allows rainwater to seep into the roof space. As a result the snooker room has had a partial ceiling collapse and is not usable. Re-roofing the Centre and installing felting and loft insulation would not only weatherproof the building but would also reduce the loss of heat through the roof space. The central heating system is aged and therefore does not supply adequate heat to the range of rooms within the building and is extremely expensive to run. A new heating system would be more efficient to run, reducing the ongoing expenditure costs extensively and would also be able to be 'zoned' enabling areas of the building to be heated at times of use rather than heating the whole building. The present toilet facilities are old and barely serviceable with some facilities unusable, a complete refurbishment to present regulations would make them modern and accessible to *all* users of the Community Centre.

The playing pitches were recently created following a grant to full football specifications, however they are not fully secure and there are cases of vandalism causing damage to the pitches. A complete perimeter fence would address this issue. A local company had an amount of palisade fencing which was excess to their requirements and this has been provided to the Community Centre, this is not enough for the whole perimeter leaving a small area unsecured.

The applicant has stated that the proposed work to the Centre would enhance community leisure facilities in West Cornforth. A modernised Community Centre with increased, more representative membership would help to build a stronger, more self-sufficient community. The modernisation of the Community Centre would enable it to continue to be available for residents, offering a range of activities for people of all ages. Currently the Community Centre accommodates a community gym, snooker, badminton, dance classes, pantomimes, dog shows, dances mobile movies and children's activities. The Community Centre is a main provider of physical space for social and leisure facilities in West Cornforth. The hall is the only one in the village large enough to house a badminton court. It is the only local venue that could hold the Village Show. Its meeting rooms are available in the evening as well

as during the day. The aim of the project is to safeguard the existing uses and enhance opportunities to use the Community Centre.

- **Evidence of need and community support:**

West Cornforth Community Association has a close association with the Cornforth Partnership. Both organisations have representation on the other's management committee. The Centre has the active support of the Parish Council that also has representation on the Association's management committee. A new group called Friend of West Cornforth Community Centre was launched in 2006 and is devoted to fund-raising and practical support for the Centre.

A questionnaire was conducted in 2005. The results showed a feeling the Community Centre was an underused resource but that the respondents believed there was potential for greater use.

- **Value for money and Revenue implications:**

The applicant has applied for £85,600, which is 39% of the total project costs. £20,000 grant from Lafarge has been received towards the costs of rewiring the building, and application is being made to Northern Rock to fund the remaining capital costs. The outcome of this external funding decision will not be known for some time. Therefore it is unlikely that the project could be given full approval until the outcome is known to ensure that the full funding package to implement the project is in place. The future revenue costs will be funded by income from the Community Centre activities, a suitable charge for the use of the premises to users and also annual subscriptions.

### **Recommendation from the Strategy and Regeneration Section:**

That the Area Forum considers:

- The project proposal, and how it would meet the priority needs of the Area 2 locality.

Subject to discussion and agreement by the Area Forum to progress the project proposal, the applicant will work with the Strategy and Regeneration Division to further develop the LIP application, and to identify all possible match funding, prior to it being taken through Sedgefield Borough Council's decisions making process.

### **Material considerations:**

## **Other applications received from Area 2:**

In taking the above decision the Area Forum is requested to consider the implication of the funding level requested against the following projects that have been received for future determination by the Forum.

- West Cornforth Number 66 Project £64,400 approved  
Works Completed and Grant claimed.
- Chilton Environmental Improvements £93,454 approved  
Works ongoing, still to claim grant.
- Ferryhill LADDER Centre Technical Study £ 5,000 approved  
Under development, still to claim grant.
- Ferryhill Sports Facility Technical Study £10,000 approved  
Application still under development.
- Duncombe Heritage Centre Development – Ferryhill. Estimated project costs £200,000. LIP grant requested approximately £100,000. Project proposal is being developed with the History Society and the Town Council.