

COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME GUIDELINES & APPLICATION FORM

Cabinet – 12 September 2013

Report of Chief Officer – Communities & Business

Status: For Decision

Key Decision: Yes

Executive Summary: Minor changes are recommended to the Council's Community Grant Scheme guidelines in order to:

- Streamline the application process
- Place greater emphasis on volunteering
- Ensure that the scheme does not subsidise statutory services provided by the voluntary sector for other authorities under commissioning or other contract arrangements

This report supports the Key Aim of: Working with local people to deliver strong, active and sustainable communities.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Hogarth

Contact Officer(s) Chief Officer Communities & Business – Lesley Bowles

Recommendation to Cabinet:

That the proposed Community Grant guidelines as set out in the Appendix are agreed.

Reason for recommendation: To ensure that the scheme continues to support the Council's priorities and that the importance of volunteering is recognised.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Council's Community Grant Scheme helps voluntary organisations who provide services for residents of the District and contribute to relevant priorities set out in the Community Plan.
- 2 The total budget available for distribution in 2013/14 was £153,331, including £98,540 for the Citizens' Advice Bureaux. Funding for the Citizens' Advice Bureaux is subject to a three year Service Level Agreement from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2015.
- 3 The grant budget is agreed as part of the annual budget setting process.

- 4 The guidelines and application form for the Community Grant Scheme have been in place in the current format since 2010 and are therefore due for review to meet the needs of voluntary groups and to streamline the process.
- 5 The Council's Community Grant Scheme is run annually and opens to applications at the end of September each year, closing in November. Applications received are appraised by Officers in December and the Portfolio Holder in January. Recommendations from the appraisal process are considered by Cabinet in March of the following year, with grants made in April to ensure that voluntary organisations receive funding at the beginning of the new financial year.

Review of the Grant Scheme Guidelines and Application Form

- 6 **Running costs:** Historically, voluntary organisations have been able to apply to the Council not only for project costs but also the running costs associated with the project. It is important to local voluntary organisations that this should continue and the new guidelines support this. However, a mechanism is needed to ensure that grants from this Council do not subsidise the running costs of projects or services that are commissioned by other funders. This is necessary because funders such as the County Council are increasingly commissioning the provision of their own statutory services from the voluntary sector. The revised guidelines have addressed this.
- 7 **Emphasis on volunteering:** It is possible that the commissioning of the voluntary sector for the provision of statutory services may lead to a reduced emphasis on volunteering as organisations employ more staff to deliver such services. The District Council has had a culture of supporting volunteering and the proposed changes to the guidelines underpin and emphasise this.
- 8 **Streamlining:** Historically, the Councils scheme has used have been two application forms with different levels of performance indicators for different levels of grant. The revised scheme streamlines this to make it easier both for the applicant and the appraisal and monitoring process.
- 9 **Consultation:** Voluntary and community groups were consulted on proposed changes to the guidelines and application form at the Voluntary & Community Sector Forum in May. Suggestions made by those attending the meeting have been incorporated into the draft guidelines and application form.
- 10 A summary of the changes made to the Guidelines is as follows:
 - The scheme's priorities now include an increased emphasis on supporting volunteers and volunteering;
 - One application form for all applications, to be completed electronically; previously there were two application forms, one for funding up to £500 and one for funding over £500, up to £5,000.
 - Compulsory performance indicators are suggested for all applications:
 - For applications up to £500:

- (a) Number of residents benefiting from the grant;
- (b) Number of volunteers benefiting from the grant;
- o For applications over £500 and up to £5,000:
 - (a) And (b) above, plus at least three additional appropriate indicators.
- Applicants may not apply for funding for projects, services or activities that their organisation is already delivering in the District as part of an existing contract or service level agreement with another funder.
- In addition, a minimum application amount of £100 is suggested. The maximum application amount remains unchanged, at £5,000;

11 The draft guidelines are set out at Appendix A.

12 Members are asked to agree the draft guidelines.

Key Implications

Financial

13 The total budget available for distribution in 2013/14 was £153,331 and was made up as follows:

Total 2013/14 grant budget available to voluntary sector and youth groups, arts and sports councils and play schemes	£153,331
Grants to CABx for 2013/14 under the terms of the agreed SLA	£98,540
Grants to all other voluntary and youth groups	£54,790
Total Grants	£153,330

14 A number of the grants made in 2013/14 were made to organisations which provide services on behalf of Sevenoaks District Council. This includes the CABx, who provide General and Housing Advice Services, West Kent Mediation, who provide high hedge mediation services and North Kent Crime Prevention Panel, who offer crime prevention advice. A list of the organisations, funded through the 2013/14 Community Grants Scheme, providing services on behalf of this Council is set out below:

Organisation	2013/14 grant
Citizens' Advice Bureaux	£98,540

Sevenoaks District Arts Council	£4,600
Sevenoaks District Sports Council	£4,600
West Kent Mediation	£5,000
North Kent Crime Prevention Panel	£450
Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Services	£3,000
TOTAL	£116,190

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

- 15 All organisations applying to the Community Grants Scheme are required to have an Equal Opportunities Policy and sign an Equal Opportunities Statement.

RISK	IMPACT	CONTROL
That grant-aided organisations may not deliver the required performance	High	Monitoring of performance indicators takes place. In the case of an organisation not going ahead with a particular project, funding is clawed back.
That the grants are used for purposes other than those agreed by the Council.	High	Monitoring of the grant takes place through performance indicators. Funding conditions apply relating to the ring fencing of the grant in an organisation's accounts for the purpose specified. Officers pay particular attention to organisations receiving larger grants, eg through quarterly monitoring meetings with CABx. If it were found that the grant had not been used for the purpose for which it was agreed, it would be

		clawed back.
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Equality Impacts

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation / Evidence
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	The community grants scheme assists with the provision of services to support District residents, particularly those in the greatest need.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have the potential to promote equality of opportunity?	Yes	The grant scheme provides funding for specific groups, such as older people, families, young people and people with disabilities. Changes to the guidelines will help to target funding to those projects which assist volunteers across the District.
c. What steps can be taken to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		No negative impacts identified

Value For Money

- 16 All applications to the Community Grants Scheme are evaluated with a Value for Money calculation to ensure that grants made have the greatest impact in the community.

Sustainability Checklist

- 17 A Sustainability Checklist has been completed. There are no negative impacts identified.

Community Impacts and Outcomes

- 18 The Council's Community Grant Scheme assists a wide variety of voluntary organisations across the District to provide services for residents in greatest need.

Conclusions

- 19 The Council's Community Grant Scheme Guidelines have been reviewed and revised. Members are asked that the draft Community Grant guidelines are agreed.

Appendices

Appendix – Draft Community Grant Scheme Guidelines.

Background Papers:

Draft Community Grant Scheme guidelines

Lesley Bowles
Chief Officer for Communities & Business