

Agenda Item

Report of : Head of Communities and Place

To: Community and Resources Committee

Subject Councillor Community Grants Scheme

Date: 23rd November 2020

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To have members consider whether £1,000 should be reapplied to each Cllr Community Grant allowance and whether the scheme should be slightly revised to assist in Covid Community response or recovery.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Councillor Community Grants Scheme has now been in operation for over eight years. As the scheme stands at the beginning of each financial year members will be allocated £2,000 that they can use to assist community groups and organisations within their wards. During financial year 20/21 the decision was taken to reduce that allocation to £1,000 and to use the £36,000 (along with the unspent allocations from the previous financial year) not allocated to distribute to Parish Councils so that they could use the funds for local covid community response.

When the impact of this distribution of funding was evaluated it became evident that the overwhelming majority of town/ parish Councils had not used the funding as it had been intended that they would and that we should find alternative ways to assist the communities that need assistance. The decision was therefore taken to recoup the funding from the parishes/towns.

2. REPORT

The simplest solution to this problem appears to be the reallocation of £36,000 to the Cllr Grants scheme and to amend the criteria of the fund so that Cllrs can assist their communities adequately.

The following extract from guidance notes on Councillor Community Grants explains the current rules of the scheme:

What is it for?

- Projects and activities that benefit the residents of your ward.
- One-off items of revenue or capital expenditure.

What/Who is not eligible?

- Retrospective funding.



- Twinning activities that take place in appropriate Wards, and support local community events with open access, are eligible. Grants cannot be awarded for twinning activities outside of the UK.
- Grants direct to Parish Councils.
- Repeat funding for the same project.
- Activities contrary to Council policies.
- Activities which the authority has no legal powers to fund.
- Political activity.
- Hospitality.
- Donations to charitable organisations.
- Commercial organisations.
- Grants that seek to cover core organisational costs such as employees, rent, utility costs, will not be considered. Costs to support the work of volunteers will be considered.
- Grants for activities that promote religious beliefs. However, for the avoidance of doubt religious organisations can receive grants for the community and social aspects of their activity, where they do not restrict access to the project from their own religion, or other religions.

Who can apply?

- Any group based within your ward, or beyond the ward where their activities benefit the residents of that ward, e.g. voluntary and community groups, schools, and clubs.
- The group does not have to be a registered charity but will need to have a bank account (or identify another organisation who can act as banker for funds). The group will also require a constitution, terms of reference or a set of rules.
- Groups/projects will need to prove the funding is needed (e.g. through supplying accounts, current bank account, where possible).
- Grants are not available to an individual.

What is proposed for use of the £1,000 that will be reapplied to each Cllr's allocation?

- That all of the above remains relevant but that Cllrs would also be able to make donations (rather than only support projects) to charitable bodies, constituted not for profit organisations or parish/town councils for activities relating to community covid 19 response or recovery.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

None.

Financial Implications

Within existing budget.

Human Resources Implications

None

Sustainability Implications

None

Equality/Diversity



Incorporated into the eligibility criteria for the Councillor Community Grants Scheme

Risk Management

There is a risk that organisations could make application to the Councillor Grant fund in order to relieve themselves of financial exposure to projects that they wish to support. This might come at the expense of other eligible groups and projects with a community. This risk can be mitigated by the careful management of the grant scheme by Cllrs and Officers who are able to decide on the eligibility of an application and it's accordance with the rules of the scheme.

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

The Councillor Community Grants Scheme helps to engage and empower communities

Ward Member and Lead Member Views

Date of Consultation – 23rd November 2020
Cllr Cottle Hunkin – Lead Member

4. CONCLUSIONS

In discussions with Cllrs it has become evident that they are still very keen to support the local response to the covid pandemic. It would seem that the distribution of the £36,000 to parishes/towns did not have the required impact and that reallocating those funds to Cllr grants, with a relaxation on criteria, might be a better way to assist communities through these hard times.

5. RECOMMENDATION

That Members consider whether to use the unspent £36,000 to reapply £1,000 per Cllr to the Councillor Grants Scheme and revise the eligibility criteria in order that donations can be made to appropriate organisations to assist in the Covid 19 community response and recovery.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Consultations: Cllr Cottle Hunkin – Lead Member
Date of Consultation – 23rd November 2020.

Officers Consulted -
Chief Executive, Head of Legal and Governance, S151 Officer.

Contact Officer: Sean Kearney

