

## COMMUNITY GRANTS

### 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Community Grant awards, totalling £129,600 in revenue grants and £92,000 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 2023/24;
- 1.2 That the proposed changes as set out in section 4.2 be approved; and
- 1.3 That the Community Transport grants as set out in section 5.5 be approved.

### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 28, 29 and 30 November 2022 the Community Grants Task and Finish Group met to consider the Community Grant applications received for the 2023/24 financial year. We received 27 applications who attended, each giving a presentation to the Task & Finish Group, and answered questions. The Group were pleased to see several applications from new groups and that applications covered the whole district.
- 2.2 The value of Revenue grant applications totalled £249,430, (£307,513 in 2021) and Capital grant applications totalled £161,040 (£349,675 in 2021). Due to the number and value of applications the Group sought to prioritise those that support our most vulnerable residents and communities, and provided the most community benefit.
- 2.3 The Task and Finish Group comprised Cllrs Corbridge, Craze (Chairman), Cullen, Dowd, O'Sullivan, Reilly 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 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 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. cost of living and mental health.
- 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 a number of instances the Group recommended grants of less than the amount being requested so as to support as many groups as possible and to recognise the benefits of the individual grant applications.

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

#### **4. REVIEW OF THE PROCESS**

4.1 After completing the interviews, the Task and Group reviewed the overall grants process.

4.2 The Task and Finish Group recommend the following amendments to the Community Grants process:

- a) For applications for the 2024/25 year, that the minimum grant application amount be increased from £600 to £1,000.
- b) To amend the application form to include a question asking if the applicant has applied for a District and County Councillor grant.
- c) To consider and develop and agree a Service Level Agreement with New Forest Disability Information Service to formalise our working relationship and agree target outcomes.

#### **5. COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANTS**

5.1 The Task and Finish Group also considered community transport grants. There are 3 Service Level Agreements with Hampshire County Council for transportation projects all funded from the overall budget for Community Grants.

5.1.1 Wheels to work – This is a moped loan service which aims to help people between 16 and 25 with no access to suitable transport get to work, apprenticeships, training or job interviews.

Current NFDC grant funding is £7,050, match funded by HCC. The contract ends on 31 March 2023 and HCC are extending the contract for a further two years, to 31 March 2025.

5.1.2 Call and Go – This is a bookable community transport service for anyone whose transport needs are not met by public bus services to go, for example, shopping, to visit a library or to see family and friends. Drivers will assist with carrying shopping and wheelchair accessible minibuses collect users from their home at a pre-arranged time. The cost will vary according to the distance travelled.

Current NFDC funding is £27,335, match funded by HCC. The contract ends on 31 March 2023 and HCC are extending the contract for a further year, to 31 March 2024.

5.1.3 Group Hire – This scheme provides affordable wheelchair accessible minibuses to hire for voluntary or charitable organisations for a period of 3 hours to 1 week. The cost of hire depends on the distance travelled and duration of hire period.

Current NFDC grant funding is £13,032, match funded by HCC. The contract ends on 31 March 2023 and HCC are extending the contract for a further year, to 31 March 2024.

- 5.2 The total current funding for the three community transport schemes is £47,419.
- 5.3 Following an HCC review and subsequent consultation due to the need to reduce budgets, the savings programme to 2023 (SP23) was agreed by HCC Cabinet in October 2021. This requires HCC to save £80m by April 2023, £10.3m of which has been allocated to the Economy, Transport and Environment Department. It has been identified that £800,000 of these savings could be realised through changes to Passenger Transport and Community Transport Services funding. HCC have modelled making £140k of these savings against the cost to HCC of the Community Transport Contracts (Dial a Ride, Call & Go and Group Hire), and final approval was made in November 2022.
- 5.4 HCC provided options and values for grant funding for 2023/24 and details on usage. The Task and Finish Group reviewed the funding options, which included options either to reduce the funding in line with HCC, to increase funding to offset the HCC reduction, or to maintain existing funding levels to minimise the impact. The Group reviewed the numbers using the schemes, which are recovering following the pandemic, and the impact of the options on service provision. HCC will review service provision to ensure efficiencies and to minimise any impact.
- 5.5 The Group was of the view that NFDC should maintain the same level of funding to support our communities, especially those in rural areas. Increasing the funding to make up for the HCC reduction was not favoured, as this would reduce already stretched grant funding elsewhere and should not be used to subsidise HCC reductions in grant funding. Therefore, The Group recommend the following:
- Funding for Call & Go for 2023/24 to be £28,556
  - Funding for Group Hire for 2023/24 to be £13,671
  - Funding for Wheels to Work for 2023/24 to be £7,800
- 5.6 Any level of agreed support must be within the annual budget available.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Task and Finish Group 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.
- 6.2 The proposals, as set out in Appendix 1, total £129,600 of Revenue grants (£130,000 in 2022/23) and £92,000 for Capital grants (£85,600 in 2022/23).
- 6.3 The proposed budget for 2023/24 for the Community Transport Service Level Agreements, as outlined in section 5 of this report, is £50,027.

## **7. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS / ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS / DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Community Grants have been awarded to support groups with projects to become more energy efficient.

## **8. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Our Community Grants programme continues to support a wide range of organisations across the district that support, engage and benefit our communities and residents, including those with mental health and disabilities, and vulnerable households.

## **9. COMMUNITY, PARTNERSHIP AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL COMMENTS**

- 9.1 At their meeting of 17 January 2023, the Community, Partnership and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel was supportive of the proposed grant awards and changes to our approach as outlined in this report.

## **10. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS**

- 10.1 The Council is committed to continually supporting our annual Community Grants programme. Decisions were particularly difficult, due to the number of applications received, and I am very pleased at the wide range of the grants awarded that will benefit our communities and support the aims of the Council. The grants cover all areas of the New Forest and include grants that promote and support physical and social activity and sports, arts and culture, and to local charities and organisations that support our communities and our most vulnerable residents, for example mental health. We are also continuing our support to the three Community Transport schemes which benefit many of our residents.

### **Further information:**

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### **Background Papers:**

Community Grants Appendix  
1 and 2