

Item

COMMUNITY GRANTS 2022-23

To:

Councillor Anna Smith, Executive Councillor for Communities
Environment & Community Scrutiny Committee 27/01/2021

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 2022-23 awards.
- 1.2 The report also provides updates for 2021-22 and outlines key areas of work going forward.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the Community Grants to voluntary and community organisations for 2022-23, as set out in Appendix 1 of this report, subject to the budget approval in February 2022 and any further satisfactory information required of applicant organisations.
- 2.2 Approve £30,000 to Cambridge Council for the Voluntary Sector (CCVS) for a building community power and resilience project following on from the remarkable support undertaken by communities during the pandemic

and linking to the Council's 'Our Cambridge' transformation programme, as detailed in section 4.

3. Background

3.1 **Corporate Grants Gateway** – Following a review in 2018, the gateway was implemented in 2019 to achieve greater transparency, consistency and accountability of grants to voluntary and community sector organisations for the following major grant funds:

- Community Grants
- Area Committee Community Grants
- Homelessness Prevention Grants
- Sustainable City Grants

3.2 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.

3.3 **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.

3.4 **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

- 3.5 **Budget** – there is a budget of £1,000,000 available for Community Grants 2022-23 subject to approval of the Council’s budget in February 2022. In addition, a government grant for covid support has been utilised for appropriate projects enabling the community grant fund to cover more projects or for an increased amount. This is highlighted in a separate column in Appendix 1.
- 3.6 £70,000 of the Community Grants budget is allocated to Area Committee Community Grants as in previous years (see paragraph 3.14).
- 3.7 The 2022-23 Community Grants programme opened in August 2021 for applications and closed on 4th October 2021. Promotion and publicity of the grant fund included a press release, newsletter articles, workshops, emails, networking and targeted conversations.
- 3.8 A range of activities has 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
- 3.9 Organisations were encouraged to engage with us and the CCVS for help and support with their applications and many took up this offer. We have seen a decrease in applications that did not meet the basic funding criteria and requests for funding for non-targeted activity. Those applicants where no award is recommended, will receive feedback and signposted to alternative funding and support.
- 3.10 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.

- 3.11 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.
- 3.12 Where no funding is proposed it will be due to one or more of the following not being adequately met:
- Grant scheme priorities and/or 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
 - Applications will be signposted to Area Committee or alternative funding streams where possible
- 3.13 If the recommended awards are approved the budget will be spent in full.
- 3.14 **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 last year as an indicative amount:

Area Committee	2022-23
North	£24,003
East	£21,112
South	£17,969
West Central	£6,916
Total	£70,000

- 3.15 **Platinum Jubilee** – alongside the area committee grants local groups have been invited to apply for grants up to £500 for events to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee. This will be funded from area committee budgets

topped up by the Grant's Team project budget as required to support neighbourhood events.

4. Grant Awards 2021-22

- 4.1 Following an application submitted by the Cambridge Council for Voluntary Services for 2022-23 exploring community power and wealth building and its connection with the communities strand of the 'Our Cambridge' transformation project, discussions were held to understand the synergies between the two. The detailed project is to be finalised in a grant agreement, but it was evident it would be beneficial to start this work as soon as possible and build on the response to Covid that communities developed and sustained over a considerable period of time. A £30,000 grant is recommended to develop this project with Council.
- 4.2 We maintained our Covid flexible funder framework to provide as much support as possible during another challenging year for the sector to deliver activities and services, being agile and responsive to changing situations. Although we took a flexible approach and enabled organisations to deliver projects in different ways or to be adapted to provide Covid 19 support, some funding has been unallocated or returned.
- 4.3 **Voluntary Sector Support** - the Grants Team have worked hard to support organisations throughout the year and 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. In addition they supported the Business Grants Team in providing local businesses much needed financial support via government funding.

5. Anti-Poverty Responsive Budget

- 5.1 The management of this fund is transferring from Corporate Strategy to the Grants Team from 2022-23. Subject to the approval of a budget bid the current £30,000 will be available on an ongoing basis to respond to emerging need. This is not a fund that external organisations can bid into directly but for the Council to approach potential voluntary sector providers to help with the need identified. Most recently this has been used for emergency food supplies, IT devices and data during the pandemic.

6. Community Grants Review

- 6.1 As part of the 'Our Cambridge' transformation programme the Community Grants will be reviewed to ensure they align with the Council's future priorities and outcomes.

7. Community Rights

- 7.1 The Grants Team has recently taken on responsibility from planning services for managing the 'Community Right to Bid' process, which has been in place since 2012. Local community and voluntary bodies, along with parish and town councils are able to identify land and buildings that provide an important service in their community. These community organisations can nominate such assets for inclusion on a register of assets of community value, which is maintained by the City Council. If an asset on the register comes up for sale, community organisations may have up to six months in which to raise capital and bid to buy the asset, before it can be sold on the open market. Examples of eligible assets include local shops, pubs, community centres, libraries, playgrounds, swimming pools, and markets.
- 7.2 The Grants Team has also taken on responsibility for managing any requests received by the Council as a 'Community Right to Challenge'. This process enables voluntary and community groups or council employees to bid to run council services. The Council must consider expressions of interest and where these are accepted, we will run a procurement exercise for that service. The Right to Challenge is a 'right to compete' in a procurement exercise. The Community Right to Challenge enables eligible groups to express an interest in running a local authority service, as it gives them the extra time they need to be able to compete fairly in an open procurement exercise and provides a way of opening up public service delivery to groups and organisations other than those in the public and private sector.
- 7.3 As this is a new area of work for team we are currently updating the process and documentation with planning colleagues and will provide updates in future reports.

8. Implications

- a) Financial Implications** - Set out in section 3 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.

9. Consultation and communication considerations

Applicants were notified when this report was published detailing recommended awards, giving an indication of proposed funding from April 2022. This adhered as closely as possible to the 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.

10. Background papers

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

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Community Grants 2022-23 Award Recommendations

12. 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