

COMMITTEE: NORTH WEST AREA REF NO: NEAC/17/18
DATE: 25 JANUARY 2018
SUBJECT: LOFTY HEIGHTS
PORTFOLIO HOLDER: CLLR SOPHIE MEUDEC
HEAD OF SERVICE: PETER TIMMINS

Short description of report content and the decision requested:

This report requests that the North West Area Committee determine the allocation of funding £945 to Lofty Heights CIC as a contribution towards the purchase of a van to increase capacity and improve the efficiency of their work in Ipswich.

Ward(s) affected:

List of Appendices included in this report:

Appendix 1 – Work Requests in Ipswich by Ward (Since April 2016)

This report has been prepared by Alice Firbank Tel: 01473 432224

Email: alice.firbank@ipswich.gov.uk

This report was prepared after consultation with:

Internal consultees

External consultees

The following policies form a context to this report:

(all relevant policies must also be referred to in the body of the report)

Building a Better Ipswich 2017

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Lofty Heights CIC aims to improve the living conditions of vulnerable people by providing a range of decluttering and furniture moving services inside and outside the home. They do this in a way that simultaneously improves the future life chances of young people not in education, employment or training by creating training and real employment opportunities.
- 1.2 To increase capacity and improve the efficiency of their work in Ipswich, the organisation is seeking contribution towards the cost of the purchase of a more suitable, second-hand vehicle.

2. Background

- 2.1 Lofty Heights is a local, not-for-profit Community Interest Company specialising in de-cluttering, deep cleaning and garden clearance. The main objectives of the organisation are a) to assist the elderly, vulnerable or those on a low income to have warmer, safer and healthier homes, and b) to create paid employment, opportunities and training for young disadvantaged adults.
- 2.2 Lofty Heights offers a wide range of services – from clearing out lofts as people downsize, to helping prepare a home for a person's discharge from hospital. The team are skilled, fully insured and experienced in working with vulnerable people, for example those living with dementia or with a hoarding complex.
- 2.3 The benefits of a clean and tidy environment are numerous for both physical and mental wellbeing. Most importantly, a clutter-free environment reduces the risk of trips, falls and house fires. When hoarding has become a problem, the team can provide a bespoke service to ensure that the process is carried out with patience and understanding.
- 2.4 Decluttering and cleaning properties allows people with limited mobility to make better use of their homes. The personal benefit of improved surroundings and a greater sense of self-esteem and a stronger likelihood of re-joining the community and reconnecting with friends and family. Lofty Heights is proud to have been responsible for bringing families back together in cases where the condition of the home had been a source of conflict before their intervention.
- 2.5 The work of Lofty Heights is beneficial for the whole community. Their support enables residents to abide by tenancy agreements to keep their homes in reasonable order, thereby preventing evictions. Support for older people can enable them to remain living independently and safely in their own home for longer, and the clearance of gardens can reduce friction between neighbours and improve the appearance of the

area. Garden clearance can also reduce the threat of doorstep crime – an unruly garden is an indicator to fraudsters that the resident may be vulnerable and highlights homes with potential for ‘cuckooing’.

- 2.6 Lofty Heights is passionate about creating employment for, and raising the aspirations of young people. Rather than formal qualifications, the organisation values skills such as motivation, commitment, trust, honesty and teamwork. They believe in giving young people a chance; in return, they expect a high standard of service for their clients.
- 2.7 Currently, the organisation is using hired vans to move items and getting around in an old Renault Clio. In order to carry out work more efficiently and cost effectively, Lofty Heights would benefit from its own van. A van would enable the organisation to increase work capacity, take on additional team members, and therefore help more people. Prices for larger jobs would reduce, as they would not have to pass on vehicle hire fees to customers, meaning that the organisation would become a more affordable option for many.
- 2.8 In terms of need for provision such as this locally –
 - a. The percentage of 16-18 year olds in Suffolk not in education, employment or training (5.3%) is higher than the national figure (3.8%).
 - b. The percentage of residents aged 16-24 claiming unemployment benefits in Suffolk (2.1%) is also higher than the national figure (1.6%).
 - c. The population of older people in Suffolk is higher than in England. 20.9% of the Suffolk population was aged 65 or more in 2012 (compared to 16.9% for England as a whole).

3. Relevant Policies

- 3.1 Building a Better Ipswich 2017:
 - A Strong Ipswich Economy
 - A Sustainable Environment
 - An Enjoyable Place to Live, Work and Study
 - A Healthy Community
 - Quality Homes for All
 - Safe Communities
- 3.2 North East Area Committee Action Plan – aims to alleviate deprivation in the following domains:
 - Skills, Education and Training
 - Health and Disability

- Living Environment

4. Options Considered / Under Consideration

- 4.1 **Option 1** – Approve the request to allocate funding of £945 as a contribution to Lofty Height’s purchase of a van.
- 4.2 **Option 2** – Approve the allocation of an amount less than £945 as a contribution to Lofty Height’s purchase of a van.
- 4.3 **Option 3** – Do not fund.

5. Consultations

- 5.1 Lofty Heights has found that there is growing demand for their service. 124 Ipswich residents have contacted the organisation since April 2016. For reference, Appendix 1 shows the requests by Ward.
- 5.2 The organisation has received feedback and advice from local councillors, council officers and partner organisations in the development of their proposal.

6. Risk Management

Risk Description	Consequence of risk	Risk Controls	Probability of risk occurring taking account of controls (scale 1-6) 1 – almost impossible 6 – very high	Impact of risk, if it occurred taking account of actions (scale 1 – negligible; 4 – catastrophic)	Actions to mitigate risk
Safeguarding risk to children, young people and/or vulnerable adults	Emotional or physical harm to a person Threat to operation of the project	Staff DBS checks Follow appropriate safeguarding policy and procedure	2	4	Staff to be appropriately trained and DBS checked Evidence of safeguarding policy and procedure to be provided to the Council for recording purposes
Risks relating to specific activities	Physical harm to participant or staff member	Risk assessment and management of	2	3	Staff to risk assess individual activities before

		individual activities			delivery
Purchase of the vehicle incomplete	Public funds not well used	Research into suitable vehicle Ongoing monitoring	3	2	Lofty Heights to provide quote when vehicle sourced and regular monitoring reports

7. Environmental Impact Assessment

- 7.1 The van will be more fuel-efficient than the current vehicle in use and the larger size of the vehicle will allow the organisation to carry out work in single trips thereby reducing mileage and fuel consumption.
- 7.2 Lofty Heights is committed to maximising the amount of recycling at every home they work in. Items cleared from homes are recycled or donated to local charities for resale wherever possible.

8. Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 8.1 The purchase of a van, instead of using a hire van, does not directly affect any individual in relation to any of the characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010. Indirectly it will have a positive impact for the characteristics of age and disability by increasing the capacity of the organisation to help older isolated people or people with a disability and to employ younger disadvantaged people.

9. Financial Considerations

Expenditure Description	Cost
Second-hand, high top, long wheel-based van (E.g. Renault Master)	£12,000
Signage, internal fitting/straps (for safe storage and carriage of tools and chemicals), initial set up costs for insurance, plus one-off administration to oversee the purchase and preparation for use of vehicle	£1,000
Total project cost	£13,000
Total amount requested	£5,040

- 9.2 The total amount requested from the Area Committees towards the overall cost is £5,040, which is divided by Area as follows:

- North East Area Committee £945
- South East Area Committee £945
- Central Area Committee £945
- North West Area Committee £945
- South West Area Committee £1,260

9.3 Lofty Heights will contribute £1,000. The organisation has written to every Councillor in Suffolk and received pledges totalling £4,800. This leaves £7,200 to raise and they intend to apply to Suffolk Coastal, Babergh & Mid Suffolk and West Suffolk community funds in addition to the Area Committees.

9.4 If awarded, the allocation to Lofty Heights will be made upon confirmation of the remaining funding having been secured.

10. Legal Considerations

10.1 The Council has the power to make grants to community projects through the Area Committees. The Area Committees have delegated Executive powers and devolved budgets.

10.2 Area Committees have the power to award grants in accordance with part 3, section 2 of the Council's Constitution i.e. the Area Committee terms of reference.

10.3 The purchase of the vehicle will be outright. Any ongoing costs for maintenance or repairs to the van will be covered by Lofty Heights.

10.4 Lofty Heights is registered as a Community Interest Company with named directors. The organisation has provided details of registration, a named bank account, year-end accounts and business plan. It thereby meets the requirements of the Area Committee Funding Protocol.

11. Performance Monitoring

11.1 Lofty Heights anticipate, and will measure, the success of the project in the following ways:

- a. Increase in workload, including any increase in the number of removal/moving jobs they assist with
- b. Decrease in the amount of bulky waste orders placed
- c. Increase in the amount of donations of unwanted items to charities
- d. Mileage and fuel consumption
- e. Volunteer placements and training opportunities

12. Conclusions

- 12.1 Funding towards the purchase of a more suitable vehicle would enable Lofty Heights to function in a more efficient, environmentally friendly and cost effective way, which would enable the organisation to reach and support more vulnerable people in Ipswich. Their work is invaluable in enabling vulnerable people to live safer, healthier and easier lifestyles whilst simultaneously providing NEETs training and real employment opportunities.

13. Recommendations

- 13.1 That the North West Area Committee consider the options set out in Section 4 and determines the merit of allocating funding.**

Reason: To determine the allocation of funding as a contribution towards the purchase of a van to increase capacity and improve the efficiency of the organisation's work in Ipswich.

Appendix 1: Work Requests in Ipswich by Ward (Since April 2016)

Ward	Number of Requests
Alexandra	19
Sprites	3
Bixley	4
Bridge	11
Castle Hill	2
Gainsborough	5
Gipping	10
Holywells	2
Priory Heath	9
Rushmere	1
Sprites	6
St John's	8
St Margaret's	6
Stoke Park	7
Westgate	11
Whitehouse	9
Whitton	11
	Total: 124