
Community Grant to Merriott Tithe Barn Project (Executive Decision)

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Purpose of the Report

Councillors are asked to consider the awarding of a grant towards Merriott Tithe Barn project.

Public Interest

Awarding grants is a keyway 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 Tithe Barn has applied to the Area West community grants programme for financial assistance with the costs of Installing new guttering, new flooring, and damp-proof membrane at Merriott Tithe Barn. The Locality Officer is submitting this report to enable the Area West Committee to make an informed decision about the application and has assessed the application.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Area West Committee award a grant of £8,085 towards Merriott Tithe Barn project, the grant to be allocated from the Area West capital programme and subject to SSDC standard conditions for community grants (Appendix A)

Merriott Tithe Barn Project

Application Details

Name of applicant:	Merriott Tithe Barn Committee
Project:	Installing new guttering, new flooring, and damp-proof membrane at Merriott Tithe Barn
Total project cost:	£21,391
Amount requested from SSDC:	£8,085
% Amount requested	17.3%
Application assessed by:	Nathan Turnbull



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	Max Score available	Officer assessment score
A Supports Council Plan/Area Chapter	1	1
B Supports Equalities & Diversity	2	2
C Supports Environment Strategy	3	2
D Need for Project	10	9
E Capacity of Organisation	15	10
F Financial need	7	3
Total	38	27

Background

The Tithe Barn was gifted to Merriott Church in 1913 for the benefit of the village. It is held by the diocese and is run on a day-to-day basis by the Tithe Barn Committee.

Tithe Barn was given to the Church for the benefit of the village and the church. The Committee has a duty to preserve this 14th century building for use by a wide range of groups and clubs in Merriott.

Parish*	Merriott
Parish Population	1979
No. of dwellings	882

*Taken from the 2011 census profile

The project

The Tithe Barn is in danger of becoming unsafe, currently part of the hall has been cordoned off due to falling masonry. The west wall has moved, and heli-pins need to be inserted to stop further movement. External and internal repointing with lime mortar is necessary. This is the first phase of work that needs to be completed before the second phase can start, this work has been funded by the committee and external funds.

The Community grant application is to support phase 2 of the project, the floor is a major concern because it's becoming unsafe for users due to uneven surfaces and the risk of injury from screws and nails. This floor was replaced a hundred years ago and has subsequently become damp and rotten. Repeated short-term attempts at repair with screws and nails, have now rusted and the boards are moving and uneven. Dampness from the floor is causing secondary damage to the wall panelling. They will

remove this floor, install DPM and a new wooden floor. They will also replace the plastic guttering, which has become bent and unfit for purpose, causing damage to the west wall. They aim to replace this with cast iron guttering, which would be longer lasting and return the external appearance of the Tithe Barn to its original appearance

Local support / evidence of need

Merriott currently has two community halls. Merriott Tithe Barn is the smaller village hall in Merriott. The Hall is used by Scouts and Cubs, Merriott Majorettes, Gardening Club, Merriott Dog Training, Gardening Club, Bridge Club, Badminton Club, Minnows Parent and Baby Group, Evergreen Games and Social Club and Café Church. There is no capacity for these activities to move into the Village Hall as it is fully booked every day except weekends. The groups which are using the Tithe Barn value it as a lower cost, smaller venue and recognise its value in the village. Around three hundred people use the hall every week.

This project is supported by Merriott Parish Council

Project costs

Project costs	Cost £
Remove plastic guttering and replace with cast iron guttering	£5,188.
Remove wooden floor and install DPM and install new wooden flooring	£16,203
Total	£21,391

Funding plan

Funding source	Secured or pending	Amount £
Parish/Town Council	pending	£100
Own Funds	Secured	£750
Awards for all	Secured	£9,956
Merriott Heritage Trust	Secured	£2,500
SSDC Community Grant	Pending	£8,085
Total		£21,391

Following on from the last Committee meeting, please see advice provided from SSDC legal team towards restrictions on contributions towards church owned properties.

Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides local authorities with the power to do anything an individual may do, subject to a number of limitations (known as the general power of competence). A local authority may exercise the power for its own purpose, for a commercial purpose and/or for the benefit of others. In exercising the power, a local authority is still subject to its general duties (such as the fiduciary duties it owes to its



local taxpayers) and to the public law requirements to exercise the general power of competence for a proper purpose.

Section 137(3) of the Local Government Act 1972 provides a power for local authorities to incur expenditure on "contributions to:

- (a) the funds of any charitable body in furtherance of its work in the United Kingdom; or*
- (b) the funds of any body which provides any public service [(whether to the public at large or to any section of it)] in the United Kingdom otherwise than for the purposes of gain".*

Section 8 of Localism Act 2011 dictates that the general power of competence applies to only eligible parish councils. Since 28 March 2012, parish councils in England have been able to rely on the power if they are eligible. A parish council is eligible if the council has resolved at a meeting of the council and each subsequent relevant annual meeting that it meets the following conditions:

- The number of members of the council that have been declared to be elected, whether at ordinary elections or at a by-election, is equal to or greater than two-thirds of the total number of members of the council (that is, the council must not have more than a third of its seats vacant).*
- The clerk to the parish council holds the:*
 - Certificate in Local Council Administration;*
 - Certificate of Higher Education in Local Policy;*
 - Certificate of Higher Education in Local Council Administration; or*
 - first level of the foundation degree in Community Engagement and Governance awarded by the University of Gloucestershire or its successor qualifications.*
- The clerk to the parish council has completed the relevant training in the exercise of the general power, or training provided in accordance with the national training strategy for parish councils adopted by the National Association of Local Councils, unless such training was required for the purpose of obtaining one of the above qualifications.*

If the conditions cease to be met following the resolution, the council will continue to be eligible until the next relevant annual meeting. If the exercise of this power is curtailed by any restriction those restrictions will also apply to the General Power.

In conclusion, if the parish council met the conditions above - it is eligible to exercise the general power and contribute to the expenditure of the repairs to the church owned property.



Conclusion and Recommendation

It is recommended that the grant of £8,805 is awarded.

Financial Implications

Following on from the November report £22,716 Area West Capital funding and £6,535 Area West revenue funding was available, grants of £20,617 were awarded leaving a total remaining balance of £8,834. If £8,085 is awarded to Merriott Tithe Barn Project, the Area West Capital funding will reduce to a balance of £0 and the Area West revenue funding will reduce to a balance of £549.00.

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

Council Plan themes and Areas of focus for 2021/22

Healthy, Self-reliant Communities

To enable healthy communities which are cohesive, sustainable and enjoy a high quality of life.

- Work with partners to support people in improving their physical and mental health and wellbeing
- Enable quality cultural, leisure and sport activities

Environment

To keep South Somerset clean, green, and attractive and respond to the climate and ecological emergency we will work in partnership to:

- Continue the delivery of the Environment Strategy action plan, reducing our carbon emissions by 10% every year, to reach carbon neutrality by 2030



Equality and Diversity Implications

<i>An Equality Impact Relevance Check Form has been completed in respect of the Proposals?</i>	Yes
<i>The Impact Relevance Check indicated that a full EIA was required?</i>	No
<i>If an EIA was not required please attach the Impact Relevance Check Form as an Appendix to this report and provide a brief summary of its findings in the comments box below.</i>	
<i>If an EIA was required please attach the completed EIA form as an Appendix to this report and provide a brief summary of the result of your Equality Impact Assessment in the comment box below.</i>	
Additional Comments	
The project aims to provide for people across all age and interest groups in the local community.	

Background Papers

Report to Area West Committee – December 2022

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.
- Complete an evaluation survey when requested after the completion of the project.
- Note that they cannot apply for another community grant for the same project within a 3-year period of this award.

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

Projects need to be completed within 6 months of award letter being signed.