Agenda Item 21 –Dec Meeting

Muga Project

I met Jason Woodford this week in order to go through the CLIF grant application from WDC and the current status of the project.

The CC hope to access CLIF funding from WDC which requires 20% matched funding from the applicant. 80% grant funding is available. Jason has considered SIF Sports Infrastructure funding in liaison with WDC and rejected it.

Decisions need to be taken by the January PC meeting on the funding to be set aside by the council for this and the Pavilion Project.

The CC has gone a long way down the procurement route and has received quotations up to £100,000 for the project, which include the following:

- Boring and gravel filling the existing surface for drainage
- Replacing the surface with sand-based astro-turf (a multi-sport compatible surface)
- Replacing the fencing with a "reboundable" alternative. Essential for cricket and hard-balled game usage.
- Extensions to house the goals
- Laying of a concrete slab accessible from the area to house a secure storage shed for cricket nets. Tennis nets, pickleball nets etc.
- Secure access via keypad gate entry system
- Fixed price quotation with 5% max contingency allowance.

I have checked with legal advisers at SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks), and they have confirmed that the CC are able to run the procurement although the grant application will be in the name of the parish council as freeholders. The grant application itself (43 pages!) is at an advanced stage and has been very professionally completed by the CC. This releases the parish council from a difficult and time-consuming tender process.

SLCC did advise that we should seek expert advice regarding the VAT status of the project as it would be very expensive for the project to attract non-reclaimable VAT. Parish councils can reclaim VAT routinely on day-to-day expenses but I have encountered projects in the past where it has been tricky to satisfy HMRC criteria. I will pursue this with Paul Mulberry of Mulberry's accountants who offers pro-bono work for parish councils in Kent and East Sussex.

Between EDFCC and EDFPC, we need to go a long way to meeting the potential £20,000 matched funding required by the CLIF programme. THE CC will put in £5,000 and will lead fund-raising, offering in return for donations life-time memberships and inscribed bricks on the court surround.

The parish council should budget for up to £10,000 outlay.

On completion of the project the council should arrange a sinking fund for surface replacement from court rental receipts.

Jason has approached a tennis coach already operating in Eastbourne Old Town who has proposed a comprehensive management plan for the courts from bookings to coached sessions, ad-hoc public sessions and provision of dedicated software for secure entry to the MUGA. This would allow the council to have a hands-off approach to management and will generate a court hire fee to meet the sinking fund. This option does require further investigation.

Tasks for the Clerk will include:

- Assistance with grant application and provision of necessary documentation
- VAT enquiries as mentioned
- Approach to SDNP Planning to confirm no planning permission required.

Jason has also arranged to meet the WDC CLIF co-ordinator Lee Shepherd shortly and it would be useful to involve a councillor as well as the clerk.

Proposals:

1. To consider setting up a sub-committee or a lead councillor to have oversight of the MUGA project separately from the Pavilion Project and to assist the clerk.
2. Nominate Councillor to attend the CLIF funding meeting.
3. Allocate £10,000 in 2026-27 budget

Phil Burgess

Clerk to East Dean and Friston