

28th April 2020

KEY DECISION: NO

WARD COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

As part of the Revenue Budget, approval has been given to the increase of the Ward Community Grant Scheme to £3,000 per ward for the financial year 2020/21 as part of the general revenue budget for 2020/21.

Currently the scheme allows Ward Members to award grants to local voluntary organisations/community groups which provide a benefit within their wards. With the increase in the budget, a review has been carried out by the Portfolio Holder in conjunction with the Officers.

The Cabinet is requested to:

- (i) approve a variance in the purpose of the scheme to include the option for Ward Members to use the funding for projects that provide a benefit to the local community as well as awarding small grants to local voluntary organisations/community groups.
- (ii) For 2020/21, agree that the scheme to run from 1st May, 2020 to 28th February 2021.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This paper seeks approval to vary the purpose of the Ward Community Grant Scheme to include the option for Ward Members to use the funding for projects or events that provide a benefit to the local community. This would be in addition to the current scheme which enables Members to support local voluntary organisations and community groups with small grants.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The Ward Community Grant Scheme was established in August 2016 with a budget of £500 per ward to allocate to local voluntary organisations, community groups and good causes within each electoral ward. The scheme was created to empower Members to play a greater role in sponsoring community and voluntary groups to enable them to achieve their local goals.

- 2.2. In June 2017 following a review by the Portfolio Holder, the budget was increased to £1,000 per ward. The funding came from the existing Community Grants Fund.
- 2.3. Following a request from Members, the budget for 2020/21 has been increased to £3,000 per ward. The additional £26,000 has been made available from the Revenue Budget as agreed by the Council on 20th February 2020.
- 2.4. This increase in budget is a pilot for the financial year 2020/21.
- 2.5. A wide range of grants have been awarded in the four years from 2016/17 and these are listed in Appendix 1.

3. DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE SCHEME

General

- 3.1. The proposed change to the criteria allows for Ward Members to use the funding for projects or events that provide a benefit to the local community. For these Member led projects, at least two Members must support the project. If a Member has a declared interest in the project, each of the other Ward Members must support the project.
- 3.2. A Member led project should be a one-off expenditure with no ongoing costs or maintenance liability to the Council. Members should liaise with relevant officers to ensure this.
- 3.3. The applicant will complete the application form and take responsibility for the grant including providing the receipts to trigger payment and completing the feedback report.
- 3.4. Under the current process, community and voluntary groups contact Ward Members to ask for their support with a project or event. Once support is confirmed a short application form is sent to the applicant. It is proposed going forward, that the community grants webpages are updated to include details about the Ward Community Grant Scheme and an online application form (for both voluntary organisation and Member led projects). Voluntary groups will still need to seek support from Ward Members before completing the application form. Checks will be put in place to ensure this has happened.
- 3.5. Details of the proposed conditions and process are set out in Appendix 2.
- 3.6. As a result of the postponement of the Borough Council elections to 6th May 2021 it is proposed to open the scheme from 1st May this year.

Alternative Options

- 3.7. The alternative option is to keep the existing conditions of the scheme by which only constituted community groups can apply for funding, whereby limiting projects that can be funded.

Consultation

- 3.8. No general consultation has been undertaken although feedback from some Members is supportive of the proposed change to the scheme.

4. IMPLICATIONS

Risks

- 4.1. Community groups may not be given sufficient opportunity to access grants under the new arrangements. In addition, some of the proposed projects may not be viable or may have ongoing costs so will not be able to proceed.
- 4.2. The Council is experienced in small grant management and the risk to the Council is very low.

Legal Implications

- 4.3. There are no legal implications provided the process is followed. The legislative framework permits the scheme.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 4.4. Of the £39,000 total allocated to the Ward Community Grant Scheme, £13,000 comes from the Community Grant Fund. The other £26,000 has been allocated from the General Revenue Budget for 2020/21. This extra amount may not be available in subsequent years.
- 4.5. Member led projects may require officer time to oversee/implement. This may lead to delays in projects coming to fruition and will have to be integrated with existing workloads.

Equalities Impact Implications

- 4.6. There are no equalities impact implications.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1. Following four successful years of the Ward Community Grant Scheme during which 123 grants have been awarded, this report recommends amending the conditions of the scheme to allow Ward Members to use the funding for projects that provide a benefit to the local community alongside providing small grants to local voluntary organisations and community groups.
- 5.2. Members across the Council have expressed their wish to be able to fund other projects in their wards. Extending the scheme to Member led projects will open up funding to more projects benefiting local residents.

Cllr Adrian Newell
Democracy, Strategy and Partnerships Portfolio Holder

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Appendix 1 – Ward Community Grants awarded between 2016/17 – 2019/20

Appendix 2 – Proposed conditions and process for the scheme in 2020/21

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