

COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME DRAFT ALLOCATIONS 2021/22 & RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO GRANT SCHEME FROM 2022/23

Cabinet 18 March 2021

Report of: Chief Officer People & Places

Status: For Information

Also considered by:

- People & Places Advisory Committee 2 March 2021

Key Decision: Yes

Executive Summary: This report sets out information about the Community Grant Scheme and summarises applications received by the Council from voluntary organisations for funding during 2021/22.

Details of the appraisal process are provided. This included a detailed consultation with the Portfolio Holder for People & Places, Cllr Dyball and the Deputy Portfolio Holder for People & Places, Cllr Coleman. Recommended grants are set out in Appendix C.

With the Members' Room currently out of use, copies of the applications received are available on One Drive (instructions provided separately). Officers would be pleased to answer detailed questions about individual applications in advance of the meeting.

This report also sets out the recommendation to carry forward the projects and funding relating to 2020/21 grants that have been affected by Covid 19 and changes for the Community Grant Scheme for 2022/23.

This report supports the Key Aim of: Providing Value for Money and the Community Plan Vision for Safe & Caring Communities, a Green & Healthy Environment and a Dynamic & Sustainable Economy.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Dyball

Contact Officer(s): Jenny Godfrey, Ext. 7112 & Kathryn Bone, Ext. 7176

Recommendation to People & Places Advisory Committee: That Members note the report.

Recommendation to Cabinet:

- (a) Grants, as set out in Appendix C of this report, be approved subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 13.
- (b) To approve that projects and funding relating to the 2020/21 grant scheme affected by Covid 19 to be carried forward as set out in paragraphs 7 & 14.
- (c) Changes to the 2022/23 grant scheme, as set out in paragraphs 15 to 17 of this report, be approved.

Reason for recommendation: Applications received have been appraised according to the Council's Guidelines and those recommended for funding support the aims of the scheme and represent value for money.

The events of recent months have prompted the recommended changes to the Community Grant Scheme for 2022/23. This will ensure that the Scheme continues to deliver its' aim of benefiting the most vulnerable residents in Sevenoaks District.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Council's Community Grant Scheme supports local charities and voluntary sector organisations that, through their work, contribute to the priorities set out in the Community Plan 2013-28.
- 2 A copy of the Council's Corporate Code of Practice for making grants is attached at Appendix A.
- 3 The grant guidelines were reviewed during 2013/14 and revised guidelines were agreed by Cabinet on 12 September 2013. There has always been a distinction for monitoring purposes between up to and including £500 grants and those over £500 and up to the maximum, £5,000. For these 2021/22 grants the application process was taken online for the first time. To make the online forms user friendly and relative to the monitoring for successful applications, two separate forms and therefore guidelines were created. These guideline documents can be found at Appendix B.
- 4 In 2020/21, the grants awarded through the Community Grant Scheme enabled voluntary organisations to support 65,656 volunteer hours in the Sevenoaks District, which represented an economic benefit of £1.17 million.

Details of the Community Grant Scheme for 2021/22

- 5 The grant scheme was publicised widely across the District within the voluntary sector, through the virtual Voluntary Sector Forum, Town and Parish Councils, In Shape Magazine, Social Media and local press in

September 2020. The closing date was 13 November 2020. The total budget available for distribution in 2021/22 is £153,340, including £98,540 for Citizens' Advice in the District, £2,500 for the Sevenoaks District Arts Council (SDAC) and £2,500 for the Sevenoaks District Sports Council (SDSC). Funding for Citizens' Advice, SDAC and SDSC is subject to Service Level Agreements.

- 6 The 2021/22 budget available for voluntary sector organisations is as follows:-

Funding for the Citizens' Advice Service Level Agreement (SLA)	£ 98,540
Funding for Sevenoaks District Arts Council (SLA)	£2,500
Funding for Sevenoaks District Sports Council (SLA)	£2,500
Amount available for Community Grants Scheme grants	£ 49,800* *See paragraph 7 below
Total Budget	£ 153,340 *See paragraph 7 below

- 7 As a result of Covid-19, some funding from the 2020/21 Community Grants Scheme is likely to be returned to the Council. Confirmation of the total funding returned will be available by the Cabinet Meeting of 18 March 2021. Included in this paper is therefore an extra recommended financial allocation for some identified grants (see Appendix C). These grants were identified during the appraisal process as delivering high levels of impact and value for money such that if additional funds were available a greater percentage of that requested would be offered. Appendix C identifies the maximum that would be allocated to each applicant should sufficient funding be returned. Returned funds will be apportioned equally to those projects identified in this way. The maximum total allocation would be £54,146.
- 8 A total of 31 grant applications have been received, representing total grant requests of £109,249.
- 9 A full schedule of applications is attached at Appendix C. The Portfolio Holder for People & Places has copies of all of the applications and a full set is available via One Drive (instructions provided separately). Officers would be pleased to deal with any detailed queries in advance of the meeting.

Appraisal Process

- 10 Members will appreciate that the recommended grants in Appendix C have been put forward following an appraisal by Officers trained in grant appraisal and a detailed consultation with the Portfolio Holder for People & Places, Cllr Dyball and the Deputy Portfolio Holder for People & Places, Cllr Coleman. Recommendations have been made in accordance with the

Scheme Guidelines and the Council's Corporate Code of Practice for grants and take into account various factors, including:

- the extent to which the application supports the District Council's priorities;
- the extent to which the application assists residents across the District and its impact;
- the extent to which the application should be funded by other organisations;
- whether performance indicators are relevant and appropriate;
- whether the applicant meets the eligibility criteria established in the Guidelines and the Corporate Code of Practice for grants;
- the level of reserves held by the applicant.
- whether the applicant has appropriate child protection and safeguarding arrangements in place.

Recommended Level of Grant

- 11 A full list of grants recommended to voluntary organisations is attached at Appendix C.
- 12 Unsuccessful applicants will be informed of the reason for this decision, and encouraged to contact the District Council's Funding Officers and visit KCC's online free, comprehensive grant search database for advice and support in seeking funding elsewhere if appropriate.

Recommended Conditions

- 13 It is recommended that grants be made to voluntary organisations subject to the following conditions:
 - That performance indicators as set out in the application forms are adhered to and monitored;
 - That appropriate Safeguarding policies and arrangements are in place, where necessary;
 - That appropriate recognition of this Council's funding contribution is made in all their publicity; and
 - Where services are provided over a wider area than the District boundaries, organisations will be required to hold grant aid from this Council in a restricted fund for the benefit of Sevenoaks District residents;
 - That organisations funded either have or are working towards any quality accreditation.

Recommended Carry Forward of 2020/21 Community Grants

- 14 In addition to the funds returned as outlined in paragraph 7, Covid-19 prevented two organisations (West Kent Extra and Kenward Trust) who awarded community grants in 2020/21 from delivering any of their projects. The grant details for these are set out below. It is recommended that these two grants be carried forward to the 2021/22 financial year to enable these projects to be delivered and Sevenoaks residents to benefit from them. Plans of exactly how these would be delivered have been obtained from the two organisations.

Organisation	Grant value	Project
West Kent Extra	£3,550	Contribution towards a residential trip for vulnerable children aged 8-12. With the increase in mental health problems now affecting children and young people this project is recommended to be carried forward.
Kenward Trust	£4,400 but with £4,190 to be carried over for this project and the other £210 being returned and made available for these 2021/22 grants (in accordance with paragraph 7 above). This £210 was included in the original grant application for refreshments and these will no longer be needed.	Archery & alpaca sessions for vulnerable adults and young people. The project will be amended to comply with Covid-19 restrictions. This project specifically targets those feeling isolated and lonely and will be beneficial to vulnerable residents.

Recommended Changes from 2022/23

- 15 The aim of the Community Grants Scheme remains the same, to benefit the most vulnerable residents in Sevenoaks District. Two key factors provide the background to these recommended changes:

- The events of recent months have had a significant impact on the community and voluntary sector. Demand for the sector's services have increased exponentially; traditional funding streams have been diverted to respond to the health pandemic; and filling many service gaps, there has been an explosion of new, grass-root, community initiatives which now seek support & encouragement. The Council has become aware of these new community initiatives through its community project work, in particular with Care for our Community (responding to Requests for Help) and the virtual Voluntary Sector Forum.
- The health pandemic has led to the introduction of new grants and funding that are being administered by the Council.

16 The community and voluntary sector was consulted using a short anonymous Survey Monkey:

- 67.34% of those responding stated that their funding needs had changed as a result of Covid. Comments included:
 - "Increased costs to respond to Covid pandemic"
 - "We are struggling to cover our fixed overheads with reduced volunteers [because of Covid] and unpredictable demand for our help."
 - "More equipment and spaces needed to support socially distanced activities"
 - "Fewer community fundraising opportunities whilst also facing client need."
- The results support the need for the encouragement and funding of new grass-root, community initiatives with 93.9% confirming that the offer of a greater number of smaller value grants via a streamlined application process would be a good idea. There were comments such as:
 - "It gives small grassroots groups an opportunity to get on the ladder"
 - "Open the opportunities for receiving grants to a broader spectrum of recipients"
 - "We firmly believe in spreading as much round to small charities as possible, rather than give larger grants to charities that don't need it as much"
 - "A great idea, we are a new start up in Sevenoaks and a streamlined process to provide some 'seed' monies against a viability plan would be very valuable."

- “Our Community Project is running several emergency initiatives and the number of families we are supporting has also grown.”
- The idea of a more streamlined application process was welcomed with comments such as:
 - “The move to digital applications was a good one and further streamlining could simplify the process further.”
 - “A shorter application process”
 - “The application form is a real disincentive to apply. I really don’t know how any small charity can answer some of your questions.”
 - “A more streamlined application and reporting process would be very welcome. This would help smaller groups and community groups like ours which exists to help those with mental health needs. That means our 'volunteers' may themselves have life challenges which make it difficult for them to commit to fundraising work.”

17. Based on the above, the recommended changes to the Community Grant Scheme for grants awarded from 2022/23 (with applications commencing September 2021) are:

- Promote the smaller grants (up to £500) to support and encourage new, grass-root community initiatives. Achieve this by streamlining the application process to make it more attractive and user friendly to applicants whilst still incorporating the eligibility, criteria and monitoring requirements of the Council. Communicate this approach earlier in the year to encourage applications.
- Consult and work with other departments to gain an oversight of all grants and funding available to community and voluntary organisations. Use this information to ensure cross-departmental checks and information shares are in place in relation to grants and funding being awarded and to greater understand and effectively manage arrangements and partnerships between the Council and the community and voluntary sector. Incorporate learning from this into the management of the Community Grants scheme and the application appraisal process to ensure that it continues to fund the most deserved, good value for money projects and to support the most vulnerable residents.

Key Implications

Financial

The level of funding is in accordance with the draft 2021/22 budget of £153,340.

Any sums awarded in addition to the 2021/22 budget of £153,340 will be funded from returned or carried forwards 2020/21 grants funding.

Resources (Non Financial)

The work connected with the Community Grant Scheme administration and monitoring is being undertaken through existing resources.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

There are no legal issues relating to this report. All organisations applying for funding are required to have an equalities policy and where appropriate child protection and/or adult protection policies.

The following table shows the risks and their mitigation.

Risk	Mitigation
Grants allocated are lower than requested	Application forms ask whether the project could continue if funding were reduced. Appraisal looks at realistic performance indicators for the amount of grant recommended. Performance indicators are agreed with Voluntary and Community Groups.
As a condition of the grant any organisation allocating onward funding on behalf of the Council to another organisation must check whether appropriate police checks and child or vulnerable adult protection policies are in place.	Condition of grant to ensure checks carried out and that application forms seek confirmation. Monitoring process to confirm an effective process is in place.
Grant allocations not approved in March.	A timetable is in place to ensure grants are considered by Cabinet in March and processes in place to ensure grant payments are made in the first week of the financial year.

Equality Assessment

23. Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. The decisions recommended through this report directly impact on end users. The impact has been analysed and does not vary between groups of people. The summary results of this analysis are set out immediately below.
24. This community grant scheme assists with the provision of services to support Sevenoaks District residents, particularly those in the greatest need. Therefore this decision being made or recommended through this paper does not have the potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different groups in the community.
25. The grant scheme provides funding for specific groups, such as older people, families, young people and people with disabilities. The grants scheme is widely publicised to ensure that groups serving a wide range of needs are able to apply. The recommended changes to the 2022/23 grant scheme will continue to promote the equality of opportunity.
26. As no negative impacts have been identified, no further mitigating steps need to be taken.

Conclusions

27. The work of the voluntary sector across the Sevenoaks District is highly valued. The Council's grants programme supports the dedication and commitment of the many volunteers who help the most vulnerable people in the District. Members are asked to agree the draft grant allocations as set out in Appendix C and the recommended changes to the Scheme for grants made in 2022/23.

Appendices

Appendix A - Council's Corporate Code of Practice for making grants

Appendix B - Community Grant Scheme guidelines Part 1 & Part 2

Appendix C - Full Schedule of applications

Sarah Robson

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - People & Places