

Name of Applicant:	Hesters Way Neighbourhood Project
Is the applicant a legally constituted, not-for-profit voluntary and community sector organisation?	Yes
Name /address of property	The Living Room 12 Devon Avenue Rowanfield Exchange Cheltenham GL51 8AU
Current rent	Market rent is £4,500 Currently in receipt of 80% discount and therefore pays £900 per annum

Rent Support outcomes	Applicant's submission	Proposed score against the sub-elements (up to a maximum of 20% per outcome)
<p>Cheltenham's environmental quality and heritage is protected, maintained and enhanced.</p> <p>This could include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting bio-diversity • Responding to climate change • Promoting sustainable living • Protecting and enhancing parks, gardens and open spaces • Protecting and enhancing the built environment 	<p>The Living Room is based in Rowanfield Exchange and since being there has enhanced the appearance of the shop front by regularly weeding and sweeping the area and generally being well cared for by the residents that volunteer there to deliver projects from locally identified needs. We believe the built environment is enhanced as this emerging community hub is open 5 days a week and we have plans for longer opening hours to develop other activities.</p> <p>The Living Room Growing project has run for a number of years and involves Volunteers and the wider residents from the community coming together to improve the environment of the local community. This includes doing litter picks around the shops where the Living Room is based, around the local streets and also King George V playing fields, this has helped to keep the area cleaner and the parents and children are more aware of the need to use the bins provided for their rubbish because of the litter picks, so it has enhanced a feeling of pride in the area. As well as litter picking the Growing Room has also engaged with planting activities, particularly at the rear of the property where volunteers created a flourishing and attractive garden, that not only included flowers but also growing green beans, strawberries and tomatoes, with more plans this year to expand the planting and to include hanging baskets at the front from each shop. The parents and children from the Parent and Toddler group enjoyed planting seeds and tending the plants and excitedly waited to see the end product of their labours. This</p>	<p>The panel noted that the presence of the living room and its activities will be of benefit to the local built environment through weeding and sweeping.</p> <p>There is reference to volunteers being involved in creating a flourishing garden that will help increase the bio-diversity of the local area.</p> <p>There is therefore some evidence that the proposed activities will have a positive impact on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting bio-diversity • Protecting and enhancing the built environment • Protecting and enhancing the built environment <p>The recommended discount is 12%</p>

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	<p>project will help to enhance the look of the area, making it a more attractive and pleasant place to live and help to improve the bio-diversity of the area through diverse planting.</p> <p>A new social business initiative called the Revival Room, which is in the process of being launched and run from the Living Room concentrates on selling used items, meaning that goods that might otherwise be discarded will get reused again. Not only will goods get reused but also used packaging will be collected from local businesses and will be recycled as packaging materials for the Revival Room goods that are sent out. This project will directly promote sustainable living, by the reusing goods and recycling of packaging materials.</p>	
<p>Sustain and grow Cheltenham's economic and cultural vitality. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping people into employment • Helping businesses to get established • Supporting cultural activity • Providing advice and information • Supporting tourist activities 	<p>The Living Room offers a place for people to come together and reduces social isolation and people have the opportunity to get involved and volunteer. A job club has been running for the past year at the Living Room, providing the space for residents to come in and use computers for job search. A local resident volunteer has created a job board, ensuring that up to date jobs are listed regularly and has proved popular addition will local residents. The Living Room has also acted as a hub of information for local people, referring them to food banks, where to access money advice, counselling and other services.</p> <p>The Living Room also provides good volunteering opportunities to residents that helps people to get closer to the job market, by learning new skills and gaining confidence. Many of the volunteers have used it as a spring board to take up training opportunities they otherwise would not have done and gained interviews as a result.</p> <p>As the Living Room is a community hub for all residents it's helped to draw in cultural experiences which has included restaurant standard Chinese cooking, as well as home cooked Chinese cooking. The Living Room has also attracted holistic healing by small independent companies coming to offer their services through monthly Spa nights run by another local resident and has supported another resident to start their coaching business by providing moral support and a space for them deliver their workshops. There are other plans in development where the Living Room will become a Social Action Hub and will be offering Community Organising training at</p>	<p>The panel noted that a job club operates from the building but no evidence was supplied about how many local residents use the facility or have secured employment as a result.</p> <p>Again there was reference to how volunteers have used their time at the living room to gain new skills and confidence but again there were no facts to back this up.</p> <p>There is therefore some evidence that the proposed activities will have a positive impact on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping people into employment • Supporting cultural activity • Providing advice and information <p>The recommended discount is 12%</p>

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	<p>introductory level and at accredited level 3 (equivalent to A level standard) this will not only enhance residents and others skills but will benefit Cheltenham as residents that are undertaking the training will be gathering local knowledge and moving residents in to action which will benefit the area that they live in. The main benefits will be more community minded active residents and residents and workers with increased skills enhancing their employment options.</p>	
<p>People live in strong and safe communities. This could include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling local residents to meet together and socialise • Engaging residents in positive social networks • Enabling local residents to contribute their time and efforts into community activity • Enabling local residents to feel safer in their communities • A place for young people to meet and feel safe 	<p>The Living Room is a community hub that has evolved as a result of local people wanting a community space so they could meet, socialise and deliver activities. The Living Room has been successful in bringing a wide variety of residents together helping to consolidate their existing social networks but also supporting the expansion of their networks in a safe place. Many of the residents have gone on to form friendships and support networks beyond the Living Room and we have seen how this this has had a positive effect on their well-being, beyond the Living Room. One resident who has a long term serious illness, who was isolated has broaden his networks so much that he now gets many visitors when he's in hospital, when he previously he was lucky to have one visitor.</p> <p>The Living Room supports and promotes local residents to run projects for the benefit of other local residents, this means residents give a lot of their voluntary time to supporting the Living Room to run, through general volunteering of opening, closing and greeting people to delivering specific projects such as the AM group, Homemade Chinese food, Growing project, Crazy Crafters, Job club etc. Therefore, the Living Room is a space which enables local residents to contribute their time and efforts towards community activity.</p> <p>The area where the Living Room is based is thought by many residents to be unsafe. However, both the PCSO and residents have told us since the Living Room has opened they now feel a lot safer when the community hub is open. The hub is now open 5 days a week, with further projects in the planning that will extend the opening hours into the evening. We hope this will help to make even more residents to feel safer. We know that the feed-back that we have from residents that use the Living Room feel it is a safe place where nobody judges them which makes them feel welcome and gives them a place to go where they can belong.</p>	<p>The panel noted that the application was stronger in relation to its community benefits. Though again the application was let down by the lack of information about how many residents used and benefited from the building.</p> <p>There is therefore some evidence that the proposed activities will have a positive impact on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling local residents to meet together and socialise • Engaging residents in positive social networks • Enabling local residents to contribute their time and efforts into community activity • Enabling local residents to feel safer in their communities <p>The recommended discount is 16%</p>

Rent Support outcomes	Applicant's submission	Proposed score against the sub-elements (up to a maximum of 20% per outcome)
<p>We will work to strengthen the emotional and physical wellbeing of all Cheltenham residents</p> <p>This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling local people to be active • Helping local people make healthy lifestyle choices • Reducing the harm caused by alcohol • Improving mental health • Improving health & wellbeing into older age 	<p>The Living Room has become a space that promotes residents action and activity, therefore provides a platform for residents to become both physically and mentally more active. Projects such as the Growing Room and Healthy Eating has helped to physically improve the overall fitness of residents and healthy eating has helped them make more informed food choices. The Living Room has built a relationship with Tesco and they have run a number of workshops, including farm to fork and healthy choices and has also helped to run some activities for families with the AM group (a parent and toddler group that becomes a family group in school holiday times)</p> <p>The majority of residents who visit the Living Room have suffered from some form of mental ill health in their lives and so therefore is a very understanding and supportive environment for those with mental ill health. Informally residents have created support networks and we now have 3 certificated mental health first aiders that have been on a course with the Mental Health Foundation Trust. This has proved invaluable as we were encountering a growing number of residents dropping in that were experiencing crisis levels of need.</p> <p>With opportunities to volunteer and run projects themselves and through the growing room project opportunity to physically get active through planting and litter picks. The AM Group also goes on nature walks, bug hunts and takes the children to KGV for soft sports activities in the Summer. All volunteers have a volunteer profile where they can build their portfolios which we have found gives a feeling of achievement when recorded in one place. We have lots of evidence of people improving their mental health that attend the LR, captured by using the Warwick and Edinburgh mental health well-being scale. The space offers a place for older people to come to meet others and make new friendships, it also offers them volunteering and mentoring opportunities as they very often have great knowledge and skills to share for example advice about gardening, another resident shares their musical skills etc.</p>	<p>The panel noted that the application set out a number of perceived health benefits, particularly in relation to residents being active and work to support people with mental health issues. Though again the application was let down by the lack of information about how many residents used and benefited from the building.</p> <p>There is therefore some evidence that the proposed activities will have a positive impact on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling local people to be active • Improving mental health • Helping local people make healthy lifestyle choices <p>The recommended discount is 12%</p>
<p>Summary and recommended rent support grant</p>		<p>The combined recommended discount is 52%</p>

Financial considerations	Panel assessment
Will the grant award support the financial viability of the operation of the building?	<p>The panel noted that the Living Room continues to operate with an annual loss; the forecast loss for 17/18 is £7,500.</p> <p>If Cabinet agree to apply a 52% rent support grant, the applicant will pay £2,160 pa. This represents an increase of £1,260 on the rent being paid currently.</p> <p>If Cabinet agree to an additional 10% rent support grant, the applicant will pay £1,710 pa, an increase of £810 on the rent being paid currently</p>
Has the organisation got reasonable longer-term plans to sustain activities being delivered from the building beyond the term of the grant?	The panel were concerned that there are no robust plans to make activities taking place in the building more financially sustainable.

Proposed cabinet recommendation:

A rent support grant of 62% of the current market rent totalling £2,790. The additional 10% is awarded in recognition of the critical work that is delivered from Living Room to support the local community living within the Rowanfield area.