

Proposal Edenbridge Public Toilets

Applicant Edenbridge Town Council

Ward Edenbridge South & West

RECOMMENDATION: That the **£34,000.00** applied for, as set out in the report, for scheme “Edenbridge Public Toilets” be approved on the following grounds:

- Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community;
- Partnership working with other organisations;
- There is sufficient certainty that the scheme will be delivered.
- Need for the scheme is identified in an adopted plan or strategy
- Sufficient evidence has been submitted to demonstrate a strong link between new development and the scheme.

Introduction

- 1 Edenbridge Town Council is one of 31 Town and Parish Councils in Sevenoaks District. It is located in the rural south of the District and shares administrative parish boundaries with Westerham, Hever and Cowden. In addition, it shares the County boundary of Kent with Surrey. It is ranked as one of the larger settlements in the District with a large number of services and facilities available to the community.

- 2 Officers received the application for CIL funding on 31.07.2018. Despite the application being submitted before the official start date for bidding, Officers considered the project as it was considered to be infrastructure and was therefore appropriate to consider.

Description of Proposal

- 3 The project is located at the Market Yard car park, Edenbridge, in the central part of the High Street. The proposal seeks a major refurbishment of the public toilets in the town centre where businesses, residents and visitors can use them. The refurbishment would bring the existing facilities up to modern

standards, improve hygiene standards to increase usage as well as providing a hot water supply to the facility.

- 4 Members of the Board should note that this is a resubmission of a scheme that Edenbridge Town Council submitted to the Board for consideration in May 2018. However, it was not considered at the time, as planning permission was not secured at the time of submission. Therefore officers were concerned, under the key considerations set out in the report that sufficient evidence had to not been supplied to show that the proposed scheme could be delivered. Therefore, this is a resubmission of the scheme and Officers can confirm that planning permission was granted in October 2018.
- 5 Furthermore, the revised submission has also included a revised timetable for the delivery of the project and it expected to be completed in March 2019, subject to the Board and Cabinet approving the bid.

Funding

- 6 Edenbridge Town Council has estimated that the total cost of the refurbishment of the public toilets will be approximately £70,000.
- 7 The Town Council have identified the following additional funding sources and grants to support their application to the Board:
 - Edenbridge Town Council CIL fund: £35,000.00 (it does not have sufficient CIL funds to cover the total cost of the project).
 - Great Stone Bridge Trust: £500.00
 - Eden Valley Chamber of Commerce: £500.00
- 8 To meet the funding gap for the full cost of the project, Edenbridge Town Council has applied to the Board for £34,000.00 of CIL funding.

Representations and Support

- 9 The application made by Edenbridge Town Council states that the following organisations will be working in partnership on the scheme:
 - Great Stone Bridge Trust
 - Eden Valley Chamber of Commerce
- 10 The application is supported by the following local representatives and organisations:
 - Cllr. Margot McArthur (Chairman to Edenbridge Town Council)

- Cllr. John Scholey (SDC Member for Edenbridge North & East)

Lead Officers Appraisal of Bid

Principal Criteria met

- Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community;
- Partnership working with other organisations;
- There is sufficient certainty that the scheme will be delivered.
- Need for the scheme is identified in an adopted plan or strategy
- Sufficient evidence has been submitted to demonstrate a strong link between new development and the scheme.

Appraisal

Strong economic, social and environmental benefits to the community

- 11 Firstly, the application sets out a number of community benefits to the area, including social, economic and environmental gains. The applicant has demonstrated that the scheme will have significant impacts not just in the local project area but also provide benefits to the wider town.
- 12 It has been identified that a number of visitors to the town will also benefit from the scheme whilst visiting tourist attractions (i.e. the Eden Valley Museum, the W.I Hall and other services and facilities). It is noted that there are no other public toilets in the town centre, and the existing facilities are well used.
- 13 By improving the public toilets, the applicant hopes that the benefits will encourage residents and visitors to spend longer in town, encouraging businesses to be flexible in their opening hours. By encouraging, more visitors to spend more time in the town would help maintain and boost the local economy. There is also a perceived view that the current facilities have a restricted view to the entrance, raising concerns of safety and the potential of crime. The proposal seeks to reduce the perceived risks to public safety and making the facility safer for the community to use. This is particularly important for the elderly and disabled users.
- 14 There are environmental benefits associated to the application. The application describes a number of benefits that can the scheme could bring including improved standards of hygiene from the existing toilets as well as reducing the amount of water used. The visual amenity will also be improved and reflects the character of a rural market town as a local shopping and tourism destination.

Partnership working with other organisations

- 15 Another key criterion for assessing the application is determining how the project will be delivered and whether any additional partners are included in the project delivery.
- 16 There is evidence that the applicant has sought buy in from local organisations and charities to deliver the scheme. While the project will be delivered by Edenbridge Town Council, it has been demonstrated that the project will be supported by the Eden Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Great Stone Bridge Trust.

There is sufficient certainty that the scheme will be delivered.

- 17 As mentioned above Edenbridge Town Council submitted the bid to the Board earlier in the year, but it was not considered as planning permission was not secured at the time. The Town Council has now confirmed that planning permission was granted in October 2018 and the decision notice has been submitted as evidence to support the application.
- 18 In addition to this, the applicant has the legal right to carry out the scheme. They have a project manager in place and a clear time scale for the proposal.
- 19 It is considered that the applicant has submitted sufficient evidence to show that there is certainty that the project will be delivered.

Need for the scheme is identified in an adopted plan or strategy to address the need for infrastructure

- 20 Whilst not specifically mentioned in the Local Plan, as part of the Spatial Vision for the Borough, Edenbridge is recognised as a rural service centre and this policy seeks to ensure that this role is retained, serving the town and surrounding villages with a number of shops, services and employment. This project will be in keeping with this aim.
- 21 Applicants to the CIL Board are asked to demonstrate whether the project is identified as part of any strategy. It has been stated in the applicant's submission that the scheme has been identified in the Town Council's plans for short-/medium-/long-term investment.
- 22 Furthermore, Edenbridge Town Council is currently in the process of producing a Neighbourhood Plan for the area and they have supplied links to online documents to support this as part of their application. Whilst this is still an emerging document, it is clear that there has been extensive consultation over the last couple of years to identify issues that the

Neighbourhood Plan could address. Some of the policy areas that the Neighbourhood Plan is seeking to address include retaining/enhancing community facilities, and also to retain and develop the vitality of the high street. This project whilst not specifically mentioned would support these aims. In addition, Policy INF of this document states that CIL payments received from developers will be used to address infrastructure shortfalls a list of infrastructure priorities are listed in the document. The public toilets are included in this list.

Sufficient evidence has been submitted to demonstrate a strong link between new development and the scheme.

- 23 As part of their submission, the applicant has specifically identified developments in the area that have created a need for this project. They have also identified that this scheme would be “convenient” for the additional residents and visitors to the developments listed.
- 24 The public toilets project has also been identified as one of the priorities for infrastructure spending in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.
- 25 The applicant has therefore sufficiently identified evidence to demonstrate that there is a strong link between the new development and the project which is seeking funding.
- 26 Therefore, after careful consideration, the need for the scheme has been adequately demonstrated through the application.

Other considerations

Funding of the scheme

- 27 The Council has determined that the purpose of CIL funding is to be a “top-up”, to be used in meeting any funding deficiencies or gaps in order to deliver the project. This funding should only be used for “capital” investment, as opposed to being used for “revenue” spend.
- 28 The applicant has stated that the majority of funding which has been secured for the proposal is from Edenbridge Town Council through committed funding from their own CIL reserves, which have been passed from Sevenoaks District Council. An additional £1000.00 has also been secured from two external organisations. So the money requested will be considered as a top up to existing funding.

Conclusion

- 29 The public toilets in Edenbridge are an important asset to the community for residents, visitors and tourists alike, and are very well used. There are no

alternative facilities within the town centre, and have been described as being a “low standard”. The proposal seeks a major refurbishment to the existing public toilets, which requires planning permission. It has been confirmed that planning permission has been granted to carry out the necessary works. There are a number of social, environmental and economic benefits which relate to the proposal. Edenbridge Town Council is primarily delivering the project, with the support of two local organisations. A majority of the funding is being provided from the Town Council’s CIL reserves.

- 30 After reviewing the application and subsequent supporting evidence, it is recommended by Officers that £34,000.00 of CIL funding be approved to support the delivery of the project. As it is considered to provide a clear public benefit and approving this bid would provide good value for the amount of CIL money applied for compared to the cost of the overall project.

Background Papers

Appendices	Appendix A1- Original bidding proforma and supporting information
Background Papers	None
Contact Officer	Simon Taylor (ext. 7134)

Richard Morris
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