

Item

COMMUNITY GRANTS 2020-21

To:

Councillor Anna Smith, Executive Councillor for Communities
Environment & Community Scrutiny Committee 16/01/2020

Report by:

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Wards affected:

All

Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This is the annual report for the Community Grants fund for voluntary, community, and not for profit organisations. It provides an overview of the process, eligibility criteria and budget in Section 3 and Appendix 1 details the applications received with recommendations for 2020-21 awards.
- 1.2 Information is also provided on the Area Committee Community Grants (3.12), Neighbourhood Community Project funding (3.13), VE Day Celebration Grants (3.14), the Corporate Grants Gateway (3.15-18), and Volunteer for Cambridge (3.20).

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the Community Grants to voluntary and community organisations for 2020-21, as set out in Appendix 1 of this report, subject to the budget approval in February 2020 and any further satisfactory information required of applicant organisations.

3. Background

3.1 The Community Grants fund was established in 2015-16 following a review of Community and Arts and Recreation Development Grants. In June 2018 an additional funding priority, 'reducing poverty', was added to the priorities listed below.

3.2 **The priorities and outcomes** for the Community Grants fund are as follows:

Priorities - All applications must demonstrate how the funding will reduce social and/or economic inequality, by removing barriers for City residents with the highest need, to enable them to access one or more of the funding priorities:

- Sporting activities
- Arts and cultural activities
- Community development activities
- Reducing poverty activities
- Legal and/or financial advice
- Employment support or
- Capacity building of the voluntary sector to achieve the above

Primary Outcome - Reduce social and/or economic inequality for City residents with the highest need

Strategic Outcomes - As well as the primary outcome activities must achieve one or more of the following strategic outcomes:

- Improved health and wellbeing
- Communities come together and bring about change
- More people have better opportunities to gain employment
- Stronger voluntary sector in the city

3.3 **Budget** – there is a budget of £1,100,000 available for Community Grants 2020-21 subject to approval of the Council's budget in February 2020. This is made up as follows:

- £945,000 core budget of £900k 2018-19 plus inflation (2 years)
- £55,000 added from the NCP review (see 3.13)
- £100,000 approved in the Budget Setting Report for one year only

3.4 £70,000 of this amount is allocated to Area Committee Community Grants as in previous years leaving £1,030,000 available for the main grant round.

- 3.5 The 2020-21 Community Grants programme opened in August 2019 for applications and closed on 1st October 2019. A communications and publicity plan was implemented including a press release, newsletter articles, workshops, emails, networking and targeted conversations to promote the grant fund.
- 3.6 A range of activities have been undertaken to support organisations to understand the funding criteria and requirements needed for a successful application, including:
- Attending organisation's committee meetings, 1-2-1 meetings
 - Training sessions and application workshops held jointly with Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service (CCVS)
 - Application Guide and Help Notes detailing the priorities, outcomes and eligibility criteria and giving guidance on requirements, question by question
 - Factsheets, templates and signposting to other funding providers
- 3.7 Even though organisations were encouraged to engage with us for help and support with their applications some chose not to and some applications were received which did not meet the basic criteria of the fund, requesting funds for non-targeted activity.
- 3.8 The Community Grants fund continues to accept Discretionary Rate Relief (DRR) applications that meet the funding priorities, outcomes and eligibility criteria. DRR contributions from this fund will need to be kept under review to ensure it responds to any changes in Business Rates legislation and currently represents good value for money with this budget having to find 40% of any award made under the Business Rate Retention Scheme.
- 3.9 All applications were assessed against the same assessment matrix developed around the priorities and outcome used in previous years, ensuring a consistent approach. These assessments were then moderated by strategy officer meetings informing the award recommendations detailed in Appendix 1. The Executive Councillor attended a meeting with officers to review the process and outcomes.
- 3.10 Where no funding is proposed it will be due to one or more of the following not being adequately met:
- Grant scheme priorities
 - Grant scheme outcomes
 - Identifying need
 - Quality or viability of the project, or

- Proposals were the remit of another service or organisation such as the County Council, Health, Housing etc
- Organisations did not demonstrate the beneficiaries could not fund the activity themselves, or that reserves could not be used to fund the activity

3.11 If the recommended awards are approved there will be £43,496 remaining for officers to consider enquiries or projects during the year.

3.12 **Area Committees** - the Area Committee grants round has been widely promoted and following the closing dates for applications, assessments will be undertaken and reports taken to each area committee with recommendations for funding. The chart below shows the amount available by area:

Area Committee	2020-21
North	£24,220
East	£21,140
South	£17,780
West Central	£6,860
Total	£70,000

3.13 **Neighbourhood Community Projects Funding** – in order to align to the Building Stronger Communities strategy, in January 2018 the Executive Councillor for Communities agreed to merge this fund with the Community Grants budget and process to ensure a transparent and accountable approach. Following a transitional period of support for previously funded groups this merger has been implemented for 2020-21.

3.14 **VE Day Celebration Grants** – from the remaining funds available in 2019-20 groups have been invited to apply for up to £500 for events and activities celebrating the 75th Anniversary of VE Day. This is a light touch application, assessment and award process to support local community celebrations.

3.15 **Corporate Grants Gateway** – in 2018 at this committee the executive Councillor for Communities approved a review of grants to VCS organisations across the Council to achieve greater transparency, consistency and accountability and to explore the potential for the development of a single grants gateway for major grants.

- 3.16 The Grants Gateway has been implemented for the 2020-21 funding round for the following funds:
- Community Grants
 - Area Committee Community Grants
 - Homelessness Prevention Grants
 - Sustainable City Grants
- 3.17 These funds are now managed by one team using the same process and timescale. The awards are considered across the funds at the same time to ensure a consistent and accountable process by experienced officers from the different service areas. The funds remain within their appropriate portfolios for decision making and to ensure alignment to each fund's strategic priorities.
- 3.18 Now that processes have bedded in this year, the 2021-22 funding round will consider offering some multi-year (up to 3-year) funding allocations to:
- Provide greater stability for projects which require more than one year to develop and deliver
 - Increase the sustainability of the sector at a time when organisations are experiencing greater financial pressures
 - Reduce the administrative load and refocus time on outcomes, monitoring and voluntary sector support
- 3.19 **Voluntary Sector Support** - the Grants Team continue to work in depth with a range of organisations to help them develop good governance and policies and also work in partnership to support the sector.
- 3.20 **Volunteer for Cambridge 2019.**
Following a review of Volunteer for Cambridge Fair 2018, organisations raised a number of issues they were facing with the recruitment and retention of volunteers. In response to this feedback a Volunteer for Cambridge 2019 conference was held on 4th November titled Market, Manage, Motivate. The conference offered workshops on inclusive, flexible, attractive and business volunteering.
- 3.21 Over 80 people attended the conference and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with every aspect of the event rated excellent or good. Plans have already started for the Volunteer for Cambridge Fair this year which will be held on Saturday 24th October 2020.

4. Implications

- a) **Financial Implications** - Set out in 3.3, 3.4 and 3.12 of the report
- b) **Staffing Implications** - There are no staffing implications
- c) **Equality and Poverty Implications** - Equalities Impact Assessments were carried out as follows:
 - January 2015 on the implementation of the Community Grants Fund
 - June 2018 on the review of funding for anti-poverty projects
- d) **Environmental Implications** - Funded organisations are expected to have or develop environmental policies.
- e) **Procurement Implications** - The Council's approach to grant aid through the Community Grants is via an application process rather than through the direct commissioning of services.
- f) **Community Safety Implications** - Some of the funded projects will have a positive impact on community safety.

5. Consultation and communication considerations

Applicants were notified when this report was published detailing recommended awards, giving an indication of proposed funding from April 2020. This adhered to the Cambridgeshire Compact framework to give three months' notice of funding changes. Officers will continue the process of award notification, signposting and support, and implementing and monitoring awards.

6. Background papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Community Grants 2020-21 Award Recommendations

8. Inspection of papers

If you have a query on the report please contact Jackie Hanson, Community Funding & Development Manager, tel: 01223 - 457867, email: jackie.hanson@cambridge.gov.uk