

CABINET

19th December 2019

STRATEGIC GRANTS PROGRAMME BEYOND 2020

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Dennis Knowles – Community Well-Being
Cllr Graeme Barnell – Planning & Economic Regeneration

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

Reason for report: To agree the approach to community grant funding when the current 3-year agreements come to an end in 2020.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That recipients of all grant agreements in place as part of the council's strategic grants programme are offered a single year extension (to end 31st March 2021) to ensure they have continuity of funding for their services
2. That recipients of the two grants not currently included within the council's strategic grants programme (Grand Western Canal and Tiverton Museum and Tourist Information Service) are also offered a single-year extension (to end 31st March 2021) to ensure they have continuity of funding for their services .
3. That in future years all grants are considered as part of one budget and decision-making process, and that these sit within the Community Well-Being portfolio.
4. That officers are instructed to commence work early in the financial year 2020/21 to initiate a full evaluation and review of the grants programme; to carry out the same process as was undertaken previously to establish the 3-year programme; and to bring forward recommendations on a new 3-year programme with reference to the Community PDG as appropriate.

Financial Implications: The budget allocated for the combined grants during the 2019/20 financial year was (£77,650 + £45,000 + £31,500). With one agreement being ended by mutual consent during the year, this report recommends that grant levels to the remaining recipients remains at its 2019/20 levels. This will see a cost reduction to the 2020/21 budget of £6,000.

Legal Implications: The existing agreements with each recipient will need to be extended for one year. No further legal implications are envisaged as a result of this report. It is important to recognise that these are grants given to support the work and projects delivered by these agencies – the Council is not commissioning these services.

Risk Assessment: Proposing to continue funding at current levels during 2020/21 will minimise risk to third parties and will ensure that the recipient organisations can continue to provide their services to their customers in the short term.

Equality Impact Assessment: The grants provided by the council are intended to fund community organisations that offer strategic benefit to the district, or provide support to vulnerable residents. Each of these organisations will have their own Equality policies and procedures in place.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The allocation of grants provides support to external agencies delivering services that are in line with the Council's own corporate priorities. Grant allocations tend to be mostly aligned to Homes and Community priorities.

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

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Under its Strategic Grants Programme 2017-2020 the council has offered three-year grant funding to a small number of external agencies. These agencies provide services which are seen to be strategic to supporting vulnerable residents in Mid Devon and which complement the council's own services. The five organisations receiving grants in the period 2017-2020 have been:

- Age UK Mid Devon
- Churches Housing Action Team (CHAT)
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Involve – Voluntary Action in Mid Devon
- Mid Devon Mobility (formerly Tiverton and District Community Transport Association).

The programme also funded a Somerset based social enterprise specialising in regeneration projects, the Onion Collective, which it was hoped would be able to help develop larger scale, flagship projects across the district. However, few significant projects of this type ultimately came forward and the funding was ended by mutual agreement at the start of 2019/20.

1.2 In addition the council also provides funding to Devon County Council towards their running of the Grand Western Canal, and provides funding to the Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life and Tourist Information Service (which is located within the museum).

2.0 Strategic Grants Programme 2020 Onwards

2.1 A report was taken to the council's Scrutiny committee on 30th September 2019 (see background papers). This report updated the committee on the process that resulted in the 2017-20 grant allocations being established, and explained that a similar approach would be taken for the next 3-year period.

- 2.2 At a meeting of the Community Wellbeing Policy Development Group on the 8th October 2019, it was agreed to set up a working group to review the level of grant funding for recipients of the Council's Strategic Grants Programme for the period 2020-23. The working group would report back to the Policy Development Group at its meeting on the 10th December.
- 2.3 The working group met on the 22nd October and was asked to consider four areas:
- The criteria for selecting the agencies that should be funded;
 - Whether the cohort of agencies, with the exception of the Onion Collective, represents the appropriate organisations that should be funded
 - The level of funding for each agency, taking into account the number of beneficiaries provided for (see Table 1, paragraph 2.2).
 - The term of the funding period and whether this should move from 3 years to a revised period, taking into account the Council's budgetary position.
- 2.4 The working group recognised the importance of the five strategic partners and the complementary nature of their services to the Council. Apart from the £6,000 offered to the Onion Collective, they recommended that the level of funding for the other five organisations should remain the same as in the previous funding period (2017-2020).
- 2.5 The process as undertaken by the Community PDG did not include a full evaluation or audit of performance by the existing grant recipients. It was not aware of any revised financial envelope that might be required as part of the council's budget-setting process. It also did not go through the same process as was agreed previously, and instead took as its starting point the understanding that each of the current grant recipients should be supported in future. This is different to what the scrutiny committee had been advised.
- 2.6 The working group acknowledged that continuing funding support would allow recipient organisations to plan for their future and would allow them to raise further match funding to sustain their operations.

3.0 Additional Grants Considered Separately

- 3.1 In addition to the strategic grants programme, the council also makes contributions to Devon County Council for their running of the Grand Western Canal, and the Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life and Tourist Information Service (which is located within the museum).
- 3.2 The Economy PDG had been due to consider reports on each of these grants during November in order to be able to feed into the council's budget-setting process for 2020/21. However, as these were not considered alongside the remainder of the grant programme (and within the council's increasingly-constrained budgetary position), it was considered appropriate that these reports were delayed pending this decision by cabinet.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 In light of the lack of time remaining within the current financial year to conduct the necessary evaluation and review, and to undertake a new grants application and assessment process, it is suggested that the recommendations at the top of this report are approved in order to provide a known budget position for 2020/21 for all grant recipients, and the council itself.

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Circulation of the report: Cllr Dennis Knowles
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List of background papers:

Grants Report to Scrutiny Committee on 30th September 2019:

<https://democracy.middevon.gov.uk/documents/s15254/Grants%20Review%20report%20for%20Scrutiny%2030%20September%202019.pdf>