

COMMUNITY AND LEISURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 19 JUNE 2018

COMMUNITY GRANTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 When considering the recommendations of the Community Grants Task and Finish Group with respect to individual grant applications, the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel decided that there should be a fundamental review of the current process and eligibility criteria in preparation for the coming year's grant applications (Minute 39 (b) of 16 January 2018 refers). The task and finish group that had considered the grant applications was asked to undertake that review.
- 1.2 The task and finish group undertook a detailed review of the main community grants process and also reviewed the criteria and process for individual councillor community engagement grants to ensure that there was a degree of consistency between the two.
- 1.3 In addition, members looked at other sources of grant aid being given by the Council to ensure that there was no overlap and that there was transparency and consistency in approach.

2.0 CONCLUSIONS WITH RESPECT TO COMMUNITY GRANTS.

- 2.1 The Group concluded that the following changes should be made to the process:
 - A firm budget should be set for community grant payments to give greater certainty and transparency to the process. The initial suggestion was that, in 2019/20 the budget for capital grants should be £100,000 and the budget for revenue grants £350,000. This includes the £255,000 payment to the Citizens' Advice Bureau. (Payments for 2018/19 totalled £74,000 capital and £415,000 revenue)
 - The Group supported the concept that income from textile banks on council-owned land should in future be directed through the community grants process instead of the Chairman's charities.
 - The Council should only pay up to 50% of the total cost of any project.
 - Each organisation should only be able to apply for one grant each year.
 - Grant requests for less than £600 should, in future, be dealt with through the Councillors' Community Engagement Grant process.
 - The ceiling value for any one capital grant should be the total capital grant budget for that year.
 - The ceiling value for a revenue grant should be £35,000. Applications for higher amounts should be considered separately and, if progressed, should be subject to a formal service level agreement. In addition, organisations providing services on the Council's behalf should not be dealt with through the community grants process, but through a separate Service Level Agreement to provide the service.
 - The submission period for forms should be brought forward to 1 July-30 September each year, with the Task and Finish Group holding interviews with applicants later in the autumn. This would allow more time for applications to be assessed by the officers and reports prepared in good time to allow members to consider them before the interviews.

- All organisations should be required to attend the interview process and if they did not do so their grant application should be refused.
- The Council should require evidence and, if appropriate, regular monitoring reports on implementation. This should be clear in the documentation.

2.2 The proposed revised criteria and process document is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

3.0 COMMUNITY FIRST NEW FOREST

3.1 The overall review process established that Community First New Forest was receiving grant aid from this Council, directly or indirectly, under a number of different headings. The cumulative level of funding and the functions being undertaken meant that consideration needed to be given to whether future funding should be through a Service Level Agreement. Accordingly, the task and finish group met with Community First New Forest on 7 June 2018.

3.2 The meeting on 7 June was extremely constructive, with Community First providing additional information on their funding and operations. The task and finish group has now requested copies of the latest management accounts for each of the service areas being run by Community First so they can establish exactly how the money is being spent. The group will also need to receive further information about the measurable outcomes from each project so they can evaluate whether this represents good value for money for this Council as a means of fulfilling its own objectives. A further report will be submitted to this Panel in due course.

4.0 COUNCILLORS' COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GRANTS

4.1 The proposed revised criteria for Councillors' Community Engagement Grants are set out as Appendix 2 to this report. The revised criteria continue the ethos that this should not be an overly bureaucratic process, and that the grants should promote activities that are of benefit to the local community. One change is to emphasise the local ward councillor's role in investigating and evaluating the requests that they receive.

4.2 The Group is also recommending that, with effect from the 2019 elections, Members are only able to carry forward any unspent grant monies for 1 year. At present the funds can be rolled forward for the 4 year term of the administration, which has budgetary control implications.

5.0 OTHER GRANTS

5.1 This Council pays sums to Hampshire County Council under 3 budget headings as this Council's contribution towards the cost of transport related schemes. One of these is the Wheels to Work moped scheme, which is run by Community First under contract to the County Council. This arrangement will form part of the wider discussion with Community First.

5.2 The Group was satisfied with the general arrangements for the payment of grants from the leisure enabling monies. They considered however that it was important that the Panel should receive an annual report on the funding given and the outcomes of each project.

6.0 CRIME AND DISORDER, ENVIRONMENTAL AND EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None arising directly from this report.

7.0 RECOMMENDED:

That the Portfolio holder for Community Affairs be advised that:

- 7.1 That the revised criteria and process documents for the consideration of Community Grants, as attached as Appendix 1 to this report, be approved;
- 7.2 A firm budget should be set for community grant payments to give greater certainty and transparency to the process. The 2019/20 budget for capital grants should be £100,000 and the budget for revenue grants £350,000;
- 7.3 That income from textile banks on council-owned land should in future be directed through the community grants process instead of the Chairman's charities.
- 7.4 That an annual report should be submitted to the Panel on the projects supported and outcomes through the Leisure Enabling monies;
- 7.5 That a further report be submitted to this Panel in due course following further investigation of the funding arrangements for Community First; and
- 7.6 That the revised criteria and guidance for the consideration of councillor community engagement grants, as set out at Appendix 2 to this report, be approved.

For further information contact

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Background papers:

Attached.

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New Forest District Council Community Grants

Aim

The Community Grants programme allows the Council to award discretionary grants to support a range of voluntary and community organisations to carry out projects and provide activities to benefit local people.

Who do we fund?

- Community, voluntary and registered charitable organisations
- Not-for-profit groups that are properly constituted, with a signed set of group rules
- But please note that the Council is unlikely to fund an organisation that is in poor financial health as it must be satisfied that the project can be delivered.
- Each organisation can only apply for one grant each year.

What do we fund?

- There are 2 main types of grants. Capital grants are one-off payments for projects such as the construction of a new play area or renovating a community hall. Revenue grants are for things like the cost of providing a charitable or community service.
- Requests for a grant of £600 or less should be made to individual ward councillors under the Councillors' Community Engagement grant scheme. The contact details for each ward councillor can be found on the Council's website at.????????????
- The Council will pay up to 50% of the total cost of the project.
- The maximum grant that the Council will pay for a capital project is £100,000, while the maximum revenue grant is £35,000.
- The Council may consider entering into a formal Service Level Agreement for revenue costs above £35,000 where the service provided is meeting a need that the Council thinks is important; or where the Council has asked the organisation to provide the service on the Council's behalf, but this is under a separate process.
- The grant should be for something that supports the Council's own priorities and objectives by being of direct benefit to the people of the New Forest

What won't be funded?

- Individuals or an item or project that mainly benefits an individual.
- Projects from private companies, profit-making or trading organisations, or business enterprises.
- Party political activities.
- Religious worship or observance; or works to buildings or grounds that are used solely by a religious organisation.

- Any activity or project that takes place or is started before the grant has been confirmed by the Council
- Any costs incurred when putting together the application or before confirmation of grant.
- Construction projects where the necessary ownership or leasing arrangements are not already in place
- Any project where any necessary formal consents, including any planning permissions, have not been obtained.
- Projects that take place solely outside of New Forest District Council area – the project must be of direct benefit to people living in the District.

The Process

- Applications must be in writing, using the grants application form which can be found on the Council's website at ??????? or by contacting Customer Services on 023 8028 5000 This form is designed to help applicants provide the Council with all the information that it will need to assess the application.
- Applications must be submitted to the Council between 1 July and 30 September each year. Applications that are received outside this period will not be considered.
- The information provided on the form must be up-to-date and complete at the time of submission. Where the financial context of the application changes, for example by a decision on a grant for the same project from another organisation, the Council must be told as soon as possible. The Council will not however accept any other material changes once an application form has been submitted.
- Once the application deadline has passed the Council's officers will assess each application to make sure that it is eligible and will provide demonstrable benefits to local people. Only those applications which pass this initial assessment will progress to the next stage.
- The next stage is that the applicants are invited to attend a meeting of the Community Grants Task and Finish Group to give a short presentation, up to 15 minutes long, and to allow the Panel to interview them further about the application. These interviews take place in the autumn. If any organisation does not attend this interview process their application will not be considered further and will be declined.
- When all presentations have been made the Task and Finish Group will present their recommendations to the meeting of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel in due course.
- The Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel advises the Portfolio Holder for Community Affairs on their recommendations on grant allocations. The Portfolio Holder presents them to the Cabinet, who will determine final awards at their meeting in February. Applicants will be notified of the decision on their grant following this meeting.

After the grant has been awarded

- All successful applicants are required to sign a formal agreement for the delivery of the project or service, as described in the application form.
- The project must not be started until this agreement has been completed.

- Applicants can only use the money for that purpose, and for no other purpose whatsoever.
- New Forest District Council must be acknowledged as a funding partner in any marketing and promotional materials for the project.
- The Council must be notified of the date on which the project will commence and the estimated completion date. The Council must be informed of any delay which may result in the project being completed later than that given date.
- Successful applicants will need to prove that the grant is being used for the purpose that has been agreed and evidence, such as invoices and receipts, will need to be provided.
- For some projects applicants will be requested to submit monitoring reports, giving updates on progress against key milestones, during the scheme.
- Unless the Council has already been notified that the project has been completed, all successful applicants will be required to submit a brief progress report on the situation with their project as at 30 September, to be received by the Council's officers by 14 October. All the progress reports will be considered by the Task and Finish Group as they start consideration of the applications for the following year.
- After the completion of every project the provider will need to send the Council an appraisal of whether the key objectives have been met.
- If the money is not used for the specified purpose, for whatever reason, it must be returned to the Council within 2 years of the decision to award the grant. If the project has been delayed as a result of matters outside of the applicant's control they may apply again under the community grants process.
- The Council shall have the right to inspect the project at any reasonable time.
- Applicants must not sell or otherwise dispose of the facility, equipment or items purchased through grant money within 3 years of the date on which the grant is paid other than at full market value. In the event of such disposal an appropriate proportion of the proceeds, equal to the proportion of the original cost met by the Council's grant, must be surrendered to the Council. The equipment or items shall not be returned to the Council for disposal.
- All buildings, land and equipment that are subject to a grant must be fully insured on the basis of full replacement cost. Evidence will need to be provided that suitable policies of insurance are in place before any payment is made.
- No part of the balance of the cost of construction projects can be raised by means of a mortgage secured on the facility without the previous written consent of the Council having been obtained.
- Organisations delivering projects aimed at children, young people or vulnerable adults will need to demonstrate to the Council that they have suitable safeguarding policies and appropriate checks in place.

Purposes for which funding may be used

The purpose of the scheme is to allow members to allocate an amount of £600 a year, at their discretion, to address local needs within their communities where small scale improvements can potentially make a big difference.

The idea is that there should be a minimum of bureaucracy. The grant may be used for any legal purpose, at the discretion of the Councillor, that will, in his or her opinion, be of benefit to residents of their ward. There is an expectation that Councillors, based on their knowledge of their local communities and any further investigations they feel necessary, will have satisfied themselves that the purpose and recipient of the grant are appropriate.

The grant may not, however, be used for any of the following purposes:

- to benefit an individual resident or household;
- to benefit a commercial enterprise or business;
- to support party political activities.
- for religious worship or observance; or works to buildings or grounds that are used solely by a religious organisation; or
- to carry out a function that is the statutory responsibility of another authority

The grant may be used in whole or in part as a contribution towards a particular project, or as a contribution towards another organisation active in the ward. Below are examples of projects for which a community grant may be paid. This list is not exhaustive.

- supporting a specific social event for a community organisation
- buying equipment for a nursery (run by a charity), a youth group or an older persons' social group
- improvements to a public area within the ward/town/village
- sponsorship for a local sports team to attend an event/competition

The organisation should have its own bank account. Payment into an individual's bank account is not desirable.

It is most cost effective if the payment is made directly using a Bank Transfer (BACS), and members are encouraged to use this payment option whenever possible.

In each instance, Councillors should consult with their local Parish or Town Council, through the Chairman or his/her nominee, about the proposed allocation of the grant. Each Councillor's grant budget may be allocated for more than one purpose, provided the total of £600 is not exceeded. Two or more Councillors may, if they wish, pool grants.

Members may carry any unspent grant monies over for 1 year, but after that time any unspent monies will be lost.

A condition of the grant is that the recipient should recognise the Council and, if you so wish you as the specific ward councillor, as a funding source in any publicity materials.

Procedure

Councillors wishing to allocate their grant should complete the Request for Payment of Grant e-form on the Councillors' Area of ForestNet by clicking on the following link:

http://eforms/ufs/ufsmain?formid=MEM_CCEG_REQUEST.

The form will then be routed to Jan Debnam.

If you are unable to use the e-form for any reason please email your request to jan.debnam@nfdc.gov.uk

The request should include:

1. The name and address of the person/organisation to whom the amount is to be paid;
2. The amount to be paid (maximum £600 per annum);
3. Whether you wish the payment to be made direct to the organisation, or whether you wish a cheque returned to you, for presentation by you to the group/organisation concerned;
4. If paying direct to the organisation, the name of the payee, their bank account details and the name and address of the person to whom the payment advice should be sent.
5. A short explanation of how the payment will benefit residents of the ward;
6. A short explanation of how you intend to ensure the grant is spent on the intended purpose.
7. A brief note on the views of the Parish/Town Council (which may be obtained from the Chairman).
8. You should also disclose any interest that you may have in the organisation that will receive the grant.

Arrangements for payment will be made as soon as possible after receipt of your completed application.

After the payment has been made

Please make sure that you check that the grant has been used for the purpose intended, and send an e-mail confirming the correct use of the money to jan.debnam@nfdc.gov.uk

If the money has not been used within 12 months of you giving the grant, the recipient should be asked to repay the grant to the Council.