

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 27TH MARCH 2012
title: LONGRIDGE STATION GRANT
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
principal author: CRAIG MATTHEWS

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To receive an update on the Longridge Station Buildings grant from Ribble Valley Borough Council and other funding sources.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions - The matters contained in this report contribute towards the council's ambition of making people's lives safer and healthier.
- Community Objectives – The issues highlighted in this report will contribute to objectives of a sustainable economy and thriving market towns.
- Corporate Priorities – The grant supports the Council's priority to lead the community and to ensure that access to services is available to all.
- Other Considerations - None

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The newly renovated Longridge Station Buildings project was a key regeneration initiative for the town funded by a number of grant sources, including £89,900 from Ribble Valley Borough Council (RVBC) to Longridge Town Council (LTC) as part of the Longridge & Parish Grants programme originally approved by the Council in 2007. This, along with the Heritage Lottery Fund, was one of the largest investments in the scheme and provided the catalyst for additional funding to be secured to allow the project to go ahead. The table below provides details of the funding sources for the £510,375 scheme: -

Heritage Lottery Fund	£221,600
Ribble Valley Borough Council	£89,900
Biffa Landfill Community Fund	£45,000
Lancashire County Developments Ltd	£42,885
Lancashire Environmental Fund	£25,000
Lancashire County Council extra support for programmes	£25,000
Lancashire County Council Environmental Projects Team	£24,000
Lancashire Small Sites Reclamation Programme	£15,000
LCC Climate Change	£7,500
Longridge Social Enterprise Company	£5,000
Lancashire Rural Futures	£3,990
Longridge Heritage Committee	£2,000
RVBC Conservation Budget	£2,000
Longridge Local History Society	£1,500
TOTAL FUNDING	£510,375

2.2 The new building contains a business centre used by small businesses for advice, information technology support and a heritage centre. The exhibition area and meeting rooms are used by local organisations and for public as well as private meetings for local organisations. Also in the building is a successful café operation let to a local business. The centre adopts the railway theme and retains the platform and station architecture.

2.3 During 2009, when work commenced on the project, it was reported that work on the main building could not begin until the gas main supplying the building was diverted and the National Grid commenced work on this in November 2009 which then allowed the main contractor to commence refurbishment of the buildings. The project was finally completed late in 2010, and in April 2011 the newly renovated Longridge Station Buildings were officially opened to the public.

3 INFORMATION

3.1 As stated earlier in this report, the existing gas main needed relocating in order for the project to progress. The National Grid charged £19,436.78 (inclusive of VAT) to do this work, which was covered within existing project budgets. However later in 2011 LTC received a reimbursement of £12,637.81 (inclusive of VAT) from the National Grid as the actual cost of the work proved to be considerably less than originally charged. Following this, the Clerk for LTC, who took up the position after the restoration project was completed, contacted RVBC along with the other funding bodies seeking confirmation of the terms and conditions under which the original grants were made and whether they would have any claim on the money refunded.

3.2 Following this further communications between the Longridge Town Clerk and the Head of Financial Services at RVBC to seek further information on this issue and the overall project costs, with the suggestion that RVBC could claim back a 25% share of the National Grid refund as one of the four principal funders for the project. The RVBC share would amount to £2,630 net of VAT.

3.3 However, since then further communications and investigations into this matter have identified that RVBC is the only body taking such a position with the other principle funders (Heritage Lottery, Lancashire County Council and Biffaward) responses being as follows: -

- Biffaward have confirmed that they are not making a claim against the refund and leave it to the discretion of the Town Council as to how the refund is used.
- Lancashire County Council have stated the following: "Lancashire County Council relinquishes any "claim" on funds held from the restoration of the Old Station Building and will leave the distribution in the hands of the Town Council. I hope other partners follow suit. Please do make the Councillors aware of our desire to see the funds used, (in some way at least) for their original purpose, refurbishment of land and buildings."
- Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) have confirmed they have a legal interest in the funds reimbursed by National Grid, but agree that Longridge Town Council should propose an agreement on how they can deploy the funds "on activities that enable people to learn about and participate in the heritage of the Old Station Building".

3.4 Whilst the original offer letter included provision for RVBC to reclaim grant if there were either variations in timescales, finance or descriptions in completing the project, however, at the present time the refund from National Grid remains in Longridge Town Council's reserve and members may wish to consider what action to take in this regard.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – None, funding for the award of grants has come from previous years budgets.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – None
- Reputation – None
- Political – None
- Other – None

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

5.1 Consider whether to agree that Longridge Town Council retain the RVBC share of the National Grid refund with the condition that the funds be used towards further maintenance and refurbishment of the Longridge Old Station building and grounds, or on activities that enable people to learn about and participate in it's heritage.

5.2 If members agree that LTC retain the refunded costs as set out in 5.1 that details of the planned expenditure are provided to RVBC before the £2,630 share of the refund is expended.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE