

# STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

## COMMUNITY SERVICES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 23 JUNE 2022

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>WOODCHESTER MANSION GRANT</b>			
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To consider a proposal for grant funding towards the Woodchester Mansion Trust			
<b>Decision(s)</b>	<b>The Committee RESOLVES to:</b>  <b>a) Agree a grant of £50k towards conservation efforts on Woodchester Mansion</b>  <b>b) Request the S151 Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, provide funding through Council reserves as set out in the report and enter into a grant agreement with Woodchester Mansion Trust.</b>			
<b>Consultation and Feedback</b>	Chair of Committee and Cllr Representative on Woodchester Mansion Trust			
<b>Report Author</b>	Andrew Cummings, Strategic Director of Resources Tel:      Email: <a href="mailto:andrew.cummings@stroud.gov.uk">andrew.cummings@stroud.gov.uk</a>			
<b>Options</b>	The Committee may choose to award a different grant level or no grant at all			
<b>Background Papers</b>	None			
<b>Appendices</b>	None			
<b>Implications (further details at the end of the report)</b>	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	Yes	Yes	No	No

### 1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Woodchester Mansion in Nympsfield is a Grade 1 listed unfinished Victorian gothic house. The freehold to the Mansion is owned by Stroud District Council but it is operated by the Woodchester Mansion Trust (WMT). The Trust hold a 99 year lease for the building which is scheduled to come to an end in 2089.
- 1.2 The surrounding Woodchester Park land is owned and managed by the National Trust.
- 1.3 WMT have a comprehensive business plan and plans for conservation of the building in several stages. The Covid pandemic has had an impact upon their financial position, although with the business grants paid through SDC a breakeven position was achieved in their last financial year. However, they were not successful for all of the National Grants they applied for. In particular a grant sought of £36k from the National Covid Cultural Recovery was not received as WMT was not deemed to be at risk of financial failure. They

have therefore approached the District Council and asked them to consider additional grant funding towards the building conservation objectives.

## **2. MAIN POINTS**

- 2.1 The Council has always endeavoured to work closely with WMT. Officers from Property Services have always supported on issues related to the building and the lease. In recent months strategic keeping in touch meetings have been held with members of the Strategic Leadership team and other Council Officers with key trustees from WMT, all in the spirit of maintaining good partnership working.
- 2.2 Community Services and Licensing Committee appoints a member rep, Councillor Steve Robinson, to the Board of Trustees for the Trust. Cllr Robinson reports back regularly to the Committee on trust activities.
- 2.3 The Council provides the Mansion Trust with a general revenue grant to support their operational activities. This was £18k p.a. until the review of Community Grants in 2021 at which point it reduced to £11k p.a. in line with the revised guidelines for the scheme. This has increased to £12k p.a. in 2022/23 and is included in the community grant budget administered by this committee.
- 2.4 The Trust has a proven track record of obtaining funds from external sources, over £600,000 in the past two years. These grants often come with match funding requirements and therefore operating income, and general revenue support, from Council grants is a vital part of the conservation programme.
- 2.5 In early 2022 the Trust approached Councillor Robinson and the Strategic Director of Resources with a view to securing additional grant funding to continue the momentum on conservation projects. In particular, funds were needed to help with the refurbishment of the studios at the mansion. Once complete the studios can be let and will provide rental income which helps to ensure the long-term continuation of the conservation works. The amount requested was £150,000 over three years.
- 2.6 The 2022 grant would be used to finance the enabling works for the studios, pre-application & early Stage 1 activities for the Chapel with any surpluses used on other works. It is those works on the studios which have been highlighted as being of particular importance with their potential of unlocking a revenue income stream.
- 2.7 The Section 151 Officer has advised that a three-year grant to WMT would represent a financial risk to SDC at this time as the Council's own three-year funding position is not secure. It is therefore recommended that a grant of one third of the total, £50k, be considered in the first of the three years. WMT may then wish to consider requesting additional money if required in later years as their conservation plan progress.
- 2.8 Trustees from WMT have indicated a willingness to attend future meetings of this committee and provide members with an update on their plans and on how this awarded grant has contributed to their conservation objectives.
- 2.9 The Council Plan at Objective ER 1.4 says that SDC will work to grow a sustainable visitor economy in the District. Woodchester Mansion is a unique visitor attraction and grant funding helps contribute to the long-term future of the building. The proposed grant funding is therefore in line with the Council plan.

- 2.10 A repairs and replacement reserve is held by the Council to fund additional costs arising from property and equipment which are not covered by existing budgets. The balance on this fund was £304k as at April 2021. As the Council is the freeholder of the building this has been deemed to be an appropriate funding source. The grant awarded will be used towards securing the long-term future of the building.
- 2.11 As the grant funding is being sourced from a fund related to building and equipment costs the awarding of this grant has no implications on other budgets being allocated by this committee and no detrimental impact on committee objectives.
- 2.12 Delegations in relation to reserves lie with the Section 151 Officer and the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee. Therefore, this committee can choose to allocate the funding and ask that the Section 151 Officer allocate this reserve accordingly. No decision is required from any other decision-making body of the Council.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 Grant funding has been requested by the WMT to assist with their ongoing conservation efforts at Woodchester Mansion.
- 3.2 In recognition of the fact that the mansion helps support the objectives of the Council Plan, that there is applicable funding available and that the grant would support conservation of a Council freehold asset it is recommended that the grant be approved.
- 3.3 As a next step, the offer from WMT to update the Committee further on progress at the Mansion should be taken up as it represents an ideal opportunity to ensure that the Council has oversight of grant sums awarded.

### **4. IMPLICATIONS**

#### **4.1 Financial Implications**

The recommended grant of £50k can be funded from the Council's repair and replacements reserve. That is an appropriate source of funding for an asset of which the Council is the freeholder.

Andrew Cummings

Tel: 01453 754115 Email: [andrew.cummings@stroud.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.cummings@stroud.gov.uk)

#### **4.2 Legal Implications**

The Council has powers to provide the grant using the General Power of Competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

Advice needs to be sought from One Legal to ensure that the grant complies with the Subsidy Control Act 2022. This Act replaces the state aid regime that operated when the UK was part of the European Union.

A grant agreement should be entered into with WMT to set out the conditions of the grant.

One Legal

Tel: 01684 272691 Email: [legal.services@tewkesbury.gov.uk](mailto:legal.services@tewkesbury.gov.uk)

### **4.3 Equality Implications**

An EIA is not required because there are not any specific changes to service delivery proposed within this decision

### **4.4 Environmental Implications**

There are no significant implications within this category