

Report to:	Cabinet
Date:	8 July 2021
Title:	Community Grants Policy
Report of:	Ian Fitzpatrick, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning
Cabinet member:	Councillor Johnny Denis, Cabinet member for communities and customers
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of report:	For Cabinet to adopt the new Community Grants Policy and agree the proposed funding allocations set out in the prospectus.
Decision type:	Key
Officer recommendation(s):	(1) Adopt the new Community Grants policy at appendix 1. (2) Agree the proposed funding allocations set out in the prospectus at appendix 2.
Reasons for recommendations:	The new Community Grants policy will enable the council to be more transparent and flexible in how local voluntary organisations are supported, with the 2022/23 programme ensuring a focus on local areas of need.
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1 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting in February 2021 and following a consultation exercise, Cabinet agreed the move to award all community grants through a bidding process with effect from April 2022. It was also agreed that a Grants Working Group of three members be formed to consider the new policy and process, subsequently reporting to Cabinet for approval.
- 1.2 The Council currently allocates £228,800 for grants to the voluntary sector each year.

- 1.3 A new Community Grants Policy, setting out the way in which the council will award grants from 22/23 onwards can be found at appendix 1, along with a draft Community Grants Prospectus which will form part of an application pack to be launched in August of this year, subject to Cabinet's agreement.

2 Proposal for 2022/23 awards

- 2.1 An additional 35k pa has been allocated to the Community Grants Programme with effect from April 2022. This is in recognition of the additional challenges faced by communities across the district due to the pandemic, and the capacity needed within the voluntary sector to support this increased need.
- 2.2 With careful consideration, the Grants Working Group has developed proposals for the allocation of awards in 22/23, as set out in the prospectus at appendix 2. These allocations (summarised below) are broadly in line with current funding policy, with the addition of an allocation to support mental health and/or sustainability projects.

- 2.3 It is proposed by the Grants Working Group that the community grants budget of £263k be allocated as follows

Advice services – £190k

Including general, benefits (Universal Credit), debt/money and housing advice.

Infrastructure services – £31k

Services which help support the development of the third sector in using volunteers, seeking funding, ensuring best practice and supporting the start-up of new groups.

Environment and wellbeing – £20k

Services which support mental health and/ or contribute to sustainability and the environment.

Equalities – £10k

Services which support specific groups which may experience discrimination or disadvantage (as defined by the Equality Act 2010), by promoting fairness and inclusion.

Homeless prevention/ Sustainable accommodation – £12k

Supporting households into sustainable accommodation through, for example, the provision of security deposits (including those nominated by the council).

- 2.4 A timeline for the 2022/23 Community Grants Programme has been developed in consultation with the Grants Working Group. The prospectus will be published on 2nd August 2021 at which point the applications process will open and then close on 1st October 2021. This gives a reasonable amount of time for groups and organisations to compile their applications. The Grants Working Group will then consider eligible applications and make recommendations for awards to Cabinet in February 2022. Approved grants will then be paid from April 2022.

3 Consultation

- 3.1 Views have been sought from current grant recipients and Tenants of Lewes District, and the views expressed have been taken account of in the development of the prospectus, policy and timeline of the 2022/23 programme.

4 Corporate plan and council policies

- 4.1 Making changes to the voluntary sector grants policy may help support the council's pledge around open and transparent decision making, as outlined in the Corporate Plan.
- 4.2 A change to policy may aid alignment with the Corporate Plan pledge to respect and promote principals of equality and support the council's equality and fairness policy.

5 Financial appraisal

- 5.1 The allocations proposed by the Grants Working Group are in line with the 2021/22 budget allocations and the proposed community grants reserve established for voluntary sector grants. However, it will not be possible to formally confirm the allocations until the 2022/23 budget is approved by Full Council in February 2022.

6 Legal implications

- 6.1 Cabinet must pay due regard to the proposals of the Grants Working Group, and the views of consultees referred to in paragraph 3.1 above, before deciding the basis on which the 2022/23 Community Grants Programme is to be allocated, including the categories of organisations to receive the grants and the weightings to be attached.

Lawyer consulted 08.06.21

Legal ref: 010205-LDC-OD

7 Risk management implications

- 7.1 If Cabinet does not allocate the funding it has budgeted for grants there are risks both to the council's reputation in relation to this high-profile activity and to the council's own services. Supporting the local voluntary sector can, in some instances, reduce demand for council services and prevent residents reaching a situation where council or other support would be required.

Reviewing the council's policies and performance on a regular basis provides an assurance that the council is fulfilling its functions in a way that complies with current legislation.

8 Equality analysis

- 8.1 These proposals would provide support for people in need of advice and information, including protected groups.

The new wellbeing and sustainability category within the grants prospectus would support the mental and physical health of residents in the district, and has the potential to improve some of the impacts felt by residents due to the pandemic.

The equalities category within the grants prospectus could potentially generate applications from projects supporting one or a combination of protected characteristics, and would seek to promote equality of opportunity.

9 Environmental sustainability implications

- 9.1 The introduction of a funding category within the grants prospectus around wellbeing and sustainability will promote the nurturing and enjoyment of green and open spaces across the district, helping people to value the natural environment and recognise the link between nature and good health.

10 Contribution to Community Wealth Building

- 10.1 One of the key principles of community wealth building is plural ownership of the economy. The community and voluntary sector, including not for profit organisations such as cooperatives and community interest companies all contribute to this plurality. By supporting the sector through a grants programme, the council aims to help stimulate plural ownership and social entrepreneurship.

11 Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Community Grants Policy
- Exempt Appendix 2 – Community Grants Prospectus 2022/23

12 Background papers

None.