

NCIL – APPLICATION FOR FUNDING - PHOENIX CULTURAL CENTRE CIC

Executive Summary

An application has been put forward by the CEO/Founder of the Phoenix Cultural Centre CIC and Councillors of Canalside Ward to apply for £17,500.000 of NCIL money (earmarked) to pay for repairs and maintenance to a lift within the building to improve accessibility for those who use the centre's facilities and increase community participation. The Executive is asked to consider the application and decide whether the application meets the agreed criteria for the money to be approved.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RESOLVE That

- (i) the application submitted by Ward Councillors for Canalside to secure £17,500.00 to repair a lift within the Phoenix Cultural Centre be approved; and
- (ii) the Financial Control Panel be authorised to approve payment for the cost of lift repair which will be drawn from the total NCIL income earmarked and available for Canalside Ward. This currently stands at £322,413.32 (Post S114 funds available £29,704.70).

Reasons for Decision

Reason: To enable the Council to contribute toward the improvement and provision of community infrastructure within Woking.

The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

Background Papers: None.

Reporting Person: Beverley Kuchar, Acting Strategic Director - Place
Email: beverley.kuchar@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3473

Contact Person: Jade Bowes, Planning Policy Officer
Email: jade.bowes@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3731

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Liam Lyons
Email: cllrliam.lyons@woking.gov.uk

Date Published: 13 March 2024

NCIL – Application for Funding – Phoenix Cultural Centre CIC

NCIL – Application for Funding – Phoenix Cultural Centre CIC

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council introduced the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) from 1 April 2015 as the main means for securing development contributions towards the provision of infrastructure to support development across the Borough.
- 1.2 The Government requires the Council to pass on a proportion of the CIL income to local communities where the chargeable development occurred. If the community has an adopted Neighbourhood Plan it receives 25% of the CIL income from development occurred in the Neighbourhood Area. If there is no Neighbourhood Plan, the area receives 15%.
- 1.3 An application has been put forward by the CEO/Founder of the Phoenix Cultural Centre and Councillors of Canalside Ward to apply for £17,500,000 of NCIL money (earmarked) to pay for repairs and maintenance to a lift within the building to improve accessibility for those who use the centre's facilities and widen community participation. The Executive is asked to consider the application and decide whether the application meets the agreed criteria for the money to be approved.
- 1.4 The agreed list of requirements to be met when applying for NCIL money to fund local community projects includes: (a) Name of the infrastructure/project that the NCIL income will deliver (b) A brief description of the project and what it seeks to achieve (c) Evidence of broad community support for the project.
- 1.5 The Government has prescribed that the CIL money can only be used for: (d) The provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure (e) Anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area.
- 1.6 The above are the key requirements against which Members should assess the application.

2.0 Officers' analysis and recommendations

- 2.1 Officers confirmed that the application and evidence of support was received September 2023, however, quotes for the work were missing. After feedback from officers, three quotes from different suppliers were provided. The applicant requested that the second most expensive quote be funded. It was then requested by officers that a statement be provided to set out why that quote was considered the most appropriate option and demonstrated best value.
- 2.2 It has been highlighted to the Councillor associated with the application that NCIL cannot be used speculatively to pay for the ongoing maintenance of works. Instead, it is advised that NCIL applications for maintenance work are submitted once they are needed and evidenced through the submission of further quotes. It is also recommended that the applicant liaise directly with the Council on how much funding is available to their Ward as further works to improve the building, as mentioned within correspondence, may be feasible subject to meeting NCIL criteria.
- 2.3 Analysis is provided below to assist Members in deciding whether this project meets the definition above of what NCIL funds can be used for.
- 2.4 In July 2023, the Phoenix Cultural Centre was granted temporary change of use of part of the ground floor and first floor of 32 Goldsworth Road to an events space (Sui Generis) and use of car park for outdoor events for a period of 5 years (PLAN/2023/0313). The applicant has noted within their application that they have been given use of the building for 3 years with a view to a permanent space.
- 2.5 It is important that Members note that the centre occupies a section of the EcoWorld development site (PLAN/2020/0568) and the developers have provided a contribution of £120,000 towards the refurbishment of the space (see CIL application).

NCIL – Application for Funding – Phoenix Cultural Centre CIC

- 2.6 The building has 40k sqft available to use alongside outdoor space and car parking facilities, which have been assessed and approved by the Highway Authority through grant of temporary planning permission.
- 2.7 The centre is an important and valued community asset which provides cultural, community, wellbeing and learning activities for the Canalside community, in addition to those beyond the Ward boundary.
- 2.8 Other groups have also been offered space within the building to operate, these include Surrey Choices, Man In The Moon Theatre, Surrey Arts, Surrey Minority Ethnic Forum, The Jam Exhibition.
- 2.9 The repairs to the lift will enable greater usage of the available space as users of all mobility types are able to access more areas of the building. Currently the only space available for wheelchair users is 10k sqft. This project should be viewed as contributing towards the Council's ambitions for economic prosperity and community investment as the usage of the centre increases to accommodate more activities to the benefit of Woking's residents.
- 2.10 This application is benefiting from other funding sources as detailed within the NCIL application (appended at Appendix 1). The bid for NCIL funding from WBC is to cover 'infrastructure' improvements to the building that were 'out of scope' to other funding opportunities. Therefore, this application for NCIL funding contributes to the wider ongoing maintenance and repair of the building.
- 2.11 The applicant has provided examples where specific activities would require access and usage of the lift. This includes operating music focused sessions for young people, individuals with disabilities, children in care/care leavers, and refugee/asylum seeking people.
- 2.12 The proposal has received broad community support from many community groups toward plans to improve the centre. Ward and County Councillors for the area have been notified of this project and verbal support has been confirmed from Councillor Aziz and Councillor Raja. Councillor Forster has also confirmed support. Supporting documents are appended at Appendix 2. Please note that some of these supporting documents are directed towards YourFund Surrey, which was a previous bid for funding that maintained the same objective (i.e., the wider repair, maintenance, and operation of the Phoenix Cultural Centre).
- 2.13 A 'Commonplace Community Feedback Report' was also provided as evidence of support and sets out questionnaire-style feedback from individuals who support the centre and benefit from its activities. This report is over 100 pages and has not been appended but can be made available to individuals on request.
- 2.14 Based on the above, it is recommended that £17,500.000 be approved towards the repair of the lift as evidenced within the quote provided to officers. Officers are satisfied that the proposal meets the agreed list of requirements, and the application should be approved.

3.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 3.1 NCIL constitutes developer contributions which is earmarked for spend by wards and neighbourhood areas.
- 3.2 Funding for this project will need to be drawn down from money available to Canalside Ward. This currently stands at £322,413.32 (Post S114 funds available £29,704.70).

NCIL – Application for Funding – Phoenix Cultural Centre CIC

Equalities and Human Resources

- 3.3 The Phoenix Cultural Centre provides a space to hold various activities that promote diversity within the community, and this application will enable further usage of the space for this purpose by improving accessibility.

Legal

- 3.4 Approval of this application at Executive will commit the Council to funding this project as specified above.

4.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 4.1 As per the requirements of NCIL, the applicant has notified the relevant Ward and County Councillors of this project and has received support.
- 4.2 Additional support from other groups and organisations has been collected to support this project and has been appended.

REPORT ENDS