

**BODY:** Cabinet

**DATE:** 8 July 2015

**SUBJECT:** Community and Housing Grants

**REPORT OF:** Senior Head of Community

**Ward(s):** All

**Purpose:** To agree the process for awarding Housing Grants, the overall budget available for Community Grants and for Housing Grants in 2016/17 to 2018/19, and priorities for the Major Grants Programme and for Housing Grants 2016/17 to 2018/19 and for the Small Grants Programme 2016/17.

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**Recommendations:** In accordance with the recommendations of the Grants Task Group Cabinet is recommended to:

- agree to align the process for awarding Housing Grants with the Community Grants Programme
- agree the overall budget for Community Grants and for Housing Grants in 2016/17 to 2018/19 subject to final budget setting in each year
- agree the priorities for the Major Grants Programme and for Housing Grants 2016/17 to 2018/19
- agree the priorities for the Small Grants Programme 2016/17
- approve changes to the Community Grants policy to reflect these decisions.

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council makes funding available to voluntary and community groups each through the Community Grants Programme and through Housing Grants.

- 1.2 The Community Grants Programme is split between Major Grants which are awarded for a three year period for grants of more than £10,000 each year and Small Grants of up to a maximum of £10,000 which are awarded for one year only. These grants are awarded in line with the Community Grants Policy initially approved by Cabinet on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2012 as amended by Cabinet on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2014.
- 1.3 Housing Grants have been paid for specific services to prevent homelessness in Eastbourne from Homelessness Grant received from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) previously ring-fenced for this purpose.

## **2.0 The process for awarding Major Grants and Housing Grants**

- 2.1 In recent years, following the national government drive to reduce the numbers of households becoming homeless and accommodated in Bed and Breakfast and other temporary housing, local authority housing teams have received grant funding from DCLG to spend on preventing homelessness. £58,500 of this funding has been used to fund voluntary sector organisations to deliver these services.
- 2.2 This funding is no longer ring-fenced. However, the work it has funded over the last few years has been vital for achieving the Council's aim of minimising homelessness and the costs to the Council of accommodating homeless households. The Grants Task Group is therefore recommending that this £58,500 continues to be used for grants to organisations to deliver homelessness prevention services.
- 2.3 It is recommended that £2,000 is used to pay Eastbourne and Wealden YMCA (YMCA) to continue their work educating school students about the realities of homelessness using the DVD which they produced with homeless young people they were working with. This work is still considered valuable in preventing homelessness and the DVD belonging to YMCA is a key part of this. It is therefore recommended that the Council continues to use £2,000 of the budget previously allocated to this work under a Service Level Agreement with YMCA, rather than including it in the general Housing Grants offered more widely. This is on the basis that this is a specific service which the Council wishes to purchase and that, as owners of the DVD, only YMCA is in a position to deliver this particular service. Taking this service outside the Grants Programme would also allow YMCA to apply for a grant, if they wish, under the Community and Housing Grants Programme.
- 2.4 It is proposed that the Council awards a total of £56,500 Housing Grants alongside Community Grants applying the same policy and procedures. Applications would be invited from voluntary and community organisations and assessed for eligibility, the extent to which they address the agreed priorities, quality, impact and value for money. The aim is to earmark this budget for homelessness prevention services and to ensure a fair and transparent process for

allocating grants in line with the Community Grants Policy.

### **3.0 Major Grants budget**

- 3.1 The current Community Grants Policy refers to the budget of £180,000 available for Major Grants in recent years. In practice, Cabinet has awarded Major Grants totalling £203,000 in the last three years to protect voluntary sector partners from reductions in funding.
- 3.2 The Grants Task Group recommends that a budget of £203,000 is set for the next three years – 2016/17 to 2018/19. At a time when many voluntary and community organisations face continued financial pressures and many have had reductions in their funding from different sources, the Group is keen to maintain its own level of grant funding to the sector.
- 3.3 Whilst this recommendation would demonstrate the Council's ongoing commitment to the voluntary and community sector, it should be remembered that the Grants programme involves a competitive process and the Policy clearly states that "Projects and services awarded Major or Housing grants for any period should not assume that they will be awarded grant in future years." This recommendation should not, therefore, be presumed to protect any individual organisation currently in receipt of a grant from reductions in funding.

### **4.0 Priorities for Major Grants and Housing Grants**

- 4.1 The Grants Task Group is recommending the following priorities for Major Grants in 2016/17 to 2018/19:
  - Advice and Financial Inclusion Services
  - Youth Engagement
  - Homelessness
  - Support for Voluntary and Community organisations
- 4.2 These priorities are proposed on the basis that they contribute significantly to the Council's own Corporate Priorities and services and to those of its partners in the wider community. In considering these priorities, the Grants Task Group has also taken account of alternative sources of funding available through ESCC Health and Social Care Commissioning Grants Prospectus, the Department of Work and Pensions and Community Safety / Police and Crime Commissioner funding.
- 4.3 The Grants Task Group is proposing to invite applications using a Major and Housing Grants Prospectus (Appendix 1) giving more detail on the priorities under each of the broad headings. This is designed to give voluntary and community organisations greater clarity on the outcomes we are seeking to fund with these grants and to give guidance on the information we are looking for in assessing applications.

## **5.0 Priorities for Small Grants 2016/17**

- 5.1 Priorities for Small Grants are agreed by Cabinet each year for the year ahead. These priorities are changed from year to year to ensure a fair distribution of funding to different types of project and to ensure that emerging needs are reflected.
- 5.2 Under the current Community Grants Policy, priority is given each year to projects which promote inclusion and the needs of those community and groups protected under the Equality Act 2010 and the Grants Task Group proposes that this policy should remain unchanged.
- 5.3 The Grants Task Group is recommending the following additional priorities for Small Grants to be awarded in 2016/17:
  - Promotion of digital inclusion
  - Promotion of emotional health and wellbeing
  - Services to children and families

## **6.0 Amendments to Community Grants Policy**

- 6.1 Cabinet is asked to approve the amendments to the Community Grants Policy in line with the recommendations contained in this report and to rename this 'Community and Housing Grants Policy' (as highlighted in Appendix 2).

## **7.0 Resource Implications**

- 7.1 This report is recommending that £58,500 previously ring-fenced from government grants continue to be applied to the prevention of homelessness. As such, there is no impact on budgets of this recommendation.
- 7.2 The recommendation set out in paragraph 3.2 would require an increase in the Community Grants budget from the current level of £240,000 to £263,000. This represents an increase of £23,000 on the budget previously set for this purpose but brings the budget into line with practice in the last three years.

## **8.0 Implications for Equalities and Fairness**

- 8.1 All applications for Community and Housing Grants must meet minimum eligibility criteria covering equalities and fairness in compliance with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.
- 8.2 The assessment of applications also takes account of proposals to ensure activities and projects are inclusive of groups with 'protected characteristics' as defined by the Act (age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex; sexual orientation).
- 8.3 Voluntary and community organisations are also encouraged to apply for projects and services which promote the inclusion of protected groups under the Small Grants programme each year through the ongoing priority given to these.

## **9.0 Legal Implications**

- 9.1 The council may award grants under its power of general competence conferred by Part 1, Chapter 1, of the Localism Act 2011. Where the source of funds is a grant from central government, the council must – under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 – comply with any conditions placed as to the use of the grant. Further, the council must manage the process of grant awards in accordance with its Financial Procedure Rules.

## **10.0 Other Implications**

- 10.1 There are no Environmental, Staffing or other implications arising from this report.

Applications are invited from all organisations in the voluntary and community sector under a wide range of headings and are assessed on the basis set out in the Community Grants Policy to ensure fairness and that public money is spent wisely on projects and services which are of a reasonable quality and offer good value for the residents of Eastbourne.

## **11.0 Conclusion**

- 11.1 In line with the deliberations of the Grants Task Group it is recommended that:
  - £58,500 continues to be used for grants to organisations to deliver homelessness prevention services
  - £2,000 of this is used to continue purchasing the schools homelessness service from Eastbourne and Wealden YMCA
  - £56,500 of this is used to award Housing Grants
  - Housing Grants are invited, assessed and awarded on the same

- basis as Community Grants and alongside Major Grants
- Funding for 2016/17 and, in the case of Major and Housing Grants, for 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 is awarded to voluntary and community organisations as set out in paragraph 4.1
- Small Grants are awarded on the basis of the priorities set out at paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3
- Agree the amendments to the Community Grants Policy as highlighted in Appendix 2

**Ian Fitzpatrick**  
**Senior Head of Community**

**Background Papers:**

*None.*

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