

COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME DRAFT ALLOCATIONS 2024/25

Cabinet – 14 March 2024

Report of: Sarah Robson, Deputy Chief Executive, Chief Officer People & Places

Status: For Decision

Also considered by:

People & Places Advisory Committee - 5 March 2024

Key Decision: Yes

Executive Summary This report sets out information about the Community Grant Scheme and summarises applications received by the Council from voluntary organisations for funding during 2024/25.

This report supports the Key Aim of: the Council's Community Plan.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Lesley Dyball

Contact Officer(s): Kathryn Bone, Ext. 7176; Abbi Caine, Ext. 7259

Recommendation to People and Places Advisory Committee:

- (a) That Members note this report.

Recommendation to Cabinet:

- (a) Grants, as set out in Appendix C of this report, be approved subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 14.

Reason for recommendation: Applications received have been appraised according to the Council's Guidelines and those recommended for funding support the aims of the scheme and represent value for money.

Introduction and Background

1. The Council's Community Grant Scheme supports local charities and voluntary sector organisations that, through their work, contribute to the priorities set out in the Community Plan 2022-25.
2. The Council's Corporate Code of Practice for making grants was reviewed in 2022 and a revised Code of Practice was agreed at Cabinet on 7 July 2022. This is attached at Appendix A.

3. The grant guidelines were reviewed in 2022 and revised guidelines were agreed by Cabinet on 7 July 2022. These guideline documents can be found at Appendix B. The Scheme Guidelines provide applicants with information about the purpose of the scheme, its priorities and what cannot be funded. They also outline that funding is available for specific project core running costs in particular new community projects and initiatives.
4. In 2023/24, the grants awarded through the Community Grant Scheme enabled voluntary organisations to support 26,272 volunteer hours in the Sevenoaks District, which represented a net present value of £336k (as calculated by the Social Value Engine).

Details of the Community Grant Scheme for 2024/25

5. The grant scheme was publicised widely across the District within the voluntary sector, through the virtual Voluntary Sector Forum, Town and Parish Councils, In Shape Magazine, Social Media and local press in September 2023. The closing date was 2 November 2023.
6. Whilst the application questions remained the same as previous years, the online system capturing the completed applications was new this year. This was thoroughly tested prior to release. In addition, applicants were provided with a template Microsoft Word application form to enable them to have an insight into the questions and have all of the required information to hand prior to completing the online form.
7. As per the Grants Code of Practice, all applicants were required to provide details of their projected outcomes of their project. This is in the form of specific performance indicators. This year, the list of suggested performance indicators was designed around the Social Value Engine (SVE) which is now being used to accurately and transparently measure the social value provided by the scheme. The Council will use the SVE to calculate the net present value of the Community Grant Scheme as part of its monitoring and evaluation.
8. The total budget available for distribution to voluntary sector organisations in 2024/25 is £97,388, including £63,540 for Citizens' Advice in the District, £2,500 for the Sevenoaks District Arts Council (SDAC) and £2,500 for the Sevenoaks District Sports Council (SDSC). Funding for Citizens' Advice, SDAC and SDSC is subject to Service Level Agreements. The amount available for the Community Grants Scheme is £28,848.
9. A total of 40 grant applications were received which was significantly more than the 30 to 32 applications usually received. The 40 applications represent a total grant request of £151,162. However, it should be noted that many applicants have sought and received alternative funding advice from our Community Projects and Funding Officers, or successfully applied to alternative routes of Council funding, including the Better Together community mobilisation grant scheme or the Community Safety Grants.

10. A full schedule of applications is attached at Appendix C. The Portfolio Holder and Deputy Portfolio Holder for People & Places has access to copies of all of the applications and a full set is available via One Drive (access instructions can be provided separately on request). Officers would be pleased to deal with any detailed queries in advance of the meeting.

Appraisal Process

11. Members will appreciate that the recommended grants in Appendix C have been put forward following an appraisal by Officers trained in grant appraisal and a detailed consultation with the Portfolio Holder for People & Places, Cllr Dyball and the Deputy Portfolio Holder for People & Places, Cllr Bulford. Recommendations have been made in accordance with the Scheme Guidelines and the Council's Corporate Code of Practice for grants and take into account various factors, including:
 - The applicant's eligibility to apply;
 - The extent to which the application supports the schemes priorities;
 - The number of people that will benefit from the project and its value for money;
 - The level of benefit and the outcomes to those living, working and volunteering in the Sevenoaks District;
 - The level of need for the project, service or activity;
 - Any funding the applicant has received or is due to receive from the Council (including from other departments) and the outcome from any monitoring of these grants.
 - The sustainability of the project, service or activity beyond the length of the funding.

Recommended Level of Grant

12. A full list of grants recommended to voluntary organisations is attached at Appendix C.
13. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed of the reason for this decision, and encouraged to contact the District Council's Funding Officers and visit Funding For All's online free, comprehensive grant search database for advice and support in seeking funding elsewhere if appropriate.

Recommended Conditions

14. It is recommended that grants be made to voluntary organisations subject to the following conditions:

That performance indicators as set out in the application forms are adhered to and monitored;

That appropriate safeguarding policies and arrangements are in place, where necessary;

That appropriate recognition of this Council's funding contribution is made in all their publicity; and

Where services are provided over a wider area than the District boundaries, organisations will be required to hold grant aid from this Council in a restricted fund for the benefit of Sevenoaks District residents;

Key Implications

Financial

15. The level of funding is in accordance with the draft 2024/25 budget of £97,388.

Resources (Non Financial)

16. The work connected with the Community Grant Scheme administration and monitoring is being undertaken through existing resources.

Legal implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

17. There are no legal issues relating to this report. All organisations applying for funding are required to have an equalities policy (or have signed to say they will adhere to the District Council's policy) and where appropriate child protection and/or adult protection policies.
18. The following risks have been identified along with the resulting mitigation:
 - The grant allocated is lower than requested -This is mitigated by the application form asking whether a project could continue if the funding were reduced and what impact this would have on the performance indicators. The appraisal ensures value for money despite any reduced grant being offered.
 - Ensuring appropriate police checks and safeguarding procedures are in place for organisations that allocate onward funding as a result of the community grant that they receive – This is mitigated by grants being issued with a condition that checks are carried out and monitoring processes to confirm an effective process is in place.
 - That grant allocations are not approved in March – A timetable is in place to ensure grants are considered by Cabinet in March and processes are in place to ensure grant payments are made in early April.

Equality Assessment

19. Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. The decisions recommended through this paper

directly impact on end users. The impact has been analysed does not vary between groups of people. The results of this analysis are set out immediately below.

20. This community grant scheme assists with the provision of services to support Sevenoaks District residents, particularly those in the greatest need. Therefore this decision being made or recommended through this paper does not have the potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different groups in the community.
21. The grant scheme provides funding for specific groups, such as older people, families, young people and people with disabilities. The grants scheme is widely publicised to ensure that groups serving a wide range of needs are able to apply.

Net Zero Implications

22. The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment.

Conclusions

23. The work of the voluntary sector across the Sevenoaks District is highly valued. The Council's grants programme supports the dedication and commitment of the many volunteers who help the most vulnerable people in the District. Members are asked to agree the draft grant allocations as set out in Appendix C.

Appendices

Appendix A - Council's Corporate Code of Practice for making grants

Appendix B - Community Grant Scheme guidelines

Appendix C - Full Schedule of applications

Sarah Robson

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – People & Places