

Report to:	Cabinet
Date:	3 February 2022
Title:	Community Grants Programme
Report of:	Ian Fitzpatrick, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning
Cabinet member:	Councillor Johnny Denis, Lead Member for Communities and Customers
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of report:	For Cabinet to consider the funding recommendations of the cross-party working group.
Decision type:	Key
Officer recommendation(s):	To agree the proposed funding allocations set out in Appendix 1.
Reasons for recommendations:	The recommendations outlined in this report will enable the council to support a broad range of voluntary sector groups, therefore reaching a larger number of residents.
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1 Introduction

- 1.1 In February 2021 following a period of stakeholder engagement which included local voluntary sector groups, Cabinet agreed to award all community grants through a bidding process, with effect from April 2022. It was also agreed that a cross party Grants Working Group of three members be formed to consider the new policy and 2022 prospectus, with recommendations taken to Cabinet for approval.

2 Budget update and proposed allocations

- 2.1 The 2022 Community Grants Programme launched a new policy and prospectus in August 2021 with the deadline for applications in October. Throughout this period the grants officer worked with 3VA to respond to queries and ascertain the eligibility of prospective applicants.

- 2.2 The prospectus set out five categories under which groups could apply: Advice, Community Infrastructure, Environment & Wellbeing, Homeless Prevention and Equality. As expected, the programme was vastly oversubscribed with almost 40 applications totalling £600k against a budget of £263k.
- 2.3 Homeless Prevention was the only category for which demand matched budget at £12k. Following discussions with Homes First colleagues, a proposal was put to the Grants Working Group that the funds for Homeless Prevention be met by a provision from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) to address homelessness in the district.
- 2.4 The single application under the Homeless Prevention pot - from Lewes District Churches HOMELINK – was assessed by the working group as having suitably fulfilled the application criteria, with the group agreeing that DLUHC funds should cover the grant. The £12k could then be used to top-up the remaining categories.
- 2.5 Additionally, a further top-up for the Advice pot was recommended in recognition of the growing impact of the pandemic and the need for sound advice provision across the district. To that end, £11k will increase the offer to successful applicants within the advice stream. This brings the Community Grants Programme budget to £274kpa.
- 2.6 3VA's bid for grant funding, resulting in a proposed allocation of £29,000 under the Community Infrastructure category, was subject to independent scrutiny by the Grants Working Group and not influenced by 3VA's assistance to other prospective applicants.
- 2.7 The Grants Working Group were tasked with assessing each application against a set of criteria. After careful consideration and much deliberation, the group produced the grant allocation proposals set out in Appendix 1. It is recommended that Cabinet approves these proposals.

3 Consultation

- 3.1 Views were sought from the local voluntary sector, current grant recipients and Tenants of Lewes District, and the views expressed were taken account of in the development of the policy and prospectus.
- 3.2 In line with feedback received, it is recommended that the process of awarding the next grants cycle in 2025 commence a year in advance. This would enable sufficient notice of confirmation around funding for organisations.

4 Corporate plan and council policies

- 4.1 Making changes to the voluntary sector grants policy supports the council's pledge to promote open and transparent decision making, as outlined in the Corporate Plan.

- 4.2 The new policy improves alignment with the Corporate Plan pledge to respect and promote principles of equality and support the council's equality and fairness policy.

5 Financial appraisal

- 5.1 As set out in Appendix 1 of the report, the 2022/23 budget provision for grants to the voluntary sector is £273,978. Any increase to this amount would require additional funds to be identified as part of the current 2022/23 budget setting process.

6 Legal implications

- 6.1 The Council is permitted under its general power of competence, conferred by s.1 Localism Act 2011, to issue grants to local community bodies.
- 6.2 In issuing any grant, the Council must consider whether it amounts to a subsidy under the UK-EU Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA) and the World Trade Organisation's Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures; and, if so, whether it adheres to the subsidy principles specified in the TCA.
- 6.3 A grant would be considered a subsidy where (i) it is given by a public authority; (ii) it makes a financial contribution to an enterprise, conferring an economic advantage that is not available on market terms; and (iii) affects international trade.
- 6.4 Grants to truly local organisations are unlikely to be caught, as their effect on international trade would be minimal, if at all.
- 6.5 On this analysis, none of the proposed grants detailed in Appendix 1 of this report amounts to a subsidy for the purposes of the UK's subsidy control measures, and therefore need not be considered further under that regime.

Lawyer consulted 16.12.21

Legal ref: 010683-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 An Equality & Fairness Analysis has been undertaken on these recommendations. It established that an increase to the budget and scope of the Community Grants Programme will deliver a 100% increase to the number of organisations funded.

This includes financial support for:

- Organisations supporting disabled people, those with a long-term health condition and carers.
- Young people living with cancer.
- Residents to improve health & wellbeing.
- Nursery aged children.
- People who have sensory impairment or loss.
- A dedicated resource for parents from minoritized groups (LGBTQ+, diverse cultures & ethnicities) experiencing domestic abuse.
- Residents facing homelessness.
- Residents needing to access advice & benefits.

9 Environmental sustainability implications

9.1 The introduction of a funding category within the grants prospectus around wellbeing and sustainability promotes 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 improved physical and mental 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 - Recommended Grant Allocations

12 Background papers

None.