



Report to: Cabinet Meeting - 31 October 2023

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paul Taylor, Public Protection & Community Relations

Director Lead: Suzanne Shead, Director - Housing Health & Wellbeing

Lead Officer: Cara Clarkson, Business Manager - Regeneration & Housing Strategy, Ext. 5923

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Report, Key Decision
Report Title	Revisions to the Community Grant Scheme
Purpose of Report	To present the revised criteria for allocations against the council's community grant scheme.
Recommendation	That Cabinet approve the revised criteria at sections 2.3 and 2.4 of the report.
Alternative Options Considered	Maintaining the existing grant criteria was considered, however the changes proposed allow for greater targeting of funds in line with Community Plan priorities.
Reason for Recommendation	To ensure that funding can be allocated to community groups – supporting communities to be sustainable and thrive.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 In 2022/23 the Council offered a combined community grant scheme, consolidating a number of previous grant allocations, with the intention of providing a simpler and more efficient offer to community groups.
- 1.2 During 2022/23, the Council allocated a total of £151,000 in community grants, supporting a total of 56 organisations across the district.
- 1.3 Criteria for the 2022/23 scheme was left relatively open, in contrast to previous years which had seen groups struggle to fit projects within more narrow funding requirements. Whilst a relatively open criteria allows for flexibility with allocation, the popularity and demand on the scheme far exceeded the funds available and for this reason, additional criteria to prioritise spend is being proposed for 2023/24.

2.0 Proposal/Details of Options Considered

2.1 It is proposed that the criteria for community grant allocation is linked to the new community plan objectives, elsewhere on this Agenda.

2.2 The scheme will remain open to a full range of applications from community groups. As before, all projects must demonstrate:

- i. Eligibility to apply i.e. applications must be from a registered charity, unincorporated association, trust or charitable/ not-for-profit company limited by guarantee/ community interest company, a constituted voluntary and community group, society or club
- ii. A local need for the project
- iii. How the project contributes to one or more of the council's community plan objectives
- iv. That the project takes place within the district
- v. Financial information to support application (this includes considering the level of reserves the group has access to and evidence to support the need for council funding, including that the funding is not being applied for retrospectively).

2.3 Additional weighting will be given to those projects that meet the following criteria:

- i. Projects that contribute to overcoming the cost-of-living crisis
- ii. Projects that contribute to public protection by reducing crime or anti-social behaviour
- iii. Projects that improve bio-diversity or contribute to reducing climate change
- iv. Projects that can demonstrate match funding (above £5k)

2.4 Additional changes to the scheme:

- i. The previous grant scheme set a maximum award of £5k per organisation. This is proposed to increase to £20k to allow for larger, transformational projects with the caveat that those projects (above £5k) that can demonstrate match funding will receive a greater weighting.
- ii. Applications will be assessed by a cross-party panel of three members from the largest three political groups, nominated by the Leaders of the relevant groups. As previously, the recommendations of the cross-party panel will normally be referred to Cabinet for approval. Where necessary to meet timescales, recommendations can be referred to the relevant Portfolio Holder for delegated decision.
- iii. The support and endorsement of the local district ward councillor is no longer required as part of the application process. Councillors will be made aware of all applications within the district and within their constituencies, with summaries of all applications available to view and comment upon. Collated comments will be fed into the panel decision-making process.
- iv. Parish and Town Councils are no longer invited to apply for funding under this grant scheme. During 2022/23 approximately one third of the grant funding available was allocated to Parish and Town Councils including allocations to support the maintenance of Parish and Town Council assets. Given that Parish and Town Councils can raise a precept, were the majority of community groups have no formal income, the funding should be directed to those groups with less opportunity to raise regular income.

- 2.5 The budget 2023/24 has been set at £100,000. Once the criteria has been approved as part of this report, the scheme will go live with applications welcomed from early November 2023. A timeframe for allocations is identified below:

Criteria Approved	31 October 2023
Application Window	13 November – 22 December 2023
Initial officer assessment (due diligence)	2 January – 12 January 2024
Member comment opportunity	15 – 19 January 2024
Cross party panel to convene	Week commencing 22 January 2024
Allocation confirmed – award letters	Week commencing 5 February 2024

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding, Sustainability, and Crime and Disorder and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Financial Implications – FIN23-24/9794

- 3.1 The 2023/24 budget was originally set at £100,000. By carrying forward the underspend in 2022/23, this gives a revised budget of £124,100 for the current financial year. It's possible that under the new criteria stated above, that the number, and value of appropriate bids, fall short of the total funding available and that there is a further carry forward of unallocated grant funding into 2024/25.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None