

**STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**COMMUNITY SERVICES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE**  
**THURSDAY, 13 MARCH 2025**

<b>Report Title</b>	Community Wellbeing Grant 2025 Review			
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	This report recommends changes to the Community Wellbeing Grant process to improve delivery against Council Plan targets and align with VCSE principles of good partnership working.			
<b>Decision(s)</b>	<b>The Committee RESOLVES to:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Adopt the proposed changes to the Community Wellbeing Grant scheme as set out in this report.</b></li> <li><b>2. Delegate authority to the lead officer to enter into necessary agreements as part of the agreed funding processes.</b></li> </ol>			
<b>Consultation and Feedback</b>	Feedback on the Council's funding process from VCSE partners SLT and ALT			
<b>Report Author</b>	Emma Keating Clark, Community Health & Wellbeing Manager Email: <a href="mailto:emma.keatingclark@stroud.gov.uk">emma.keatingclark@stroud.gov.uk</a>			
<b>Options</b>	The grant could be processed in the same way it was three years ago. This took approximately 120 hours of Council officers' time and significant time for each VCSE applicant. 50% of applicants were not successful and in this funding period, would be better signposted to the new Stroud Funding platform.			
<b>Background Papers</b>	None			
<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix A: Stroud District Council VCSE Principles – Adopted 2024 Appendix B: Recommendations for Funding Appendix C: Equality Impact Assessment			
<b>Implications (further details at the end of the report)</b>	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	Yes	Yes	No

## 1. Introduction / Background

Proposal for changes to Community Wellbeing Grant Process

- 1.1 The current Community Wellbeing Grant funding ends 31st March 2025 after a three year funding term. The original grant was through a competitive application. It was greatly oversubscribed, with more than 60 applicants asking for more than £1.5m. Supporting applications, processing and deciding allocations took more than 120 hours of officers time and a significant amount of time for each applicant.

The Council relies on some VCSE organisations to directly deliver the Council's wellbeing and health prevention objectives. Without them, the Council objectives would not be fulfilled, and target communities would not be reached.

Rather than repeat a similar competitive application process, officers recommend that the Council re-purpose this funding for targeted delivery to better support the new Council Plan and our commitment to tackling Health Inequalities.

- 1.2 In addition, the following recommendations have been developed in alignment with the Council's VCSE Principles, adopted in 2024. This includes, increasing VCSE funding through the new Council's crowd funding platform and listening to VCSE feedback to make funding more effective for partners who directly support the Council Plan. See Appendix A for full details of the Council VCSE Principles.

## **2. Recommendations and Next Steps**

### **2.1 Recommendation 1**

The Community Wellbeing Grant budget should be targeted directly to Community Hubs, to other VCSE partners who deliver specialist wellbeing work in the district and to Cultural Hubs. This will strengthen our ability to tackle Health Inequalities and deliver the new the Council Plan.

Recommendation 1 relates to Community Hubs, VCSE Organisations offering specialist support in the district and Cultural Hubs.

### **2.2 Community Hubs**

Community Hubs have become effective partners for the Council and specialist services to reach communities facing the most challenge in our district. This is acknowledged by our partners in health, care, cost of living and community safety. Part funding from the Council enables the Community Hubs to keep the lights on, support staff or volunteers and run pantries and community cafes

### **2.3 VCSE Organisations Offering Specialist Support to the District**

Some of the VCSE organisations who previously received Community Wellbeing Grants are the only organisation with the specialist skills to support particular targeted groups in our district. This includes families affected by domestic abuse, older adults and carers, adults with long term mental and physical health challenges and vulnerable young people and families. These specified organisations have all been part-funded by our statutory partners and take referrals for their specialist services. Supporting their work with a small the Council Community Wellbeing Grant, provides a little more resilience for their organisations and ensures continued specialist support for our district residents.

### **2.4 Cultural Hubs**

Some of the organisations supported by the Community Wellbeing funding who have long been Cultural Hubs for the north and south of the district. the Council support has enabled them to continue as drivers of creative and cultural development in our communities. In 2025/26, the Council is committed to developing a delivery plan for the new Cultural Strategy to further support this work for the district. A one year grant from the Community Wellbeing fund will enable these Cultural Hubs to continue existing delivery whilst supporting the Council's work to develop further cultural funding for the district.

### **2.5 Next Steps for Recommendation 1**

A grant agreement for Community Hubs, specialist delivery organisations and Cultural Hubs should be drafted and funding allocation criteria agreed. Existing Community

Wellbeing Grant recipients recommended for funding, should be informed of the changes to the grant process. They should be invited to work with the Council on a new agreement. Governance and monitoring arrangements under the new agreement must be in place. It should be noted that not all grant recipients will receive the same funding they have had in the last three years. The amount granted to each Hub or specialist organisation should be calculated based on the scale and complexity of need they serve. New funding arrangements should be ready to begin in April 2025 or as soon as possible after this time.

Some of the previous Community Wellbeing Grant recipients would be more appropriately funded in alternative ways., including Small Grants of less than £1,000, Stroud Funding (crowd funding platform) or funding related to other the Council or partner workstreams.

## 2.6 Legal Considerations

It is important that funding and accompanying agreements should be compliant with appropriate legal procedures and should take into consideration the Subsidy Control Act 2022. In order to ensure compliance, the lead officer will undertake additional Subsidy Control training in February 2025 and will take One Legal advice on agreements.

## 2.7 Recommendation 2

The term of new grant agreements should be one to two years as appropriate and some of the overall budget should be held back in order to fund potential new partners each year until 2028. Funding will be paid 80% / 20%, with the last 20% paid upon completion of monitoring.

The previous grant term was increased to three years to enable continuity of funding for VCSE partners. The downside of this approach was that the Council were unable to allocate Community Wellbeing funding to other VCSE partners in that three year period. This included Money Advice charities who were not funding before the Cost of Living Crisis emerged. Changing the contract term and allocation time frame, gives the Council the flexibility to respond to emerging needs and to support developing VCSE organisations further down the line.

## 2.8 Recommendation 3

Some of the previous Community Wellbeing Grant recipients would be more appropriately funded in alternative ways, including Small Grants of less than £1,000, Stroud Funding (crowd funding platform) or funding related to other the Council or partner workstreams.

## 2.9 Small Grants

The Council runs a quarterly Small Grant of up to £1,000 aimed at introducing small organisations or projects into grant funding.

## 2.10 Stroud Funding

The new crowd funding platform was introduced in November 2024 and has amplified the Council grant giving by combining it with community fund raising for local projects. The next round of Stroud Funding will close in May 2025. Any organisation eligible will be supported to pitch their projects on the platform between now and then.

## 2.11 Other Council or Partner Workstreams

The Council works with external partners on a number of workstreams that allocate budget to local organisations. Some of the organisations previously funded through the Community Wellbeing grant would be better involved in these other workstreams.

This includes the development of a new the Council Youth Strategy which will help to deliver against our Council and NHS priorities to support Young People's wellbeing. The Council are already working with independent Youth Clubs across the district to allocate the Council and NHS funding for this priority.

Another Council workstream is the sustainable management of heritage sites in the district. Woodchester Mansion was transferred from the Council as an historic asset to a community trust. The Trust's management committee are working with the Council Asset Management team to ensure the Mansion's ongoing sustainability, as with other heritage sites in the district, like Kingshill House. As such, their Community Wellbeing allocation should be re-purposed as a heritage management grant overseen by the Council Asset Management team.

## 2.12 Next Steps for Recommendation 3

Organisations should be informed of the changes to the Community Wellbeing Grant process. They will be supported to engage with alternative funding routes as appropriate.

## 3. Conclusion

This report recommends that the Community Wellbeing Grant be re-purposed in the following ways.

### 3.1 Recommendation 1

The Community Wellbeing Grant budget should be targeted directly to Community Hubs, to other VCSE partners who deliver specialist wellbeing work in the district and to Cultural Hubs. This will strengthen our ability to tackle Health Inequalities and deliver the new the Council Plan.

### 3.2 Recommendation 2

The term of new grant contracts should be one to two years as appropriate and some of the overall budget should be held back in order to fund potential new partners each year until 2028.

### 3.3 Recommendation 3

Some of the previous Community Wellbeing Grant recipients would be more appropriately funded in alternative ways. including Small Grants of less than £1,000, Stroud Funding (crowd funding platform) or funding related to other the Council or partner workstreams.

### 3.4 Recommended Funding Routes

See appendix B for the full list of organisations previously receiving a Community Wellbeing Grant and recommendations for appropriate funding routes.

## 4. Implications

### 4.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report as it recommending refined processes and conditions. Any consideration to the allocation of grant monies must only be in conjunction with the receipt of the funding stream. Subsidy Control recommendations will be considered for each grant awarded under advisement of One Legal.

Adele Rudkin, Accountant

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### 4.2 Legal Implications

There are direct legal implications associated with the use of and grant of funding for this matter. One Legal will be able to provide legal advice and assistance where appropriate to support subsidy control assessments for each grant of funding and the preparation of grant agreements. Subsidy Control must be considered before confirming funding with any organisation.

It is understood that there are no procurement implications associated with this report, however, in the event that goods, services or works are required, the Council's Contract Procedure Rules must be followed, together with the Procurement Act 2023 – One Legal and the Council's Procurement Team will be able to provide advice and assistance on this.

[Name, Title of Legal Officer]

Email: [legalservices@onelegal.org.uk](mailto:legalservices@onelegal.org.uk)

### 4.3 Equality Implications

An EIA has been carried out by Officers in relation to the decision made in this report. The lead officer recommends that the changes proposed are made in order to target funding more effectively to those facing Health Inequalities.

**If an EIA has been completed, please ensure that it has been signed, and sent [policy@stroud.gov.uk](mailto:policy@stroud.gov.uk) and attached as an appendix to the report.**

### 4.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.