

TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL - APPLICATION FOR A RENTAL GRANT SUBSIDY

please complete and return this form, together with your organisation's financial accounts for the last two years (i.e. profit and loss accounts and balance sheets)

Name of organisation*: Hurst Green (Surrey) Community Association	
Description of land / property*: A community centre building owned and operated by registered charity 'Hurst Green Community Association' (HGCA) which is managed by the charity's Trustees. The land plot on which the community centre sits is leased from Tandridge District Council. The address is 4Oak Close, Hurst Green, Oxted Surrey, RH8 0BA	
Annual market rental assessment*: £17,000	
Please complete sections 1 to 5 below	
1.	Contact details
	Name: Karen Joy Sorensen
	Position within the organisation: Lead Volunteer for HGCA YFS Project (Nominated Trustee as of July 2023)
	Contact phone number: [REDACTED]
	Contact e-mail address: [REDACTED]
2.	Role of the organisation / membership regime / community links
2A	Please describe your organisation's objectives and how it utilises the land / buildings leased from the Council.
	The Hurst Green (Surrey) Community Association is a registered charity (Charity Reg No; 272789) which runs the Hurst Green Community Centre to "provide and maintain a facility for the use by the people of Hurst Green for social, recreation and a variety of leisure activities" as described in its charitable purposes.
	Our constitution states that;
	"The objects of the Association are to:
	(1) promote the benefit of the inhabitants of Hurst Green and the neighbourhood without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, race or of political, religious or other opinions, by the associating together the inhabitants and local authorities, voluntary and other organisations in a common effort to provide facilities recreation and leisure-time occupation.

- (2) to maintain and manage the community centre (the centre) in furtherance of these objects.
- (3) promote such other charitable purposes as may from time to time be determined.

The Association shall be non-party in politics and non-sectarian in religion.”

The building was originally constructed by local volunteers in 1976, and has a long association with the local community as its dedicated community centre making it well loved and valued by this community.

Current regular hirers are Little Oaks Pre-school Nursery (daily weekdays) and Mighty Oaks Youth Club offering educational benefits via early learning and through encouraging and improving social and networking skills. Outside groups can attend the youth club to help educate young people via art and craft activities or talks about different topics.

The main hall is hired weekly by local groups and individuals for group exercise activities such as Zumba, badminton, Boostfit, yoga, Taekwon-do and other classes like Kammeo (singing), as well as for weddings, wakes, parties and social events. Voting for local elections is held at the hall.

The smaller Harling Room is used for meetings, craft and other activities.

The various activities both running now and planned, provide safe and supportive opportunities to bring people together.

We have developed an active and well used community garden around the centre, in addition to the secure space which the nursery and youth club use at the rear of the main hall. We are growing fruit and vegetables for the local Community Fridge as well as providing an attractive and welcoming accessible space for local people, especially those without their own gardens, to visit and use.

2B Is your organisation affiliated to a county / regional / national body? (If so, please give details)

No affiliations.

2C How many paid up members does your organisation have?

We do not have a membership arrangement and the centre is open to everyone who wishes to use or hire it, subject to our constitutional values.

We estimate that about 400 people use the hall on an average week. The table below shows an average weekly timetable.

Usage	Number	Frequency
Little Oaks Nursery	34 children + 9 staff = 43	Daily Monday - Friday
Mighty Oaks Youth Club	35 - 40 young people + 7-8 staff = 42 = 48	Weekly evening
Boost Fit exercise class	20 attendees + 1 staff = 21	Weekly evening
Kammeo singing group	5 attendees	Weekly evening
Circuit exercise	9 attendees	Weekly evening
Badminton	16 attendees	Weekly evening
Calm Kids (therapy group)	8 children + 1 staff = 9	Weekly evening

Zumba exercise class	20 attendees + 1 staff = 21	Weekly evening
Taekwondo Do	33 students + 3 staff = 36	Weekly evening
Children's parties	60 people average	Weekends daytime
Music and other events	150 – 180 people (max capacity for fire regulations)	Weekends usually evenings
Total (average) weekly	Circa 400+ people using the hall	

2D Approximately what percentage of the paid up members live in Tandridge?

We do not, as above, have any members, but we know that the majority of users are local people, from within Hurst Green or it's surrounds.

When music events are held, the catchment area may be wider.

2E Are there any restrictions to membership?

There is no membership and therefore no restrictions to the use of the hall, as long as hirers meet our constitutional commitments.

Our facilities are open to all. However, hire charges apply for events for which the organisers are charging. These charges are competitive and we have confirmed that they are similar to facilities elsewhere locally.

2F Please provide details of relevant membership and hire fees and any other charges

There are no membership fees.

Standard Hire Fees are currently as follows;

Full centre hire £25 per hour

Main hall hire £20 per hour

Harling room (small hall) £12 per hour

All events have a refundable deposit-

£50 for parties

£100 for large events

£150-£200 high risk events

All events have a supplement to cover admin and costs (such as cleaning) per event

£25 for smaller events like parties

£50 for large events

2G Are discounts available on the grounds of financial hardship?

The Centre Manager has discretion to vary fees in special circumstances, but hire charges are competitive, as is evidenced by the number of local families who hire the hall for children's parties and other family events.

We run some events at no cost to the 'user' - for example, events run by Creative Community. This allows local people and families to access events which they might not otherwise be able to afford.

Special rates are available to regular hirers who commit to a fixed term hire and those who

provide a social asset. For example, the preschool nursery is a long term client (they have been using the hall for over 40 years) and the only Under 5s nursery in Hurst Green. They benefit from a 40% reduction over the standard hire rate in order to enable them to continue. The youth group also benefit from a reduced hire fee.

2H Are the facilities only available to members or can users 'pay on the day'?

Not applicable as anyone can book and use the facilities.

3. Access to facilities and integration with the wider community

3A When are the facilities available for use during an average week?

Little Oaks Nursery uses the hall from 8.30am to 3.30pm Mondays to Fridays in term times. For safeguarding reasons due to the current layout of the building, no other users are permitted to use the centre during this time. This is one of the key reasons we wish to pursue the refurbishment and extension project through a SCC YFS grant.

Other users hire the hall both early and later evenings (usually 2 groups per day) and the hall is hired daytime and evenings on most weekend for children's and adult parties and events.

We are fully booked well ahead and often have to turn down requests for hire.

Our Premises Licence (TAND\PREM\15\003) permits us to hire the hall 365/24/7 and hold licenced activities such as entertainment/ music/plays etc from 9am-midnight all year. However, we are mindful of the needs of local residents in allowing these.

3B Does the organisation do anything to encourage wide ranging community use of the facilities? For example, initiatives to:

- achieve a diverse membership base (besides any membership fee concessions / hardship relief schemes referred to in 2B above); and / or
- allow use by non-members such as community taster sessions; training / coaching development programmes; or via partnerships with local schools

As previously explained, we have no membership criteria, and the use of the hall is open to all local residents.

Our aim is to support people of all backgrounds and ages and also those with disabilities. We work with local groups such as Creative Community and The Accessibility Project to extend the use of the centre to less able and disadvantaged individuals and groups. This allows us to run events at no cost to the user, and we plan to extend this element if we have an improved centre.

TDC is aware of our plans to bid to Surrey County Council's Your Fund Surrey (SCC YFS) grant to make significant improvements to the centre. The renewal of our lease is a pre-condition of this application.

The planned redesign and extension of the centre would make the space much more flexible and user friendly, allowing us to increase both the range of facilities (and therefore the opportunities available) and those who can use it. This would include separate access to

rooms, refurbished and additional toilets (including improved disabled facilities), and an improved and refitted kitchen. This will allow more of our community to enjoy group activities, social support, public information and many other purposes that will enrich the lives of local people.

We want to ensure it meets the requirements of all users, including those with a range of disabilities and special needs, whether individuals or groups by providing improved accessibility to the building.

We want to provide appropriate space and safe facilities for all groups using the centre, including those for whom safeguarding is a particular issue such as the nursery and vulnerable adults.

Our resident's survey shows that of the 300+ respondents, 67% said that they would definitely and 30% maybe use the hall more if these improvements were made, and 94 % of these agreed that an improved facility could have the potential to improve the experience of living in and around Hurst Green.

Only 23% were extremely or very satisfied with the current facilities, particularly wanting improvements on toilets, kitchen, modernisation and flexibility.

3C Does the organisation fulfil any wider community roles (e.g. outreach work in schools or participation in community events such as fetes and shows)?

Prior to COVID, the centre regularly ran events such as fairs e.g. Summer, Christmas etc. We have several events planned later in the year including a 'garden party' in the community garden and a Christmas Fair and craft making event.

As noted in 3B, we work with local groups such as Creative Community and The Accessibility Project to extend the use of the centre to less able and disadvantaged individuals and groups.

We have good links with local schools and the community garden team is working with a number of these on planting and growing events.

We have had support from local pubs such as the Diamond Inn in running fundraising events, and have been offered the support of a local Rotary branch with our YFS project.

4. Financial position / sustainability

4A Are financial reserves being accumulated for any particular purpose (e.g. future projects or specific contingencies)?

Additional funds are not being accumulated in the recent economic climate. The existing funds of Hurst Green Community Association (the charity running the community centre) is operational capital required for;

- day to day expenses,

-maintenance of our aged building to current regulatory standards,

- staff

- reserves to safeguard the continued operation of the centre (through unprecedented events, such as closure of the centre during the covid period and the resulting significant

drop in income).

The charity is hoping to run without a financial deficit, but is faced with a significant increase in energy costs and to maintain an aged building in line with current regulations.

The 2022/23 accounts, which are awaiting audit by our accountant, show the significant impact of a range of issues, in particular hugely increased energy bills, on our bottom line.

The provisional financial year result (see attached draft accounts 12 months to 31/3/23) is a loss of £1,241 for the period. This is due to increased costs of various surveys and initial remediation works. We are also faced with the substantially increased utility costs, with the gas bill increasing from £2,000 to £7,500 per annum. February alone was £1,400!

All of these issues contribute to the impossibility of the centre being able to incorporate an increase to £17,000 (340 times our existing ground rent of £50) into our annual budget.

N.B. The centre's gas bill has increased from approximately £2000 per annum to £7500 per annum (we are on a 1-year tariff - being the cheapest option available when we had to renew in February 2023).

4B Please give details of any commercial activities on the site which generates income (e.g. bar / catering operations)

The community centre is hired out for private parties and events at commercial rates to generate income, in order that we can continue to hire the centre to our community based clubs/projects (such as our under 5's nursery, youth club etc) at subsidised rates.

4C Please describe any fundraising activities undertaken by the group during a typical year

The main activities of the entirely voluntary Trustees and Management Committee are taken up in the running of the centre, in order to maintain it for use by local people.

The centre is primarily funded by utilising hire fees to cover expenditure.

We are currently developing a Fundraising Strategy in support of our SCC YFS application which will include a number of large and small fundraising activities. For example, we have held a quiz at a local pub.

We are fortunate to have recently secured the support of a local Rotary branch to help us with this.

4D Does the organisation pursue any funding opportunities from other grant giving bodies?

During the Covid period, when the centre was required to significantly restrict its activities to protect the running of the nursery, we successfully applied for a number of government's Covid support grants to enable this.

We have recently applied to Oxted Parish Council for a grant (£500) to fund new equipment for our community racquet club activities (badminton and Pickleball).

Surrey County Council Your Fund Surrey - A key funding opportunity will be our application to SCC YFS as the proposed renovation and extension of the present facility is going to be subject to an SCC Your Fund Surrey bid. It has passed the Initial Eligibility stage and we are

working on the full bid.

As previously mentioned, the renewal of our lease is a precondition of this application.

We have recently secured a £7,000 grant from the TDC Covid Recovery Fund to allow us to appoint an architect to develop some very initial designs for the proposed scheme.

We have applied to the TDC CIL funds for a further grant to facilitate this application.

Other grant opportunities external to government organisations are also being pursued. We have applied, and continue to apply, to a number of other organisations such as The National Lottery, supermarket chains and utility companies grant opportunities. However, very few grant bodies offer capital funds and many will not permit applications for day to day revenue costs.

5. Alignment with the Council's corporate priorities

5A In light of the information provided above, please explain how you think your organisation's activities align with the Council's corporate priorities/Strategic Plan (page 8 also refers).

Key Corporate Priorities for 2020/21 – 2023/24

- **Building a better Council** – making the Council financially sustainable and providing residents with the best possible services
- Whilst we fully understand that the Council must both seek opportunities for income generation, and ensure that its limited funds are used appropriately, we would argue that the ground rent of £17,000 proposed in this lease is not an appropriate way to promote this aim. By approving this application for a full rental grant subsidy, the council will be ensuring that Hurst Green Community Centre remains at the heart of the community and continues to provide activities and services to the benefit of the community.
- The centre provides a wide range of facilities and events, including a preschool nursery and a teens youth group, as well as other groups which we believe support the council's aim to provide residents with the best possible services. Loss of these would have a significant impact on local families who rely on these.
- **Creating the homes, infrastructure and environment we need** – both now and in the future
- We believe that the community centre contributes to the infrastructure the local community needs, and that the success of the YFS application would contribute further to this aim.
- The provision of support from Early Years (the preschool nursery), through teens (Mighty Oaks) and young/ middle and older age groups (exercise and leisure groups) maximises wellbeing for the whole life cycle/community in its own modest way.
- The community garden enhances the area local to the centre, and is used by many local families and older people, especially those without their own gardens, to visit and enjoy. This encourages people to walk to the garden, increasing their exercise, and

encouraging a closer relationship with nature, plants and wildlife.

- Hurst Green residents have to rely on facilities provided by its large neighbour town, Oxted. However, this is a mile away and over a hill, requiring a car or public transport. The roads are narrow with limited pavement. The Hurst Green population has grown substantially in recent decades with several new housing estates. The centre in its own right remains a key community hub that can be accessed far more easily – for many, on foot.
- **Supporting economic recovery in Tandridge** – from lockdown to growth that everyone benefits from
- The continued availability of a low cost centre for groups and families to hire for leisure and other activities contributes to the economic and social recovery from lockdown and the impact of its restrictions.
- If our YFS scheme is successful, we hope to run ‘Access to IT’ workshops, events like Job Clubs and offer the additional space to Citizen’s Advice and other similar support activities based on our community needs assessment.
- **Becoming a greener, more sustainable District** – tackling climate change
- whilst there are limited opportunities for improving sustainability measures within the existing centre, the YFS project has a key focus on incorporating measures such as heat source pumps, solar panels and other energy saving devices into the scheme. This is important both for its impact on the climate, and to ensure the financial viability of the centre in the future. The redevelopment will make it more sustainable for the future, with reduced energy running costs, which will reduce our carbon footprint and allow us to utilise our resources more efficiently.
- We have installed a large water butt in the community garden to utilise rain water for watering, and are incorporating planting that is able to withstand increased temperatures and dry periods as well as encouraging pollinators and insects with our choice of plants, our bug hotels and new bog garden.

6. Required subsidy

6A What level of subsidy do you wish to apply for as a % of the annual market rental assessment on page 1 above

We wish to apply for a 100% subsidy. Our current annual ground rent is £50 per annum and this is the level we have factored into our financial projections for future years.

6B What, in your opinion, would be the consequences of the Council not providing the subsidy, both for your organisation and the community at large?

The consequences of the Council not providing the subsidy, both for your organisation and the Hurst Green community in particular would, we believe, be substantial.

Certainly, for Hurst Green Community Centre, raising facility hire fees to fund the full rent would mean most (if not all) existing hirers immediately going elsewhere and potential hirers

heavily dissuaded - we know what other facilities charge and we only just break even today (as evidenced by our accounts provided).

As local indoor facilities are scarce, this may even mean that some hirers could no longer operate. As many of these provide childcare and exercise classes, this would not surely be in the interest of TDC to allow.

As you know, we are applying for a lease extension early because Your Fund Surrey requires landlord commitment to a long lease before any funding is considered for the proposed renovation and extension work. However, as the Community Centre would not be economically viable after 2029 with a £17k annual rental, it would be irresponsible to proceed with the work without first knowing whether a grant subsidy would commence from 2029 - otherwise we'd be committing large public money to a project where the centre would start to lose substantial money from that date and therefore would, in all likelihood, close.

Imposing a £17K market value rent would make the centre immediately unviable and the YFS funding being applied for poor value for money. Consequently, SCC probably would not agree to fund it in the first place.

May I please refer you to an email from Tandridge Council 1st July 2021 to Carmen Lambert Singer, Chair HGCA Trustees, as follows;

“Hello Carmen,

Thank you for getting in touch with Alison Boote regarding the proposals and please accept our apologies for taking a while to respond to you due to staff leave.

The Council is very interested in the Association’s plans for the future delivery of services and facilities to the residents of Hurst Green and would like to continue our partnership with you through the Hurst Green Community Centre. We therefore support in principle your application to Your Fund Surrey to improve services through the provision of an improved community building on the site.

We would like to offer a new 25 year lease to the Association to support this ongoing work and maintain the successful partnership. The new lease would continue to be inside the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954. This means that the tenant has the right to renew at the end of the lease.

By taking this route, we would be making a significant investment in the community and guarantee a future for the Association and its partners to continue. By extending this partnership, the Council is also in a strong position to be a safety net for both the Association and the local residents to ensure that Hurst Green Community Centre remains at the heart of the community and continues to provide activities and services to the benefit of the community.

Whilst we are very supportive of your proposals, in order to agree the new lease (which would be subject to obtaining funding, planning and any other applicable consents), we will need to have sight of the full details that you propose. Please supply a detailed Business Plan, which supplies evidence of consultation with the local community and partner organisations highlighting the types of activities and services that will take place, informed by these discussions.

We would also need to see evidence of the partnerships that are considered essential to deliver your vision. Please also supply any cost estimates, architectural plans and surveys and investigations that have been carried out to date.

I look forward to hearing from you and the other trustees to discuss further

Kind regards

Jason Thomas

Asset Management Specialist Tandridge Council”

We believe that TDC is supportive of the community centre in principle, as evidenced previously, and would ask you to demonstrate this by granting this application.

Key Corporate Priorities for 2020/21 – 2023/24

- **Building a better Council** – making the Council financially sustainable and providing residents with the best possible services
- **Creating the homes, infrastructure and environment we need** – both now and in the future
- **Supporting economic recovery in Tandridge** – from lockdown to growth that everyone benefits from
- **Becoming a greener, more sustainable District** – tackling climate change

Please see further detail on the Council’s website:

<https://www.tandridge.gov.uk/Your-council/Strategies-and-plans>