

NAME OF COMMITTEE	Community Services Committee
DATE	11th March 2014
REPORT TITLE	Amendments to Community and Economy Grant Criteria and Guidelines
Report of	Community Projects & Policy Officer
WARDS AFFECTED	All

Summary of report:

Following a review of the West Devon grant schemes this report proposes a number of changes to more flexibly utilise available funding to meet local needs and provide a consistent and streamlined set of criteria for the allocation of funding leading to the more efficient administration of applications.

Financial implications:

The revised process and guidelines remain within the allocated budget of £59,701 (£36,000 capital and £23,701 revenue). There are no further direct financial implications, however there will be savings generated in officer time with a simpler/streamlined process.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that Members:

1. Approve the revised grant guidelines as set out in Appendix A
2. Approve the revised approval process for the allocation of grant funding as set out in 2.4 of this report

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Currently there are a number of different grant schemes:

- The Community Project Grant scheme supports capital projects of local community benefit.
- The Village Hall Grant scheme supports capital works to repair, adapt, modernise or replace village/community halls.

- The Economic Development and Regeneration Grant scheme supports internal and external projects which help to deliver the Economic Delivery Plan.
 - The Arts Grant scheme aims to increase access to the arts and encourage people to take part.
 - The Sports Grant schemes support projects to improve the quality, range and impact of sport and physical activity and improve the skill level and number of volunteer coaches and officials in West Devon.
- 1.2 Each scheme has separate guidelines, although there are some common or similar clauses and processes. Only applications from not-for-profit organisations can be accepted.
 - 1.3 The Economy team manage and administer the Arts and Economic Development grants and the Community team manage and administer Community Projects, Village Halls and Sports Grants.
 - 1.4 Each scheme is funded from separate funding pots, which cannot be used to subsidise each other, although Community Projects Grants are able to fund some larger sports and arts projects as long as they fit the scheme criteria. The Community Projects Grants scheme and Village Hall Grants scheme are currently capital funded, whilst the other schemes are revenue funded.
 - 1.5 The responsibility for approving the allocation of funds rests with the Head of Service. Currently officers assess applications and recommend the sum to be allocated. An Intention to Delegate form is emailed to the Head of Service and Chair and Vice-Chair of Community Services Committee for comment. The form is then inserted in the Member Bulletin to provide all Members with an opportunity to comment or call-in to Committee if there are particular concerns.
 - 1.6 In June 2013 Members of Overview and Scrutiny were advised that the grant schemes would be reviewed to ensure they are able to support the delivery of a wide range of projects in the most effective and efficient way. In addition with formal approval to proceed with the Council's Transformation Programme consideration was required as to the how any future schemes would fit within the proposed new model.
 - 1.7 There is also the TAP (Town and Parish) Fund, which encourages town and parish councils to work collaboratively on projects of community benefit, this is largely funded by Devon County Council (DCC) with a different set of criteria and therefore not included in these proposals.

2. Revised Grant Schemes

- 2.1 A range of options to deliver grant schemes going forward were considered as part of the review process and for each option the benefits, concerns and constraints were evaluated. Consideration was given to:
 - Value for money;
 - Financial Resources;
 - Other Resource requirements, including the number of staff required and time commitment for specialist advice, decision-making and administration;

- Maximisation of available funding to meet local needs and enable projects to attract funds in from other sources;
- Funding a wide-range of projects to achieve the most community benefit;
- Ensuring funding meets the locally identified priorities;
- Consistency of approach to the allocation of funding;
- Level of accountability;
- The Council's Transformation Plan – the most effective and efficient way to deliver grants in the new model;
- The most straightforward, efficient and streamlined process for both the Council and communities.

2.2 Proposed revised guidelines can be found at Appendix A.

2.3 Key proposed changes are:

- Amalgamation of Community Projects & Village Hall grant schemes: Since 2001 the council has funded over 30 community/village halls through the Village Hall grant scheme, providing funding of around £400,000 to the majority of the communities in the borough to help them either modernise, update or build new facilities. As many communities now have updated facilities there is a reduced call on these grants in terms of numbers although we still receive 2-3 applications annually. At the same time there has been an increased demand for the community projects grants with good quality projects coming forward that meet local needs and aspirations. In order to make best use of available funds it is considered beneficial to merge both schemes which will still allow the funding of village halls where appropriate, but also enable us to fund more good quality local projects with the ability to offer a higher level of funding for some of these.
- Amalgamation of Economic Development and Arts Grant schemes: Since 2010 the Council has funded 48 arts projects of which only 9 have solely benefitted a small local community. In recognition of the impact that arts have on the wider economy and an increase in arts projects applying for an Economic Development Grant it is considered beneficial to merge both schemes to make the best use of available funds and officer time. This will allow us to encourage good quality projects to come forward that meet the Councils economic priorities.
- Whilst we are proposing one funding pot for sports grants, rather than split into sports and training, this is more around streamlining the process for greater efficiency but it will also enable better allocation of funds.
- In addition there will be streamlining of the allocation process, forms and criteria.

2.4 It is proposed to amend the approval process as follows:

- Ward members to be advised when a grant application is received so that they are given an early opportunity for comment before a recommendation is made.
- Grants up to £2,000 to be approved by the relevant manager (currently the Community Manager and the Economy Manager) in accordance with the agreed guidelines, with the decision on grants over £2,000 to be made by these managers in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Community Services Committee and then circulated to all members in the Member Bulletin, as currently, for comment and call-in to committee where there are concerns.
- As in 2013 a report with a list of all allocated grants for the previous financial year will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee annually for their consideration and comment.

3. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Localism Act 2011 - General Powers of Competence giving a local authority power to take reasonable action 'for the benefit of the authority, its area or persons resident or present in its area'.

3.2 Community Services Committee is responsible for approving policy relating to community and economic grants. Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for scrutinising the delivery of services and policy and may review existing policy and recommend changes to the appropriate Committee or Council.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no additional direct financial implications as a result of these changes.

4.2 The current budget for these grants overall is £59,701 (£36,000 capital and £23,701 revenue). Funding will be allocated from the capital or revenue pot as applicable.

4.3 Savings will be generated from adopting a streamlined process which will reduce officer time and provide a more efficient and consistent service.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 The Risk Management implications are shown at the end of this report in the Strategic Risks Template.

Corporate priorities engaged:	Community Life; Economy; Environment
Statutory powers:	Localism Act 2011 – General Powers of Competence
Considerations of equality and human rights:	The provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 and Equalities Act 2010 have been considered when developing this policy. A

	360 degree assessment is not required as the policy will not disproportionately affect any group covered by the Equalities Act.
Biodiversity considerations:	There are no biodiversity implications as a result of this report.
Sustainability considerations:	The long term sustainability of each project will continue to be considered as part of the application process.
Crime and disorder implications:	Some projects funded may alleviate issues of crime and disorder.
Background papers:	Report to 4 th June 2013 Overview and Scrutiny Committee – West Devon Borough Council grant Scheme Allocations 2012/13 T18 – Transformation plans and reports
Appendices attached:	Appendix A – Grant Schemes guidance notes

STRATEGIC RISKS TEMPLATE

No	Risk Title	Risk/Opportunity Description	Inherent risk status				Mitigating & Management actions	Ownership
			Impact of negative outcome	Chance of negative outcome	Risk score and direction of travel			
1	Delivery of outcomes and value for money	<p>Risk: Failure to deliver outcomes to the community and provide value for money for the Council's contributions</p> <p>Opportunity: To support local projects that deliver outcomes for communities in the most effective and efficient way, enhancing the reputation of the Council</p>	3	2	6	↓	<p>This more streamlined joined up approach will seek to maximise the allocation of funding to meet local needs and reduce risk, whilst increasing opportunity.</p> <p>Schemes will be reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to deliver outcomes and support a wide range of projects.</p> <p>Annual monitoring report will continue to be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p>	Community Manager/ Economy Manager
2	Council's transformation plan	Ensure that the scheme and process fit in with the proposed future operating model for the Council	3	2	6	↓	<p>This more streamlined joined up approach will enable a streamlined and consistent process that fits with the new model.</p> <p>The grant process will be reviewed regularly to ensure it continues to fit with the Council's operating model</p>	Community Manager/ Economy Manager
3	Financial	Funding not allocated to community grant schemes as part of budget-setting process, or withdrawn in later years	4	2	8	↔	Current funding allocated via capital and revenue budget. Future allocation will be part of the budget setting process.	Community Manager/ Economy Manager

Direction of travel symbols ↓ ↑ ↔