

Report to: **Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **11 July 2017**

Title: **Review of WDBC Community Grant Schemes**

Portfolio Area: **Customer First**

Wards Affected: **All**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: **Overview and Scrutiny**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

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Recommendations:

That Overview and Scrutiny Committee RECOMMENDS to the Hub that is RECOMMENDS to Council to:

1. Incorporate the Sports Grant into a 'Community Grant' scheme, retaining £2,000 as a revenue line to cover 'training/coaching grants.'
2. Exclude applications to the Community Grant from projects within Dartmoor National Park which have already received support from the DNPA Sustainable Communities Fund.
3. Support production of a one page summary of grant schemes which officers and Members can use to increase and sustain the level of promotion to local communities.
4. Support ongoing officer engagement with DCC to refocus the TAP scheme criteria on its original purpose, and reinstate the process that is outlined at paragraph 7.3 below.
5. Support the Arts Task & Finish Group recommendations shown in section 3.3-3.4 of the report regarding revenue funding to communities.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee have requested a review of existing Council community grant schemes, including options for streamlining or improving the schemes.

- 1.2 The Council administers a number of capital and revenue grant schemes which are open to applications from Town/Parish Councils and 'not for private profit making' community groups. These schemes support projects which deliver against Council priorities including Community, Environment, and Wellbeing. A summary of these schemes is set out in Appendix A, and the number of applications and commitments in Appendix B.
- 1.3 This report highlights the recommendation of the Arts Task and Finish Group which is for a new revenue scheme (using funds from the capital Community Project Grant scheme) to support initiatives which support community cohesion and vibrancy. See Appendix C for full Arts Task & Finish Group findings and recommendations.
- 1.4 This report makes recommendations intended to streamline the schemes and to ensure an increased level of applications to the schemes (detailed in Appendix D), ultimately maximising the ability of these schemes to deliver beneficial projects to West Devon communities.

2. Background

- 2.1 Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee highlighted that the grant scheme offer could be clearer, with seemingly multiple similar grant schemes.
- 2.2 The grant schemes available to the West Devon community are funded by the revenue budget, New Homes Bonus, and through developer funds previously generated by major planning applications. Whilst supporting similar projects (namely new or improved community facilities), each scheme is administered in a slightly different manner dependent on the intended purpose of the scheme and origin of the funds (detailed in Appendix A).
- 2.3 The level of applications vary across the grant schemes (see Appendix B). Whilst some schemes (TAP, DNP SCF) have had a high number of applications, others have had a disappointing level of applications in recent years.
- 2.4 The number of applications to the Community Projects and Sports Development schemes have historically fluctuated from year to year, and accordingly underspends have traditionally been rolled forward. It is also acknowledged that prior to and following T18 the level of promotion by specialist officers has reduced (namely Sports Development Officer, Arts Officer, and Regeneration Officer, each of whom were responsible for one of these grant schemes).
- 2.5 All WDBC grant schemes are currently administered by a Case Manager with support from a Specialist. With this reduced officer input, this is a good opportunity to review the schemes and subject to Members continuing to supporting the level of funding, to maximise the level of good applications to the funds.

3. Arts Task & Finish Group

- 3.1 Following the recommendations of the Economy Working Group to reduce funding to Villages In Action from £8,000 p.a. in 2016/17 to £4,000 p.a. in 2017/18 and concerns raised by Members at the joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee (17th January 2017 - O&S 8 refers), a Task & Finish Group formed to look at the support given to the Arts and to make relevant recommendations.
- 3.2 Appendix C shows the Terms of Reference, membership, findings and recommendations of the Arts Task & Finish Group.
- 3.3 Key recommendations as follows:
 - a. Create a Community Fund allowing for both **revenue** and capital grant applications.
 - b. To keep funding criteria for the Community Fund revenue monies broad including arts to allow for as many community projects as possible to apply provided applications support community cohesion and vibrancy.
 - c. Operate the revenue element of the fund similar to South Hams Sustainable Community Fund.
 - d. All revenue applications to be signed off by relevant Ward Member(s) before submission to officers to process payments.
 - e. In kind funding to be eligible as match funding in revenue applications.
 - f. Where possible first time applicants to be given priority over previous applicants.
 - g. Returning applicants to provide proof of how previous funds awarded were well spent.
 - h. Successful applicants to recognise the Council funding in any publicity by naming the Council as a contributor.
 - i. Villages In Action funding to be ring fenced and if not used by VIA to be transferred to the revenue Community Fund.
 - j. Museum funding to continue as considered good value for money.
 - k. That this new revenue component of the Community Fund to total £5,300 (as per previous Arts Grant Scheme annual budget) with applicants able to apply for up to £500 per grant.
- 3.4 The sum of £5,300 could be covered by reserves in 2017/18 due to successive underspend of the capital budget, and formally included in the budget in 2018/19. In 2018/19 the capital Community Project Grant budget would be reduced by £5,300 and a separate revenue budget line of the same amount created. The origin of the funds would remain the New Homes Bonus, which can be spent on revenue or capital expenditure. It is recommended these arrangements are reviewed in 12-18 months to gauge how a new revenue Community Fund performs and whether £5,300 is an appropriate figure.

4. Incorporate the Sports Grant into a 'Community Grant' scheme, retaining £2,000 as a revenue line to cover training/coaching

- 4.1 This is a simple incorporation of the Sports Grant into an overarching 'Community Grant' scheme. Any of the existing capital equipment/facility applications would continue to be eligible for the Community Grant. A revenue line of £2,000 would be retained to cover training and coaching applications as these are seen as being beneficial to the sustainability of grass roots sports in West Devon.
- 4.2 Officers will seek to maximise the promotion and support offered by the Okehampton Recreation Community Association to increasing sports participation and development across West Devon. OCRA are supported with an annual £2,000 payment, previously subject to a Service Level Agreement (now expired). Part of the previous SLA was for OCRA to act as the first point of contact for clubs wishing to develop facilities and coaching.
- 4.3 The arrangement with OCRA is likely to be subject to review by the Commissioning Manager and Leisure Specialist, and the requirement to align this 'first point of contact' role with supporting groups to apply to the Community Grant will be a key requirement of any future formal agreement.
- 4.4 Additionally, OCRA have now entered an agreement with Fusion (Leisure centre provider) with respect to delivering a Sports and Activity Development Plan on behalf of Fusion. This offers a further opportunity for OCRA to promote the WDBC Community Grant to suitable sports clubs across West Devon.

5. Exclude applications to the Community Grant from projects within Dartmoor National Park which have already received support from the DNPA Sustainable Communities Fund

- 5.1 Currently applicants to the Community Project Grant scheme from within Dartmoor National Park can also apply to the Sustainable Communities Fund for the same project. The source of both of these funds is the New Homes Bonus money paid to WDBC, part of which is then paid to DNPA according to the number of house completions within DNP, and subsequently administered to community groups via the SCF.
- 5.2 Applicants from outside DNP are only eligible to apply to the Community Project Grant. It is proposed that to equalise the opportunity to access funds, applicants should only be able to secure funds from one of these funding pots towards a single project.
- 5.3 Accordingly it is proposed to exclude applications to the Community Grant if a project already has a commitment of funds from the DNPA SCF, and vice versa.

6. Support officer production of a one page summary of grant schemes which officers and Members can use to increase and sustain the level of promotion to local communities.

- 6.1 Each grant scheme is promoted by officers through existing networks (e.g. CVS newsletters), attendance at events (e.g. presentations at funding events), emails and presentations to Town and Parish Clerks, WDBC website, and the local press.
- 6.2 As is evident from the small number of applications to the Sports and Community Projects in some recent years it is apparent that officers need to do more to promote the schemes and ensure potential beneficiary groups hear about the schemes (and subsequently apply).
- 6.3 It is not considered that the small number of applications to the Sports and Community Projects in some recent years is evidence that the schemes are no longer required. Levels of applications do fluctuate, and it is clear from the applications in 2016/17 and this current financial year to the Community Projects Grants scheme that there is still a need from the West Devon community.
- 6.4 Subject to Member support, to assist with clarity of promotion, officers will produce a one page summary of grant schemes which officers and Members can use to increase and sustain the level of promotion to local communities. Members can play a key role in ensuring that potential beneficiary groups/projects within their Ward hear about the schemes, and to encourage groups to apply.
- 6.5 Clearly, if the scheme is better promoted and levels of applications remain low then there may be a case for reviewing the size of the Community Grant scheme, however it is considered that this would currently be premature and to the detriment of the West Devon community.

7. Support ongoing officer engagement with DCC to continue to refocus the TAP scheme criteria on its original purpose, and require officers to circulate project applications to Link specific DCC and WDBC Members in advance of circulating Link agenda

- 7.1 As a result of an Audit of the TAP Fund in 2017 by DCC and further discussion of findings by DCC Cabinet, DCC officers are seeking to work with Borough/District officers to review the existing TAP Fund Guidance in readiness for 2018/19, with the aim of revitalising and reinforcing the TAP Fund brand; returning to its original concept of a joint DCC/District scheme that supports new, collaborative and innovative ideas generated by communities to benefit those communities.

- 7.2 It is proposed that WDBC officers engage with this process to bring their experience to the table and report back to WDBC and DCC Members accordingly of any amendments to the existing TAP Fund Guidance and approach proposed by DCC officers.
- 7.3 It is further noted that the lead officers administering the TAP Fund scheme have only recently been made aware of the previously agreed requirement whereby Council officers should circulate a summary of each TAP Fund application to the local DCC and WDBC Members for their informal consideration prior to being included on a Link Committee agenda. The purpose of this requirement was to enable officers to review applications first to ensure that they complied with the Fund criteria, with any issues then being highlighted in advance to local Members for their early consideration. If concerns were raised during this stage, then there would be the opportunity for applications to be either reviewed and/or withdrawn before a Link Committee agenda is published. This stage of prior consultation has not been implemented over the last couple of years and it is recommended that it be re-instated with immediate effect.
- 7.4 Accordingly, officers have noted this requirement, and will commence the circulation of such a summary with immediate effect.

8. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	<p>There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report as West Devon Borough Council accepts no liability for projects beyond the provision of Community Project Grants.</p> <p>The Council has powers to give these grants in order to support its priorities through the Localism Act's Powers of General Competence.</p>
Financial	Y	<p>The existing Community Project Grant scheme is a Capital Budget line, with the majority of the West Devon Capital Programme funded by the New Homes Bonus. Funds from the NHB can be used towards capital or revenue expenditure. If Members are minded to set up a new budget line for revenue projects this would be acceptable use of NHB monies. This could be actioned within the 17/18 financial year funding the revenue from reserves initially and then building it into the budget formally for 18/19.</p> <p>Incorporating the Sports Grant into a Community Grant would have no financial implications, although the £2,000 retained from the £8,130 Sports Grant for training grants would need to be built into the budget</p>

		formally in 2018/19. Overall, the report is not recommending any changes to the overall budget available for community grants.
Risk		It is not considered that incorporation of the Sports Grant into a Community Grant carries any risk. Excluding applications to the CP grant scheme from projects within DNP which have already received support from the DNPA SCF will disadvantage a small number of projects which might otherwise have sought funds from both schemes.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	Grants support funding to a wide range of community groups, therefore promoting equal opportunities.
Safeguarding	N	
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Y	Grants commonly deliver health and wellbeing benefits to West Devon communities.
Other implications	N	

Supporting Information-

Appendices:

Appendix A – Current and recently ceased WDBC grant schemes

Appendix B – Summary of commitments in current and recently ceased WDBC grant schemes

Appendix C – West Devon Arts Task and Finish Group

Appendix D – Options, pros & cons of current and alternative approaches

Background Papers:

None