

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
30 SEPTEMBER 2019**

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMY AND REGNERATION

STRATEGIC GRANTS PROGRAMME 2020 – 2023

Cabinet Member(s): Councillor Dennis Knowles

Responsible Officer: Mrs Jenny Clifford, Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration

Reason for report: To set out the process for agreeing the level of grant funding for external agencies under the Community Strategic Grants Programme for the period 2020 to 2023.

RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.

Financial Implications: There are no cost implications with regard to setting out the process outlined in this report. However this process will set a robust basis for the financial assessment of future grant awards.

Legal Implications: There are no legal implications envisaged with respect to setting up the working group and any legal implications arising from the recommendations from that group will be set out in any subsequent reports.

Risk Assessment: The proposed assessment of grants will minimise risk with regard to the Council's investment.

Equality Impact Assessment: The Community Strategic Grants Programme funds key strategic community organisations that offer support to vulnerable residents. Each of these organisations will have their own equality policies and procedures.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The allocation of grants provides support to external agencies delivering services that advance the Council's corporate priorities. Grant allocations tend to be most closely Homes and Community priorities.

Impact on Climate Change: Ensuring that residents are able to get information and advice through locally delivered services reduces travel and related environmental impact.

1.0 Introduction/Background

This report lays out the process for allocating grant funding under the Community Strategic Grants Programme for the financial period 2020-2023. The review follows the principles laid out in the Council's Grants and Funding Strategy, which maintains that, in an environment in which local authority funding is becoming increasingly constrained, grants should be allocated to a core group of agencies whose services:

- (a) complement and expand upon the services already provided by the Council;
- (b) demonstrably contribute to the Council's priorities, as detailed in its Corporate Plan;
- (c) offer choice to residents;
- (d) bring social and economic benefit, and
- (e) provide best value.

2.0 Grants Review 2017- 2020

2.1 Through the last Grants Review, the Council awarded three-year funding for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2020 under the following categories:

1. Welfare Advice and Information Services, including debt advice, money advice and housing advice;
2. Community Transport Services; and
3. Support for Community Organisations.

2.2 Grants were awarded to six external agencies which were seen to deliver services that complement the Council's own service provision and which contribute to the social wellbeing and economic prosperity of the district.

- Welfare Advice and Information Services
 - Age UK Mid Devon,
 - Churches Housing Action Team (CHAT),
 - Citizens Advice.
- The Community Transport Services
 - Tiverton and District Community Transport Association, (now known as Mid Devon Mobility)
- Support for Community Organisations
 - Involve – Voluntary Action in Mid Devon
 - The Onion Collective.

2.3 The three-year funding agreement with the Onion Collective, a Somerset based social enterprise specialising in regeneration projects, was intended to help develop large scale, flagship projects across the district. However, few meaningful projects of this type came forward and the agreement was cancelled by mutual consent at the start of the financial year 2019/20.

2.4 As part of the funding agreement, each grant funded organisation is required to (a) report regularly on an agreed set of key performance indicators and (b) give a presentation on their work to the Community Policy Development Group. With the exception of the Onion Collective, which was subject to a slightly different arrangement due to the nature of the expertise provided, all funded agencies have satisfied the above conditions.

3.0 Community Strategic Grant Programme 2020 – 2023

- 3.1 With the exception of the award to the Onion Collective, the move to three-year funding arrangements for Age UK Mid Devon, the Churches Housing Action Group, Citizens Advice, Involve – Voluntary Action in Mid Devon, and Mid Devon Mobility has proved to be a success. It has provided residents – often the district’s most vulnerable and marginalised – with resources to support their basic needs, while alleviating pressure on and complementing Council services. The three-year funding agreement has enabled the Council and Strategic Grant aided agencies the opportunity to develop a closer working relationship and provided a degree of security through funding continuity, while the Council’s continued investment encourages other grant-making bodies to similarly invest.
- 3.2 It is recommended that a similar approach is applied to the Strategic Grants Programme 2020-2023. In order to review the level of grant funding to individual agencies, it is recommended that the Community Policy Development Group appoint a working group that should meet and report back to the Policy Development Group at its meeting in December, so that its recommendations can be included as part of the budget setting process.
- 3.3 In conclusion, following the Grants Review 2017-2020, the move towards three-year funding agreement has provided a secure basis on which to support external agencies that continue to provide advice and support to vulnerable residents. This can help alleviate pressure on the Council’s own services, which often have to divert resources into dealing with matters that are not strictly within the Council’s remit. It is recommended that this approach continues for the financial period 2020 -2023 with a review to set funding levels.

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Leadership Team