

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

28 NOVEMBER 2019

8

Report Title	COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME
Purpose of Report	To agree arrangements for the Community Grant Scheme for 2020/21.
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES: a. To agree to extend the Community Grant Scheme in 2020/21. b. To award the funding as set out in Appendix A in line with previous arrangements. c. To delegate authority to the incoming Strategic Director of Communities to carry out a full review of the Council's grants budget and allocation processes.
Consultation and Feedback	Consultation will be a key part of any review.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	There is budget available to fund the scheme until 2021/21. A full review of the budget is recommended before 2021/22 to ensure that the scheme is affordable within the Councils financial position and ongoing objectives. Adele Rudkin, Accountant Tel: 01453 754109 Email: adele.rudkin@stroud.gov.uk
Legal Implications	There are no legal implications arising from this report. Patrick Arran, Interim Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer Tel: 01453 754369 Email: patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk
Report Author	Andrew Cummings, Strategic Director of Resources Tel: 01453 754155 Email: andrew.cummings@stroud.gov.uk
Options	The Committee may choose not to extend existing processes. This would then either require a full review of 2020/21 allocations or a decision to not proceed with a community grants scheme.
Performance Management Follow Up	The future review of grants will be reported back to this Committee
Background Papers	Community Lottery Report – Strategy and Resources Committee 3 rd October 2019
Appendix	Appendix A – Community Grants Allocations

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The District Council has a strong history of supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector through grant funding and maintains a budget to do so of £337k p.a. in spite of significant reductions in its own funding position.
- 1.2 Research with some local districts has shown that they hold budgets of anywhere between £54k and £160k p.a.
- 1.3 The existing scheme was created under delegated powers by the Director of Customer Services and reported to this committee in April 2017 in the format of a Member Information Sheet. Although this approach would have been constitutionally possible again a report has been produced to allow members proper opportunity to scrutinise proposals.
- 1.4 The grant scheme currently is for core running costs of charitable organisations and is not to fund specific projects. Organisations are required to submit regular reports on their activities to SDC but there are no specific objectives to be achieved.

2. Extending the Community Grants Scheme into 2020/21

- 2.1 The existing grants scheme continues only until the end of the 2019/20 financial year creating a need to make a decision about 2020/21 or, alternatively, ending the Community Grant Scheme. The Council is committed through its Corporate Delivery Plan to continue working in partnership with external organisations and therefore ending the grant scheme is not an outcome which has been considered.
- 2.2 The Council continues to exist in a time of considerable financial uncertainty. The recent Government Spending Review set out the headlines for local authority for 2020/21 only with no information provided for years after that point.
- 2.3 Strategy and Resources Committee has recently decided to set up a Community Lottery within the District. The primary driver for the lottery is to empower local voluntary sector groups with a new resource through which additional funding can be generated. The lottery is expected to launch early in the financial year 2020/21 and is likely to provide a good funding source for many local organisations.
- 2.4 The Council has recently committed to recruit a new Strategic Director of Communities. Part of their remit will be to consider the authority's whole approach to working with the voluntary and community sector.
- 2.5 In 2020, after the Council elections, the authority will be publishing a new Corporate Delivery Plan setting out the priorities of the authority for the subsequent four year period. This will give the Council a clear direction in what it wants to achieve through working in partnership with the voluntary and community sector.
- 2.6 This combination of factors means it is recommended that the existing community grants scheme be extended for a further year and therefore also

apply in 2020/21. The Council has certainty over funding for that year and reviewing a scheme immediately before a new Director is in post and a new Corporate Delivery Plan is in place is not recommended as a course of action.

- 2.7 This one year extension would also provide a further year of certainty for those organisations receiving Community grants, some of whom have recently been in correspondence with the Council seeking clarity over future arrangements.

3. Future arrangements for the Grants Process

- 3.1 It is recommended that a full review of the grants process is carried out to allow a fully revised scheme to be launched in time for the 2021/22 financial year.

- 3.2 This report does not seek to restrict the scope of what the new Strategic Director may consider as part of their review but the key principles to be covered will be:-

- Ensuring the scheme fairly supports organisations which are working to support others, in line with the Council's own objectives as included in the Corporate Delivery Plan.
- Maintaining a focus on transparency.
- Ensure funding is targeted towards specific outcomes.
- Ensuring any new scheme is affordable for the Council within its financial position from 2021 onwards.

- 3.3 Consultation will be a key component of the review process and will include elected members and groups currently receiving community grants, as well as wider groups representing the community and voluntary sector. The review is also likely to include an assessment of equalities impacts.

- 3.4 Although previous arrangements for grants have been determined on delegated powers of officers the far reaching nature of this review mean it will be brought back to this committee for agreement. This will be no later than the timetable which is required to complete the budget setting process for the 2021/22 year.