

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

3 September 2008

Report of Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Executive Non Key Decisions

1 REQUEST FOR GRANT TOWARDS CHRISTMAS LIGHTS IN AYLESFORD

This report considers a request for support for Christmas lighting in Aylesford which is currently not eligible under the approved scheme of grants for Christmas displays.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 The current scheme of grant aid for Christmas displays was approved following the Scrutiny Committee's review (Decision no D060226CAB) and implemented for the first time in 2007. The annual revenue budget was increased to £16,000. Grants are made to chambers of commerce or other organised groups of traders in eligible local centres with specified maximum amounts allocated to each organisation broadly based on the size of the commercial area. The release of grant depends on an equivalent sum being raised locally, including a specified minimum contribution from the Parish or Town Council.
- 1.1.2 The scheme defines "local centre" in both urban and rural locations to ensure that grant is focused on the larger local centres. (A minimum of 4,000 sqm of commercial floor space and at least 12 individual units in urban areas and 300sqm floor space and 7 units in rural areas, the urban/rural distinction being as set out in the Local Development Framework.) Eight local centres were eligible for grant aid in 2007.
- 1.1.3 A separate four year rolling capital grant fund of £6,000 per annum was established for lighting equipment renewals to enable two of the eight centres each year to receive a capital grant to assist with upgrading their Christmas displays.

1.2 Application in respect of Aylesford

- 1.2.1 A request for grant support for Christmas lighting has been received from Aylesford Parish Council. They wish to build on the success of a lighting scheme for the Old Bridge undertaken in 2007 and develop a new lighting scheme in the Square in the centre of the village in 2008. The Old Bridge lighting scheme was

well supported by funding from local businesses and some private sector is already in place to help fund the new scheme for The Square. The Parish Council has requested support from the Borough Council of £2,000.

- 1.2.2 Aylesford is not eligible as a “local centre” as defined above and it is anticipated that the revenue budget will be fully allocated to the existing centres. However, there is scope to award a one-off capital grant as the sum of £3,000 reserved last year for a potential new scheme at Liberty Square, Kings Hill was not used. Consequently this has been rolled forward and the capital plan provision for 2008/09 currently stands at £9,000. As the Aylesford scheme is a new proposal, the majority of the funding required will be capital; in particular to purchase the lighting equipment. On the basis that this is a one-off grant and that capital plan provision exists to support the scheme, it is recommended that a capital grant of £2,000 be offered subject to this support being recognised in any subsequent publicity etc.

1.3 Legal Implications

- 1.3.1 None

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 Although not eligible for on-going revenue support, a one-off capital grant for Aylesford to assist with the expansion of an already successful lighting scheme, paid for mainly by local business, represents good value for money.

1.5 Risk Assessment

- 1.5.1 None, although should the new lighting scheme not proceed for any reason, the capital grant will need to be recovered.

1.6 Recommendations

- 1.6.1 That Aylesford Parish Council **BE OFFERED** a capital grant of £2,000 in support the development of a Christmas lighting scheme for the The Square in 2008.

Background papers:

contact: Mark Raymond

Nil

David Hughes
Chief Executive