

Appendix A

Sevenoaks District Council

Code of Practice for Grant-making

1. Background

1.1. Sevenoaks District Council is committed to improving the quality of life for our residents. We recognize that the community, voluntary sector and the businesses community have a significant role to play in helping us do this for residents who are more vulnerable and in need of support. In line with this, the Council delivers grant schemes, where it is able, to provide additional activities and projects that complement and support our strategic and overall objectives.

1.2. This Code of Practice has been adopted by the Council and is intended for use across all teams and services who are running or considering running a grant scheme using Council Funds.

1.3. From time to time, the Council may manage other grants such as those to individuals and other sectors including businesses. Grant schemes being delivered by the Council as a conduit of an external body e.g. DWP, must adhere to the funders requirements. Other Council grant schemes being delivered using external funding must adhere to the funders' requirements whilst following the principals of this policy.

2. Definition

For this purpose, a grant is taken to mean:

'a cash award for a specified initiative, project or service not provided by the Council which benefits those who live, work and volunteer in the District'

3. Requirements of our grant schemes

3.1. As a minimum, each grant scheme should specify:

- Guidelines for completing the application form;
- The objectives of the grant scheme, in particular how it will help the Council meet its overall objectives and support the Council's strategic objectives and if appropriate the objectives of the external funding body;
- The required outcomes the Council or funding body is seeking from the funding;
- Who is eligible to apply (see example list in **Appendix 1**);
- The timescales for the funding, including the deadline for applications and when decisions will be made;
- How we will make our decisions and the criteria against which applications will be appraised;

- Minimum and maximum grant level (if appropriate);
- Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating individual grant awards and the scheme as a whole.

4. Application Process:

4.1. The application form should be in plain English and targeted to the potential recipients. The degree of information required should be proportionate, reasonable and reflect the level of funding available.

4.2. The aim of the form is to give the applicant the opportunity to demonstrate how the application meets the scheme criteria, evidence of need, and the outcomes the applicant group expects to achieve. The suggested contents of the application form are found at **Appendix 2**.

4.2. There should be clear guidance on the application process given to applicants with the form. The suggested contents of this guidance is included at **Appendix 3**

4.4. A checklist or online equivalent should be provided for applicants to ensure that all information has been supplied and all relevant and necessary documents are provided with the application form.

4.5. Officers should keep a record of all requests for application forms and follow up, where appropriate, why these were not returned as part of the overall scheme evaluation.

5. Appraising applications and decision making

The Council supports the following principles regarding appraisals and decision-making:

- The process should be transparent and the method used made clear as part of the application guidelines;
- Grant appraisers should be trained and no decision should be made by an individual;
- Appraisal must take place against the given criteria and applicants must meet the set criteria in order to receive the grant;
- Appraisers must be clear that the scheme/proposal meets the main aim of the grant scheme and that the identified need is met;
- Appraisers need to ensure that they have a checklist for all the required documents, e.g. application form with all sections completed, accounts, safeguarding policies and procedures. If any document is missing, or is not considered adequate, the applicant should be given a limited period of time to provide them. If the information is not provided in this time period, then the application may not be considered. Timescales and ability to do this may be restricted due to funding body or other limitations;

- Appraisers must be satisfied that the applicant has confirmed they have an adequate safeguarding policy or policies in place to safeguard children, young people and/or vulnerable adults and the appropriate DBS checks have taken place. If appropriate, any organisation deemed not to have adequate arrangements in place may have conditions attached to their funding agreement or not receive any funding;
- If appropriate to the grant scheme, audited or independently examined accounts should be considered when the application is appraised. Where the applicant has not been in existence long enough to have a set of audited accounts, they must provide financial records commensurate with the level of grant being applied. The review of the accounts should be proportionate, reasonable and reflect the level of funding.
- If appropriate to the grant scheme, appraisers should consider any other funding the applicant has received from the Council and any monitoring data from these grants.
- Appraisers should keep clear records of their decisions regardless of the outcome of the appraisal.

6. Approval

6.1 All grant applications should receive a response indicating that the grant has been approved, held over or refused;

6.2. Approval letters should indicate clearly whether there are any conditions attached to the grant and include: the timescale for payments, monitoring requirements, and the Council's requirements regarding promotion and publicity. The Council's logo will be provided for this purpose;

6.3. If the application has not been approved, clear reasons should be given and further feedback provided if requested.

7. Monitoring & Evaluation

7.1. Monitoring has to be relevant and targeted to the applicant group, with the degree of detail reflecting the size of grant. It should assess achievements against agreed outcomes/targets;

7.2. As a minimum, recipients of grants must keep a record of beneficiary numbers, who else has benefited from the grant and any feedback from users. This should reflect any of the Council's obligations under the Public Sector Equalities Act.

7.3. The applicant group should carry out an evaluation of the project with the beneficiaries, proportionate to the size of grant, such as a satisfaction survey and/or case studies.

7.4. The grant process itself must be evaluated and reviewed internally at regular intervals, at least every 3 years, to ensure the system is still effective. This includes review of application forms, criteria, reporting etc. with feedback from applicants.

8. General

8.1. Working in line with the Data Protection Act, there should be an SDC database which everyone can access that gives details of those groups who have applied for funding and the outcome.

8.2. Details of all successful applications are now provided on the SDC website Transparency pages as required by law under the Localism Act 2011.

Appendix A1 Eligibility for all Council funded grant schemes

All of the following should be included in the eligibility criteria for applicants.

- The project should be for the benefit of people **living, working or volunteering in the Sevenoaks District**. This includes applicants who are based outside of the area but whose proposed activity is of benefit to those within the District;
- Any funding given should be ring-fenced for those living, working or volunteering in the Sevenoaks District and appear as such in the applicant organisation's accounts;
- The applicant group must have a written constitution or a set of rules or be verified that it is genuine entity i.e. a companies house / charity commission check;
- The applicant group must have a bank account and in the case of voluntary or community groups have at least 2 signatories, who are not related to each other and who do not live at the same address. If they do not have a bank account, they must nominate a properly constituted voluntary organisation to take responsibility for the money on their behalf;
- The applicant must, if requested or required by the scheme, enclose with the application a set of audited or independently examined accounts for the latest year available. If they have not been in existence long enough to have a set of audited accounts available, they should be able to provide financial records commensurate with the level of grant and provide evidence that they have a bank account as detailed above;
- The applicant group must confirm that they have an adequate safeguarding policy or policies in place to safeguard children, young people and/or vulnerable adults and the appropriate DBS checks have taken place.

Appendix A2: Application Form Contents

The level of detail the Council will require will vary according to the scheme and the amount of funding.

For most schemes we will expect the form to capture the following information:

- A description of the project, who it is aimed at, how it meets the scheme's objectives and criteria, and what outcomes will be delivered;
- The applicant's capacity to deliver the project, based on previous experience;
- Details of how the funding will be spent and any other financial or in kind contributions to the project or scheme. The level of information required will be proportionate to the level of grant.
- Clear evidence of financial need, and how the scheme provides value for money;
- If relevant to the funding pot in question, confirmation as to whether the applicant has applied to the Council on previous occasions;
- A project plan and timetable;
- A section where the applicant will set out performance indicators, which are measurable and capture the outcomes of the project;
- Details of any accreditation the organization has or is working towards;
- Confirmation that the applicant has written policies on equal opportunities, health and safety and safeguarding, and that these have been included with the application and/or has confirmed that they will adhere to the Council's policies;
- Details of the applicant's bank account;
- An Equalities statement;
- A named individual with contact details who will be the lead contact for the grant;
- Signature and date box (or online equivalent).

Appendix A3 Guidance on the application process

The Council considers that the following information is included in any guidance on the application process:

- Who is eligible to apply;
- The scheme criteria including links to relevant Council documents such as the Community Plan;
- The types of outcomes the funding pot expects to see and at least one example of these;
- Timescales for the scheme and the dates by which we will notify applicants of receipt of applications (within 10 days of receipt) and decisions on awards;
- How we will consider value for money;
- A clear statement that no applications will be considered after the closing date;
- How we will make our decisions, who will do this, and how we will allocate funding if the scheme is over-subscribed;
- A clear reminder that failure to complete all the necessary questions may invalidate the application;
- A statement that the Council will require grants to be paid back if the project does not go ahead for any reason and that failure to notify the Council that a project is not proceeding may jeopardize future applications;.
- Notification regarding payment processes and at what stage the funding will be made available e.g. on receipt of invoices, 100% in advance, staged payment etc;
- A statement confirming that all Council grants payments will be by direct debit and will be accompanied by a remittance advice and a letter setting out the conditions of the grant and monitoring arrangements;
- The level and timing of monitoring, evaluation and annual reporting required (*see Section 7: Monitoring and Evaluation*);
- Signposting to where further support is available, e.g. on writing and adopting safeguarding policies;
- A statement regarding data protection and our obligations as required by law under the Localism Act 2011 for transparency;
- Grant managers should provide a form for the applicant to sign and date and return, to confirm they have received the money and that it will be used for the purpose for which it was approved;

- The evidence required from applicants to prove that the money has been spent on what it was intended for. (*The financial threshold needs to be considered*).