

Community Grant to Merriott Village Hall (Executive Decision)

Director: Martin Woods, Director of Service Delivery
Manager / Lead Specialist: Tim Cook, Locality Manager
Lead Officer: Adrian Moore, Locality Officer
Contact Details: adrian.moore@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462409

Purpose of the Report

Councillors are asked to consider the awarding of a grant of £11,500 towards Solar Array and Battery Storage for Merriott Village Hall.

Public Interest

Awarding grants is a key way that SSDC supports and helps to deliver community projects sponsored by Parishes and voluntary community organisations in the towns and villages across the district.

Merriott Village Hall has applied to the Area West community grants programme for financial assistance with the costs of installing a Solar Array and Battery Storage. The application has been assessed by the Locality Officer who is submitting this report to enable the Area West Committee to make an informed decision about the application.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Councillors award a grant of £11,500 to Merriott Village Hall, the grant to be allocated from the Area West capital programme and subject to SSDC standard conditions for community grants (appendix A).

Application Details

Name of applicant:	Merriott Village Hall
Project:	Solar Array and Battery Storage
Total project cost:	£24,478
Amount requested from SSDC:	£11,500
Application assessed by:	Adrian Moore

Community Grants Assessment Score

The table below shows the grant scoring for this application. Applications must meet the minimum score of 22 to be considered for SSDC funding under Community Grants policies.

Category	Actual score	Maximum score possible
A Eligibility	Y	Y/N
B Equalities Impact	6	7
C Need for project	4	5
D Capacity of organisation	14	15
E Financial need	4	7
F Innovation	3	3
Grand total	31	37

Background

Merriott Village Hall is a lovely, spacious and characterful village hall with a large hall that has a production stage, PA system, hearing loop, an extra meeting room, well-fitted kitchen, and ample parking to the rear with designated disabled parking. There is very good access for wheelchair users at both front and rear doors, together with disabled toilets.

The main hall can accommodate up to 220 people and is light and airy. There is also the Blake Room, which is perfect for meetings and smaller groups and can be used as a waiting room, bar, cloak room or changing room amongst other things. It is an excellent venue for wedding receptions, parties, wakes and other large functions. Regular groups include; Badminton, Short Mat Bowls, Bridge Club, Baby Sensory Classes, Pilates, Zumba, Yoga and Dance Clubs.

The Village Hall is in good order and very well managed. The management committee have now ventured to install solar panels on the roof and install a battery storage system to take small steps, where they have influence, to help tackle the crisis of climate change. There is no gas or oil supply to the hall and everything runs on electricity including the air source heat pump. This investment in solar power will not only help in reducing the financial running costs of the hall and keep hiring costs affordable to the community but also will greatly reduce the use of fossil-fuelled generated electricity and therefore drastically reduce the hall's carbon footprint year after year.

In May 2019 SSDC declared its recognition of a 'Climate and Ecological Emergency' and has developed an environment strategy to help protect the environment and ecology, reduce carbon emissions and to work towards the Council and district becoming carbon neutral. SSDC has said that adapting to climate change means changing the way it does things and will look not only at how SSDC can manage its environmental performance and reduce impacts but will also address how it can work with and support its communities to do the same.

It is well known that SSDC is now in partnership in a massive investment in cutting-edge, groundbreaking, renewable energy technology. SSDC has a clear commitment to green energy and is already having influence on the environmental decision making of our communities.

Parish information

Parish*	Merriott
Parish Population	1,979
No. of dwellings	900

*Taken from the 2011 census profile

The project

The project involves the installation of 26 solar panels on the southwest facing roof of Merriott Village Hall. The panels are estimated to generate approximately 7,700 kWh (Kilowatt Hours) per year. However, there will be a mismatch between generation time and use. Therefore, the project also includes the installation of electric storage batteries to assist with the mismatch. The current tiles on the roof are chrysotile and contain asbestos. Therefore, there is the need to engage a company that can deal with the safe and secure removal of these tiles and can also install the solar panels and the batteries. The disturbed roof around the solar array will be replaced with matching non-asbestos containing tiles. All works are estimated to be completed within three days.

The Village Hall Committee have future proofed this project to enable the addition of car charging points to be added if and when further external funds are secured from elsewhere in the future. This is aspirational at this stage but the current project has that potential.

Local support / evidence of need

The current hall users and Merriott village residents have been canvassed for their views on this project and there has been an overwhelming positive response. Other village halls, that have already installed solar panels, have also been contacted by the hall committee and have reported that the result of their solar installations have been extremely beneficial.

The installation project will be explained on the hall notice boards both inside and outside the hall and will be advertised on the hall and village websites. An article will appear in the Merriott Messenger (distributed free to all residents) and offered to a wider press. A meter will be installed in the hall showing how much electricity is being generated.

Project costs

Project costs	Cost £
Solar Array – Supply of Photovoltaic System (7.80 kWp)	7,079
Installation	1,440
Access Equipment	1,260
SolarWatt 4.8kW Battery storage system supply and install	4,199
Roofing Works	10,500
Total	24,478

Funding plan

Funding source	Secured or pending	Amount £
Parish Council	*Secured	*100
Own Funds	Secured	5,000
Somerset Community Foundation	Pending	5,000
The Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation	Pending	5,000
Gannet Foundation Newsquest	Pending	5,000
Bath & West Community Energy Fund	Pending	5,000
South Somerset District Council	Pending	11,500
Total		36,600

If the currently pending grant funding is not secured in time, the Village Hall Committee will take out a loan to meet the total project costs.

* Merriott Village Hall Committee and Merriott Parish Council took over the combined recreation ground and village hall in 1925 and it has been the case that the Parish Council manages and maintains the car park and provides it for the benefit of the village hall free of charge.

Three new specified parking places have been created due to the new disabled access at the rear of the village hall and a further planned project to install two electric car-charging points. The cost of the charging points is not included in the current project because there are separate sources of funds that the Village Hall Committee will apply for in the future for this purpose.

The village hall is dependent on the use of the whole of the car park as well as the specified places and would not be able to attract the hirers it does without it. This year the Parish Council has spent over £20,000 refurbishing the tarmac car park at the rear of the village hall and creating an additional overflow car park. The Parish Council have supported the village hall project by a contribution of a nominal sum in addition to the financial support 'in kind' specifically benefitting the village hall within the car park re-modelling works.

Conclusion and Recommendation

It is recommended that a grant of £11,500 is awarded

If the pending funding sources are successful then the SSDC contribution will be reduced from £11,500 to only meet the shortfall required to reach the £24,478 total budget of the project.

Financial implications

The balance in the Area West Capital programme is £143,829. If the recommended grant of £11,500 is awarded, £132,329 will remain.

Grants are awarded subject to all other funding being secured before the commencement of the project and are on a % basis of the full project costs. Payment of the grant cannot exceed the grant award and is proportionally reduced if full project costs are under budget.

Council Plan Implications

Healthy, Self-reliant Communities; to enable healthy communities which are cohesive, sustainable and enjoy a high quality of life we will:

- Work with partners to reduce the impact of social isolation and create a feeling of community.
- Work with partners to support people in improving their own physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Enable quality cultural, leisure and sport activities.

Economy; To promote a strong and growing economy with thriving urban, rural and land-based businesses, we will:

- Promote and support commercial investment including inward investment, innovation and productivity.

Economy; To keep South Somerset clean, green, attractive and sustainable we will:

- Be a leading council in developing and adopting a Green Agenda to promote sustainable environment, economy and communities.
- Promote a high-quality built environment.

Area West Chapter Implications

- Support a range of improvements to community buildings

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

SSDC Environment Strategy;

- We will work to achieve a significant reduction in emissions and improve carbon-offset rates across the geography of South Somerset, through direct action, by supporting the communities of South Somerset to meet their ambitions and through the way we do things; ensuring that working towards carbon neutrality is a thread which runs through all of our decision-making.
- Reduced electricity consumption and reduced carbon footprint

Equality and Diversity Implications

The project aims to provide for people across all age and interest groups in the local community.

Background Papers None

Appendix A

Standard conditions applying to all SSDC Community Grants

The applicant agrees to: -

- Notify SSDC if there is a material change to the information provided in the application.
- Start the project within six months of the grant offer and notify SSDC of any changes to the project or start date as soon as possible.
- Confirm that all other funding sources have been secured before starting the project, if these were not already in place at the time of the application.
Acknowledge SSDC assistance towards the project in any relevant publicity about the project (e.g. leaflets, posters, websites, and promotional materials) and on any permanent acknowledgement (e.g. plaques, signs etc.).
- Work in conjunction with SSDC officers to monitor and share the success of the project and the benefits to the community resulting from SSDC's contribution to the project.
- Provide a project update and/or supply before and after photos if requested.
- Supply receipted invoices or receipts which provide evidence of the **full** cost of the project so that the grant can be released.

Standard conditions applying to buildings, facilities and equipment

- Establish and maintain a “sinking fund” to support future replacement of the building / facility / equipment as grant funding is only awarded on a one-off basis.
- Use the SSDC Building Control Service when buildings regulations are required.
- Incorporate disabled access and provide an access statement where relevant.

Special conditions