

**3 September 2013****Agenda Item: 7****REPORT OF THE TEMPORARY GROUP MANAGER SAFER AND ENGAGED  
COMMUNITIES****MANSFIELD WOODHOUSE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval to make a grant of £5,000 to Mansfield Woodhouse Community Development Group (MWCDG). This will enable continued service delivery whilst longer term sustainability issues are addressed and resolved.

**Information and Advice**

2. MWCDG operate and run a Community Resource Centre on Park Road in Mansfield Woodhouse. The group was established in 1995 and since then has been at the centre of a number of projects and programmes that are all aimed at improving the well-being of local residents.
3. MWCDG is governed by a Board of Trustees and is a registered charity, the resource centre is a community hub and as well as providing a venue for many learning and recreational activities MWCDG also deliver and support the following important community activities:-
  - § Production of a community newsletter "The Woodhouse Warbler" delivered free of charge to 8,500 homes 4 times a year.
  - § A Summer Fayre attended by 1000 local residents
  - § A Christmas Event with 300+ attending
  - § Organising the Christmas lights for the town – with 300+ attending the big switch on
  - § The friends of Yeoman Hill Park – supporting the protection and maintenance of the park including utilising the Victorian Bandstand for a series of productions throughout the year.
  - § A Community Action Forum which meets every quarter and is open to the public to raise concerns and issues with the main service providers in attendance – Police, NHS, Local Authorities and Councillors all attending
4. The County Council has been approached by the MWCDG Trustees seeking financial support to help the Centre develop a plan which will help to secure its longer term sustainability of the Centre.



5. Currently the main source of annual income for the Resource Centre is from rental of rooms:-
  - § Nottinghamshire County Council have three staff from the Community & Voluntary Sector Team, this generates £6,500 per annum.
  - § The Adventure Service and this secures £19,000 in rent.
  - § Ad-hoc room rental brings in another £15,000.
6. Furthermore, the group has seen significant reduction in income over the past three financial years – two major streams have ceased resulting in £40,000 annual deficit.
  - § European Regional Development Fund & County Council Grant:- for a number of years this group alongside 14 other organisation have been in receipt of an average of £25,000 as a contribution to their core running costs – this funding ceased in March 2012.
  - § Neighbourhood Incubation Units – for three years to March 2012 the group had managed some Business Incubation Units located next door to Park Road – this secured £15,000 worth of funding each year, that service was taken in-house by Mansfield District Council.
7. The trustees have implemented a number of changes over this period and have realised savings across a number of key expenditure headings, the most significant being staff costs. However, the current staffing levels of 2.3 fte and a cleaner/caretaker (reduced from 7 staff in 2011) are seen as being the minimum to keep the centre open.
8. As of the end of July 13 the cash balance at the bank was £39,500 – the trustees assess that when reserves fall to £30,000 they will be in a position where closure will have to be seriously considered.

### **Financial Implications**

9. The trustees have asked the County Council for both financial and practical support. They are seeking a grant of £5000 and a programme of support to help develop a new model of operation for the centre. They have agreed to use £5,000 from the reserves to match this grant.
10. It is proposed that a grant agreement is made between the Council and MWCDG requiring that the Board of Trustees agree to work in partnership with the County Council to look for more sustainable funding solutions.
11. MWCDG are working with the County Council as part of a wider project on the role of Community Resource Centres and the Big Lottery to explore funding from its Reaching Communities fund.
12. The grant will be funded from the 2013/14 grant aid budget.

### **Other Options Considered**



13. No support is offered and from October the trustees consider implementing closure action. This would result in the loss of a significant amount of community based activity and the closure of a community asset in a deprived community within Nottinghamshire.
14. Without this support the County Council may be faced with re-locating the three staff based at Park Road. The financial and business costs of having to do this are likely to be in excess of the grant proposed.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

15. MWCDG provides a Centre for a wide range of community based activity to take place. It serves all age groups of the local population and provides a well equipped environment for people to meet, interact and learn. To allow the centre to close without first exploring a coordinated package of support is not a sensible response to their current situation. Approval of a grant would allow MWCDG, the County Council and other partners time to review the operational model and secure a more sustainable financial future.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

16. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

17. It is recommended that:

- i) The Grant Aid Sub-Committee approves a grant with special conditions of £5,000 to the Mansfield Woodhouse Community Development Group.
- ii) The Board of Trustees of MWCDG agree to work in partnership with the County Council to develop more sustainable funding solutions
- iii) Nottinghamshire County Council Community & Voluntary Sector Team co-ordinates a partnership approach to reviewing the current operational model.

**Chris Walker**

**Temporary Group Manager, Safer and Engaged Communities**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**



**Cathy Harvey**  
**Team Manager, Community and Voluntary Sector Team**  
**0115 97 73415**

**Constitutional Comments (SLB 07/08/2013)**

Grant Aid Sub-Committee has authority for grant aid as set out in the Council's Grant Aid Strategy and is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

**Financial Comments (SEM 22/08/13)**

The financial implications are set out in the report.

**Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**  
Mansfield North