

COMMUNITY GRANTS

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That Community Grant awards, totalling £130,000 in revenue grants and £85,600 in capital grants, as set out in Appendix 1, and in more detail in Appendix 2, be approved for inclusion in the Medium-Term Financial Plan and proposed budget for 2022/23;
- 1.2 That Grant awards totalling £28,500 are made from the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable funding held by the Council as part of the COVID-19 funding support received by the Government; and
- 1.3 That the proposed changes as set out in section 5.2 be approved.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 23, 24 and 25 November 2021 the Community Grants Task and Finish Group met to examine the Community Grant applications received for the 2022/23 financial year. We received 31 applications from 29 organisations who attended, each giving a presentation to the Task & Finish Group, followed by a question and answer session. The Group were pleased to see several applications from new groups and applications covering the whole district.
- 2.2 The value of applications had increased significantly from 2020/21, with Revenue grant applications totalling £307,513 (£199,500 in 2020) and Capital grant applications totalling £349,675 (£286,300 in 2020). Due to the increased number and value of applications the Group sought to prioritise applications which support our vulnerable residents and communities.
- 2.3 The Task and Finish Group comprised Cllrs Alvey, Davis, O'Sullivan, Corbridge, Dowd, Reid and Sevier, with input from key Council Officers. Meetings were also attended by Cllr D Russell, the Portfolio Holder for People and Places.

3. PROCESS

- 3.1 As part of their application, all Community Grant applicants were asked to provide details of their accounts, and how their application would meet the needs of, and benefit or support, residents in the District. Applicants were also asked to explain how their funding request linked to the priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan, how they supported residents through the pandemic, and their outcomes and key deliverables. Particular consideration was given to those organisations which supported issues that were highlighted in the Council's Community Engagement forums with partner organisations, e.g. mental health, and isolation.
- 3.2 Following the presentations, the Task and Finish Group thoroughly discussed and reviewed the information submitted with the applications and presented at interview and responses to the Groups specific questions. In formulating a recommendation for each grant request, members considered the agreed criteria, the Council's Corporate Plan priorities, and the value for money being offered. Due to the number

and value of applications the Group had to make difficult decisions and in some instances the Group recommended grants of less than the amount being requested so as to support as many groups as possible.

- 3.3 The recommendations, with reasons, for the determination of each of the grant requests, are summarised in **Appendix 1** and in further detail in **Appendix 2**.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Grants Panel were advised that the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan had allowed for up to £130,000 to be awarded on Revenue Grants and up to £100,000 for Capital Grants. Additional funding from the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) funding was utilised to directly support organisations applying for Revenue Grants that support CEV groups.
- 4.2 The proposals, as set out in Appendix 1, total £130,000 of Revenue grants (£127,000 in 2021/22) and £85,600 for Capital grants (£80,300 in 2021/22), with a further £28,500 of grants being applied from the CEV funding held by the Council.

5. REVIEW OF THE PROCESS

- 5.1 After completing the interviews, the Task and Group reviewed the process to discuss any changes. This included limiting grant funding for a maximum period of three years to an organisation, reviewing the policy and application form or capping the level of any capital grant award.
- 5.2 The Task and Finish Group recommend the following amendments to the Community Grants process:
- a) To confirm the Task and Finish Group composition in March Community, Partnership and Wellbeing Panel meeting and agree the dates for interviews so that when the application form is publicised on our website advance notice is given to applicants, members and officers
 - b) To include text on the website detailing the number of capital grants given and the average amount awarded to manage applicant expectations
 - c) To amend the approach so that it is clear that:
 - i. educational establishments can only apply for a Capital Community Grant where it can be clearly demonstrated to the Council that the project benefits the wider community.
 - ii. there is discretion to award a greater amount than the amount applied for where there is an additional benefit to residents and communities
 - iii. to allow in exceptional circumstances a change in application where eligibility criteria is still met and the application meets our priorities.
 - d) To amend the application form with:
 - i. a question on the amounts and expected decision date of other funding applications have been made by the applicant
 - ii. a question asking which other organisations, agencies, and groups the applicant work with and how this has benefited our communities

- e) To develop and agree a Service Level Agreement with Community First Wessex to formalise our working relationship and agree target outcomes.
- f) For recipients of revenue grants to provide information and updates on key achievements and how they have used the grant to support our residents and communities.
- g) To explore if certain Capital grants funded through the Community Grants process and reserves is the most appropriate way of funding projects.

6. COMMUNITY, PARTNERSHIP AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY PANEL COMMENTS

- 6.1 At their meeting of 18 January 2022, the Community, Partnership and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel was supportive of the proposed grant awards and changes to our approach as outlined in this report.

7. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

- 7.1 The Council is committed to supporting our Community Grants programme and decisions were particularly difficult due to the number of applications received. I am pleased at the wide range of the grants awarded that will benefit our communities and support the aims of the Council, with the grants covering all areas of the New Forest and include grants to the Arts, Families and Young People, Sports, Mental Health and to charities that support our most vulnerable households. We are looking forward to working with Community First Wessex to develop a Service Level Agreement.

Further information:

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Background Papers:

Community Grants Appendix
1 and 2