

ANGUS COUNCIL**POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE****TUESDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER, 2001****VILLAGE HALL DEVELOPMENTS IN ANGUS****Report by the Chief Executive****ABSTRACT**

This report gives an account of the latest proposals submitted for funding to improve Village Halls across Angus. The report is submitted against the background of the strategy approved by the Policy and Resources Committee as set out in Report. No. 341/98.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Policy & Resources Committee:

- (a) Agree to make grant aid available to the following Village Halls:-
 - i) Westmuir Village Hall - £3,144 (50% recoverable from European sources).
 - ii) Careston Hall - £8,514 (50% recoverable from European sources).
 - iii) Stracathro Village Hall - £1,242 (50% recoverable from European sources).
 - iv) Clova Village Hall - £5,202 (50% recoverable from European sources).
 - v) Aberlemno Village Hall - £3,061 (50% recoverable from European sources).
- (b) Instruct Officers to bring back reports on further submissions for financial assistance made to Angus Council and the Angus Federation of Village Halls for financial assistance to effect improvements to the Village Halls in Angus.

2. BACKGROUND

Elected Members will recall the report prepared by the Chief Executive (Report No 341/98) on Village Hall Developments in Angus, which was approved by the Policy and Resources Committee on 24 March 1998. This report set out the strategy of Angus Council and its partners for developing rural village halls across Angus with a view to bringing them up to a modern day standard in terms of their physical condition, and with a view to the potential of these village halls being utilised for community regeneration and possible future service delivery. The report also

highlighted that the Council, in developing this strategy, had been involved in negotiations with the Angus Federation of Village Halls and individual Village Hall Committees across Angus.

3. PROJECT SUBMISSION AND APPRAISAL CRITERIA

To ensure a transparent and objective process for appraising submissions by village halls for funding assistance, the Council has established a Village Hall Improvement Group to appraise projects against an approved set of selection criteria. The Group comprises Officers from the Community Education Service, the Chief Executive's Department, members of the Angus Federation of Village Halls and a representative of the Angus Access Panel who advises on proposals to enhance disability access.

To assist the Group, each Village Hall has been asked to supply information concerning the following:-

- (a) the present levels of usage of the Hall;
- (b) the benefits which are expected to arise from the proposed works;
- (c) arrangements the Village Hall Committee has made for future maintenance;
- (d) the organisation's latest audited/approved accounts;
- (e) the following information on the proposed works:-
 - (i) description and detail of the works;
 - (ii) a minimum of two commercial estimates for the works proposed;
 - (iii) an identification within this of the costs associated with works to improve access for people with disabilities.

To ensure that any proposed works to village halls are actually required and represent value for money it has been agreed that representatives of the Property Services Department and the Building Control Section of the Planning & Transport Department should be involved both to ascertain value for money from proposed works and to check that the halls in question are structurally sound. The Committee will also ensure that all works undertaken attain suitable standards of workmanship so as to be long-lasting and that all works meet the necessary standards as set out in the relevant building regulations.

As part of continuing efforts to stimulate community development it is considered appropriate to encourage communities and Hall Committees to undertake certain works themselves. In this regard funding will be made available to cover the costs of materials. It is not, however, considered appropriate to assign a monetary value to voluntary labour. The Group consider it appropriate that village halls be expected to raise funds to co-finance improvements. In this regard 100% grants would not be considered in any circumstances. However, it is appreciated that the smaller and more remote village halls with scattered small populations would, in all probability, find it more difficult to raise funds than halls with larger catchment populations. It is considered appropriate that such halls be eligible for a higher intervention rate. It is proposed that under normal circumstances a grant rate of 50% of eligible costs be made available but that the Group retain the ability to approve grants of up to 75% of eligible costs where a case can be presented highlighting difficulties in generating local funds.

Grants will only be paid upon the receipt of original invoices or receipts. Agreement has been reached with the Finance Department to ensure a prompt payment procedure so those Village Hall Committees can pay promptly accounts with contractors.

The Group will work on a consensual basis with no partner having a greater degree of influence than another.

4. FUNDING REQUESTS FOR PRESENT CONSIDERATION

At its last meeting the Angus Village Halls Improvement Group raised five submissions from Village Halls across Angus. The projects are set out in the following table:-

	Applicant £	A.F.V.H. £	Angus Council £
Westmuir Village Hall Upgrade of Kitchen	1,048	-	3,144 (50% recoverable from European sources)
Careston Village Hall Rewire; Install Heating; Hot Water; Access Ramp	NIL	-	8,514 (50% recoverable from European sources)
Stracathro Village Hall Parking Bays for people With Disabilities	414	-	1,242 (50% recoverable from European sources)
Clova Village Hall Rewiring; access improvements; repainting; new lighting; flooring upgrade	1,734	-	5,202 (50% recoverable from European sources)
Aberlemno Village Hall Create Car Park with external lighting	1,020		3,061 (50% recoverable from European sources)
Totals	£4,216		£21,163

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Report No 341/98 noted that a three-year funding package totalling some £190,000 had been established to fund improvements to village halls. This sum is made up of £90,000 (£30,000pa) from Angus Council Local Challenge Fund, £20,000 (£10,000pa) from Angus Council's Corporate Grant Aid Scheme and £30,000 from the European Union's Rural Stirling/Upland Tayside 5(b) Programme. The Scottish National Rural Partnership has made £50,000 available to the Angus Federation of Village Halls specifically to assist with the implementation of access improvements for people with disabilities.

The above funds with the exception of the Rural Partnership Funds will be channelled through a single financial source from which grants towards village hall improvements will be paid. This procedure will help ensure effective control of expenditure.

The financial implications for Angus Council approving the above works totalling £22,163 gross can be met from the Angus Council's Village Hall Capital Grant Finance Scheme. £10,582 of this sum is recoverable from European sources.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This report is an interim statement of the ongoing expenditure related to improvements to Village Halls in Angus emerging from submissions for financial support from Village Halls across Angus. The works recommended for approval will enhance the ability of the Council to deliver appropriate services through these improved halls. It is anticipated that the improvements will create up-to-date facilities, which should enable individual Village Hall Committees to develop programmes, which will promote activities, which will raise finance to ensure ongoing maintenance work.

7. HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

There are no human rights issues arising from this report.

8. CONSULTATION

The Directors of Education, Finance and Law and Administration have been consulted during the preparation of this report.

A B Watson
Chief Executive

Note: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied upon to any material extent in preparing this report.