

27th June 2017

REPORT NO. CD1703

KEY DECISION: NO

REVIEW OF COMMUNITY WARD GRANTS SCHEME

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

On 23rd August 2016, the Cabinet approved the establishment of a pilot Community Award Grants Scheme which enabled Ward Members to support initiatives in their Ward up to a value of £500 per annum.

The Cabinet Portfolio Member committed to review the pilot scheme and report back to Cabinet. This report sets out that review and recommends that the Scheme be continued for 2017/18 with the further recommendation that the value of awards be increased to £1,000 per annum per Ward.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 23rd August 2016, the Cabinet approved the establishment of a pilot Community Award Grants Scheme which enabled Ward Members to support initiatives in their Ward up to a value of £500 per annum.
- 1.2 This report reviews the activity undertaken during 2016/17 under the pilot scheme.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A copy of the August 2016 Cabinet report (CD1602) and operating scheme arrangements are set out as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.2 The desire to establish a Ward Community Grant Scheme is set out alongside other initiatives in the Council's published plan for 2017/18 under the section "Supporting and empowering our communities and meeting local needs".
- 2.3 Appendix 2 to this report, sets out the actual Community Grants made under the pilot scheme during 2016/17. In summary, the data in Appendix 2 shows the following:
 - Grants were awarded in all 13 Ward areas
 - Seven Ward areas awarded the full budget amount of £500 to one organisation

- Four Ward areas split their budget allocation across awards to two organisations
- One Ward area split the budget allocation across awards to three organisations
- One Ward area awarded £270 of their £500 budget to one organisation, leaving a balance of £230 unspent
- The total budget spend was therefore £6,270 out of £6,500 made available for the Scheme
- 19 organisations in total received support
- The lowest award was for £150 and a full £500 was allocated in seven instances

2.4 In seeking to undertake a review of the effectiveness of the Scheme, all Councillors have been asked for their feedback in respect of this pilot.

2.5 Feedback received to date is summarised below:

- 15 Members returned a questionnaire providing feedback (full details of responses are attached as Appendix 3)
- All Members that expressed a view supported the continuation of the scheme
- Four Members recommended that the scheme be retained at £500 per Ward per annum, whilst 10 Members suggested a higher figure with the most common mentioned being £1,000
- There was a general view around the application process being simpler and quicker
- Views were also made regarding suitable publicity and transparency around grants made
- Overall, the comments received from Members were positive

3. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

3.1 In light of the experience during 2016/17 and based on the feedback received to date, it is recommended to continue with a Ward Community Grant Scheme for 2017/18 using the same award criteria but with the added feature that the annual amount available per Ward be increased to £1,000. Action should also be taken to improve the administration process where possible.

Consultation

3.2 No general public consultation has been undertaken, however, all Members have been consulted as set out in 2.4 and 2.5 above.

4. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

4.1 There are no specific legal implications or risks associated with this proposal.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 4.2 The budget available to support this Scheme for 2017/18 is already within the Council's approved budget for Community Grants. Therefore, there are no additional financial implications of approving this proposal. The £1,000 per Ward required to support the 2017/18 Scheme will account for a maximum total of spend of £13,000 from the existing Community Grants budget.

Equalities Impact Implications

- 4.3 No particular equality implications arise as a result of this proposal.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 Following a successful pilot Ward Community Grants Scheme in 2016/17, this report recommends a continuation of the Scheme in 2017/18.
- 5.2 Members across the Council have expressed their support for the continuation of this Scheme.
- 5.3 The analysis of activity in 2016/17 and Members feedback has indicated that this Scheme has enabled considerable support to be targeted to local organisations with minimal impact upon Council operations.

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CABINET
23RD August 2016

CORPORATE DIRECTOR
Report: CD 1602

Ward Community Grant Scheme

1. Background

- 1.1 For many years the Council has set aside a Community Grants Fund to support bids from local groups for small sums to assist with community projects or to further the aims of a community group.
- 1.2 Historically grants have been awarded following an application process and determined by the Cabinet Member for Concessions and Community Support.
- 1.3 This report proposes to make £6,500 of the current year's Community Grant Fund budget available to support a pilot scheme whereby Ward Councillors play a greater role in sponsoring community and voluntary groups in their own Wards.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 The details of the proposed pilot scheme are set out in Appendix 1 to this report overleaf.

3 Financial Implications

- 3.1 The total allocation for grants during the pilot period will be £500 per ward per year from the existing Community Grants Fund. This will account for £6,500 from the existing budget and will therefore not require any additional allocation of funds or supplementary estimates.

4 Recommendations

- 4.1 Cabinet are requested to agree and endorse the adoption of a Ward Community Grant Scheme on a pilot basis as set out in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 The Cabinet Member for Concessions and Community Support be required to review the effectiveness of this pilot scheme and report back to Cabinet by the 31st March 2017.

Ian Harrison
Corporate Director

WARD COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To empower Ward Councillors to play a greater role in sponsoring community and voluntary groups to enable them to achieve their local objectives.
- 1.2 In order to achieve this purpose, initially a pilot scheme will be introduced, making available a budget of up to £500 for community grants to local voluntary organisations, community groups and good causes within each electoral Ward.

2. How can an application be made

- 2.1 An application can be submitted by or through the Ward Councillors and it must be of benefit for the Ward. An application could be made for one-off projects, equipment/materials, individual events or to develop an organisation. A grant application should not usually be made to pay for day-to-day costs or general running costs of a group or scheme. Ideally, applications should show clear community benefits/need and demonstrate community support.
- 2.2 Applications should use a standard form and should normally be endorsed by all three Ward Councillors.

3. Processing applications

- 3.1 The Head of Community and Environmental Services will check applications to ensure that funding sources are not being duplicated from other sources and they are complete and clear. The level of any balances of the applicant will be taken into account in assessing need. The Cabinet Member for Concessions and Community Support will complete an executive decision form and reports will be made to Cabinet periodically on any grants awarded and refused.

4. Allocation of Grants

- 4.1 The total allocation for grants during the pilot period will be £500 per Ward per year from the existing Community Grants Fund. This will account for £6,500 from the existing budget.

5. Review of Pilot Period

- 5.1 The Cabinet Member for Concessions and Community Support will review the effectiveness of this pilot scheme and report to Cabinet by the 31st March 2017.

Ward Community Grant Scheme 2016/17

Ward	Organisation	Award amount	Project	Status
Aldershot Park	Parkside	£500	Update Garden Group facilities	APPROVED - awaiting receipts
Cherrywood	3rd Farnborough Scouts	£200	Scout hut kitchen improvements	APPROVED - awaiting receipts
	MCP	£150	Hawley Community Garden	APPROVED - awaiting receipts
	COGS	£150	The Larder	APPROVED - awaiting signed acceptance form (20.4.17)
Cove & Southwood	Southwood Church	£500	Ignite project	APPROVED - awaiting signed acceptance form (20.4.17)
Empress	3rd Farnborough Scouts	£200	Scout hut kitchen improvements	APPROVED - awaiting receipts
	Farnborough Street Residents Association	£300	Planter	COMPLETE
Fernhill	Fernhill Primary School	£250	Playground markings	APPROVED - awaiting receipts
	Fernhill Secondary School	£250	Books for Book Buzz project	APPROVED - awaiting receipts
Knellwood	Farnborough Bowling Club	£500	Bowling green renewal	COMPLETE
Manor Park	2nd Aldershot Scouts	£500	Tarmacing & drainage improvements	COMPLETE
North Town	internal transfer of funds	£500	New/replacement community noticeboards	APPROVED - chasing maintenance team to replace noticeboard in shopping area, then see what funding is left for new board
Rowhill	PAG (Parent Action Group) for disability	£250	Arts activity days in summer holidays	APPROVED - awaiting signed acceptance form (sent 4.5.17)
	Aldershot Baptist Church	250	Equipment/resource for Youth Hub	APPROVED - awaiting receipts
St John's	St John's Church	£270	Outdoor Christmas lighting for churchyard	COMPLETE
St Mark's	North Camp Matters Community Association	£300	Bike racks	APPROVED - awaiting signed acceptance form (sent 4.5.17)
	North Camp Football Team	£200	Football equipment & trophies	APPROVED - awaiting signed acceptance form (sent 4.5.17)
Wellington	The Vine Centre	£500	Emergency night shelter	APPROVED - awaiting receipts
West Heath	Cove Brook Greenway group	£500	Website development	APPROVED - awaiting receipts

	Do you support the continuation of a Ward Community Grant Scheme in a similar format to the 2016/17 pilot scheme?	If no, please say why	How did you find the process to apply and do you have any thoughts on how we could improve this?	How do you propose to raise awareness about the Scheme in your Ward, is there anything we can do to support you with this?	What amount of money do you think is appropriate for each Ward to have as a budget? Given that the total budget available for Community Grants has been approved at £20,000.	Please write below any other comments about this Scheme that you would like taken into account as part of this review.
1	Yes		It seemed a bit onerous that the charity nominated had then to apply as if it was applying for an ordinary Community Award, rather than one that the three ward councillors had picked because of their local knowledge.	As ward councillors, we are aware of the major issues in the ward – and street homelessness is the top priority – so all the award was needed to address that.	£500	As the total amount of money for all Community Grants is so limited at present, there should be a realistic assessment, perhaps with the help of RVS, as to what amount could be made available to meet the Council's priorities in partnership with local charities. On the basis of that data, the Cabinet could then decide how much of the budget to set aside for all Community Grants – £20,000 seems inadequate if £6500 is currently going on ward-based grants. A ward-based system does not take into account need in the borough as a whole or the overall priorities of the Council – so some affluent wards have the same amount as wards where there is significant deprivation, for example. I really favour of the Council addressing the issues of deprivation as the top priority. However, I recognise that a ward-based system gives ward councillors a direct role in assessing priorities in their wards, so I favour retaining the present scheme.
2	Yes		We had problems because we wished to support a group who were not registered with HMRC or the Charity Commission and did not have valuable work. It would be helpful if we could offer help during the very early stages for innovative schemes.	I look after 2 noticeboards and can put up an information flyer. The Plough and Horses and St John's Church are the main community hubs, so we will promote at both.	£500	I think it unwise to increase the amount until we have a clearer idea of the value of the scheme. And I have some concerns about giving the perception that we are buying votes. Unlike town centre wards and wards in areas of deprivation, St John's is essentially a dormitory ward with relatively few opportunities for grant donations.
3	Yes			Through Manor Park Neighbourhood Forum & Hampshire Magazine.	£1,000	
4	Yes		Wards with split party representation as West Heath has, can have problems with allocating this grant.	Already have many ideas for 2017/18 grant.	£1,450	I was not notified regarding the allocation of grant in West Heath, it would be great to know what this went on.
5	Yes		Should be simplified - we need to find a way to empower councillors more in the grants process with the money more obviously coming through them and with charities not needing to fill in so many forms.	Am including it in my quarterly newsletters which go to 1500 people in my ward. Also mentioning it at ward forums which have representatives of most streets in the ward through NHW coordinators.	£1,000	

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6	Yes		I was only elected as a Borough Councillor this month, so I cannot testify about the application process from last year's grant scheme. However, I strongly recommend that for this year's scheme, some information about the Ward Community Grant Scheme is uploaded onto the website page about different community grants, alerting residents to this potential source for funding for projects. On the South Gloucestershire District Council website, there is an option for residents to fill in an application form to make their case to ward councillors for funding. It would be great if we could embed something similar into the application process for Rushmoor, and may help to engage more residents and community groups.	The main way that we are likely to raise awareness in the Ward is through word of mouth, and potentially advertising the Scheme on community notice boards. To this end, it would be useful for the Council to design a poster with information about the scheme that could be displayed in public places. In addition, the Council could assist Councillors through greater use of its social media platforms to engage voluntary and community sector groups in the Borough about the Ward Community Grant Scheme. This could mean advertising the Scheme on the Rushmoor BC Twitter feed every month of the calendar year, and by paying for Facebook adverts that will appear in the timeline of residents/groups who like the Council's Facebook page.	£1,000 (with scope for a higher amount subject to additional criteria being met). Looking at the level of grants awarded through the Scheme last year, it may be worth stipulating in the procedures for the Ward Community Grant Scheme that it is not permissible to carry forward uncommitted grant amounts into the next financial year.	I believe that all Community Grants awarded by Rushmoor Borough Council (including the Ward Community Grant Scheme) should be published on the Council's website during the calendar year, for the purposes of transparency and demonstrating value for money to residents. A good model for this is South Gloucestershire District Council, who share information as part of their Open Data policy about all grants awarded through Member Awarded Funding, the recipient group/organisation and the purpose and value of the grants: http://www.southglos.gov.uk//documents/Open-Data-16_17-1.csv In the longer term, Rushmoor BC may want to consider replacing the Community Grant Scheme with a system of Member Awarded Funding (combining the budgets for Community Grants and Ward Community Grants) to provide Councillors with greater responsibility for decision making and allocation of these grants. Clearly, this would have to be underpinned by a clear set of policies and procedures to ensure accountability and transparency around the Scheme. The principles and processes for Member Awarded Funding at South Gloucestershire District Council can be found here: http://www.southglos.gov.uk//documents/Principles-and-Processes-MAF.pdf
7	Yes		Fernhill grants were co-ordinated by Cllr Ken Muschamp. I am unaware of any problems with the process.	Information on the web would be useful <u>BUT</u> given the relatively low amount available, too much publicity would be counter-productive and could generate disappointment.	£20,000/13	
8 & 9	Yes		Very slow process. Have a separate form for this scheme.	Continue to raise awareness in Arena.	£1,000	Need for clear guidelines to clarify what schemes are in scope and those not.
10	Yes		Process easy. Cycle forum near impossible	Via our regular paper comms, social media comms and surgery.	£1,000	I'd be interested to know how the award worked in areas that have a political mix of Cllrs.
11	Yes				£500	The Scheme is a good one and is most welcome. It enables Ward Councillors to give attention to a Group or Groups that may otherwise, be missed when other Community Grants are made available, in the normal way, prior to this new Ward Grants system coming in to force I am happy that the level of £500 be maintained for this coming financial year, in light of the constraints put upon us all in relation to Council Spending. So In conclusion I would be more than happy when this is raised, in Cabinet for them to endorse the present Ward Grants to Councillors.

	Do you support the continuation of a Ward Community Grant Scheme in a similar format to the 2016/17 pilot scheme?	If no, please say why	How did you find the process to apply and do you have any thoughts on how we could improve this?	How do you propose to raise awareness about the Scheme in your Ward, is there anything we can do to support you with this?	What amount of money do you think is appropriate for each Ward to have as a budget? Given that the total budget available for Community Grants has been approved at £20,000.	Please write below any other comments about this Scheme that you would like taken into account as part of this review.
12	Yes		Process good and efficient, clear and user-friendly for recipient to complete. Communication with parties was good, and appreciated the speed of replying to queries. Perhaps a little improvement in finding the form and guidance on the website, had to initially search on RBC website for the link which took time, perhaps the 'search' engine can be improved to find the link?	Community notice board leaflets with deadline for completion highlighted and simple, clear, examples of 'appropriate funding opportunities' for application. RBC webpage to have notice (within a given timeframe) with link community grant page for further information. Leaflet/small poster in RBC buildings, eg. Library, Leisure Centres, Community halls etc.	£1,000	I may have missed it, but if not, a press article listing the community groups and wards who have benefitted in the past 6 months? Together with quotes from the groups which gives opportunities for them to thank the Council and recognition of this good work. Also this may give a platform to enable communication to show how receiving the grant has enabled growth within the community, eg. community cohesion, education enhancement etc.
13	Yes		The process for Aldershot Park did not follow the formal process but was agreed with Gareth Lyon and one of the other Councillor's for AP. Therefore, I cannot really comment on this aspect. I do believe though that the process must be simple and easy to understand, especially for any organisations	There are two aspects to this: Direct communication with organisations and to this affect some sort of flier might be useful that can be given to them explaining what it is all about and the process. The other is indirectly via the general public, who perhaps could nominate such organisations. The obvious routes are the various notice boards and Arena magazine.	£1,000	A very worthwhile scheme and long may it continue. A £1000 ward budget would allow larger amounts to be spread amongst various organisations if so required.
14						As scheme its neither here nor there and what we should be looking at is backing orgs in there grant applications rather than this sort of approach. Seemingly the money in my ward was authorised by someone to whom about what I've got no idea.
15	Yes		Probably because it was the first year of operation, I didn't find that communication about the Scheme to us, as councillors, was as good as it could have been. At first, none of us in my ward were too sure whether the system had actually been given the go-ahead or not. Consequently, it was fairly late on in the council year that we sat down to decide how we wanted to allocate our funding. The Application procedures to be followed by the recipients seemed to be satisfactory.	We will probably use our periodic Councillors' Newsletter to raise awareness, together with our Social Media facilities. The Council will also need to continue to promote the Scheme adequately through its usual channels, perhaps on a more regular basis.	£500	I hope that the Scheme continues for years to come. Can funding be permanently ring-fenced for this Scheme to ensure that it isn't stopped at some point because of short-term financial pressures?