



AGENDA ITEM: 5(o)

CABINET 17th March 2015

Report of: Assistant Director Community Services

Relevant Managing Director : Managing Director (People and Places)

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Cllr D.Sudworth

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SUBJECT: CHAPEL GALLERY ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS / GRANT FUNDING

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To consider the acceptance of an award of an Arts Council England grant to improve access and development of the first floor of the Chapel Gallery/Community Centre.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That, in order to meet the allocation requirements of the awarding body that the grant award of £127,360 is accepted, subject to 2.3 below.

2.2 That a planning application is submitted to enable the construction work to commence, if applicable, in due course.

2.3 That the Leisure Strategy/Action Plan is considered prior to any final commitment or engagement of contractors for the construction work, subject to the approval of the £25k funding to be considered at Council on the 25th February 2015.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Chapel Gallery in Ormskirk is an innovative contemporary art gallery that opened in 2001. It provides a high quality service that includes an exhibition and events programme, education service, contemporary craft shop and café, alongside the Arts Development Service. Two of the most popular exhibitions are the West Lancashire Open, that receives submissions from around 500 applicants and the annual Objects of Desire Exhibition that provide a great regional attraction, during the months of November and December.
- 3.2 The gallery also provides a holiday activity programme with an Art Club for young people aged eight to sixteen with access to the nationally accredited Arts Council England Arts Awards and a range of adult learning opportunities, an artist network and family friendly events. The facility has an excellent reputation locally and sub-regionally and has the capacity to have even greater impact at a local, regional and at national level.
- 3.3 The gallery has achieved to date over 39,000 visits in 2013/14. With the extension of access and facilities to the first floor and better use of social media to promote events, it is felt that this can be improved upon. However currently programming remains restricted since the gallery has only one main exhibition space, on the ground floor.
- 3.4 Disabled access to the first floor is restricted and it can not, therefore be used for gallery showcase events, exhibitions and performance work.
- 3.5 It is considered both by gallery staff and officers from the Arts Council that a second quality space fitted out for exhibitions and events would improve the level of use for the gallery and generate additional income from events and sales. It would also enable the exhibition programme to incorporate heritage exhibitions and further develop the events programme to incorporate the pilot Vintage and Handmade fairs, and an Animation Festival working in partnership with Edge Hill University's Animation Department and West Lancashire College.

4.0 CURRENT SITUATION

- 4.1 Officers have previously explored the option to install a lift within the confines of the building; however this has not proved an easy option given the layout and structural issues which would make an internal option very expensive.
- 4.2 An approach was made to the Arts Council England for capital funding in 2010 towards the provision of a lift, but funding was not available at that time.
- 4.3 Arts Council England have since reviewed the capital grant funding allocations and recognised that certain areas within the North West were under represented in terms of grant support. West Lancashire has received no strategic funding over the 6 year review period and less than 3.5% of the available support and small pot capital funding in Lancashire over the same period.

- 4.4 Officers from the Arts Council contacted the Council with an offer to reconsider the option to improve access to the first floor and explore the provision of a development grant to provide opportunities to improve the first floor exhibition space.
- 4.5 The Arts Council supported the development of draft plans for the proposal with the overall capital funding required being split over two phases. The Arts Council have stated they would like a two phased approach to the scheme with phase one funding allocated from the current financial year and the option for phase two funding from 2015/16. The Arts Council have approved a £127,360 grant contribution in year one followed by an assessment of a potential grant award of up to £80,000 in year two.
- 4.6 The initial phase is the construction of a lift to provide access to the first floor with modifications to the entrance area and foyer. Plans showing an artist impression of the front of the building and ground floor are attached at Appendix 1.
- 4.7 The work to provide the lift will also tidy up the view of the side of the building which currently provides access to emergency exits and the bin store.

5.0 ISSUES

- 5.1 The Chapel Gallery is part of the Leisure Strategy, which is currently being worked on and will be presented to Members in July 2015 and will be accompanied by a 10 year Action Plan in the context of reducing public finances.
- 5.2 The Arts Council need to allocate the funding for the first phase works for the lift access, by the end of March 2015. The second phase funding application would follow after construction work to the lift has commenced, allocated from Arts Council grant funding from 2015/16.
- 5.3 The Arts Council have been made aware of the current leisure strategy. They are nevertheless keen to continue with the support for the current scheme. They will commit the funding to the Council on the understanding that the strategic review and planning considerations may result in the scheme not going forward.
- 5.4 Consequences of not proceeding with the phase one proposal is that funding allocated for both this phase and the ability to access funding for phase two work would be withdrawn, the Council would not incur any penalty costs associated with withdrawing from the proposal and rejecting the grant. The available grant would then be reallocated to other schemes in the North West who have not been successful in this current grant period. We have asked if the funding could be reallocated to another scheme in West Lancashire and have been informed that this would require a fresh grant application.
- 5.5 The grants by the Arts Council are seen as small capital grants; however they are subject to conditions. The grant must be used for the purpose specified and the grant or part grant is to be repaid back to the Arts Council if it is not fully

utilised for the project/scheme. The project/scheme must be operational for a minimum period of twelve months following completion of the project/scheme. A copy of the grant conditions are attached at Appendix 2.

6.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Arts Council Grant of £127k is the principal cost of the phase one work to install a lift to the front of the building and undertake a small commission, that will result in the installation of art work to the front glass panels.
- 6.2.1 An element of in-kind funding for project management is required together with a financial contribution to support the overall cost of the phase one works. An allocation of £25k for capital expenditure to support the project has been approved as part of the budget setting process for 2015-16.
- 6.3 It is expected that visitor numbers and income would increase from availability and promotion of new activities and programmes as a result of improving access to the first floor. In addition the phase two works would provide an exhibition space which would improve the experience for visitors and attract higher quality and higher value products for display and sale.
- 6.4 The lift will require an annual insurance inspection and a maintenance fee of approx £800. This will be offset by increased income from events and activities.
- 6.5 It is expected that a number of specialist weekend events (approx 1 per month) will be promoted, with the potential to improve net income.

7.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Agreeing to the acceptance of the Arts Council grant maintains options for the development of the gallery. Should the work not proceed then the grant would be repaid to the Arts Council with no penalties or fees for the Borough Council.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is a significant direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix 3 to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the recommendations contained within this report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Artist impression of the front elevation lift and ground floor plan.

Appendix 2
Appendix 3

Grant conditions.
Equality Impact Assessment Form