

## **STRATEGIC GRANTS REVIEW**

**Cabinet Member(s):** Cllr Dennis Knowles – Community Well-Being

**Responsible Officer:** Adrian Welsh, Strategic Manager Growth, Economy and Delivery

**Reason for report:** To agree the process for a review of strategic grant funding for the financial year 2022-23.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. That the Community PDG nominates members for a working group to look at the Council's funding priorities for the period 2022-23
2. That the Committee asks Cabinet to set the level of strategic grants funding as part of the budget setting process.

**Financial Implications:** The budget allocated for the combined grants during the 2021/22 financial year was £138,500. The funding available for 2022-23 will be dependent on the Council's budgetary review this autumn, but is likely to be impacted by the need to reduce general fund expenditure by between 8-10% to balance the budget.

**Legal Implications:** In the event that funding priorities change and a proposal comes forward which will result in some organisations receiving less or no funding, careful consideration should be given to whether such a proposal ought to be subject to a consultation before a final decision is made.

**Risk Assessment:** The purpose of the working group is to provide a more informed basis for decision-making and will minimise risks with regard to any potential change to the grants.

**Equality Impact Assessment:** In the event that funding priorities change and a proposal comes forward which will result in some organisations receiving less or no funding, a full Equality Impact Assessment needs to be done to assess the potential impact of such cuts on residents before a final decision is made.

**Relationship to Corporate Plan:** The allocation of grants provides support to external agencies delivering services that advance the Council's Homes, Community and Economy priorities.

**Impact on Climate Change:** Ensuring that residents are able to get information and advice through locally delivered services and are able to access local cultural, leisure and green space opportunities reduces travel and related environmental impact.

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Mid Devon District Council values the role of the community and voluntary sector in providing key services to the community, meeting the needs of Mid Devon residents, particularly the most vulnerable, and helping to deliver the Council's Corporate Objectives.
- 1.2 Under the Strategic Grants Programme 2017-2020 the Council offered three-year funding to five community and voluntary sector partners, whose services were seen to be of strategic importance in supporting Mid Devon's vulnerable residents and complementing the Council's own services. In addition, the Council provided funding under its Economic Development budget to the Grand Western Canal, Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life, and the Tourist Information Service, as public / community sector partners who contribute to the local economy through their support to the tourism sector.
- 1.3 At the Cabinet meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2019, it was agreed to amalgamate the two budgets into one strategic grants programme, and to extend the funding for a year to March 2021 in order to undertake a thorough review of the grants programme.
- 1.4 Due to the pandemic, it was not possible to carry out this review of the grants programme. However, a working group was convened to make recommendations on the grant programme for 2021-22. The working group met three times to discuss and approve recommendations that were agreed at Community PDG.
- 1.5 In February 2021, the Cabinet agreed to extend the grant scheme for a further year to March 2022 with the following resolutions:
- A one year grant award be made for 2021-2022, with a review in the autumn of 2021
  - Grants to be made on a 1 year settlement basis, to be reviewed annually each autumn
- 1.6 The level of funding for 2021-2022 was set at:

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>2021-2022 Grant</b>
Churches Housing Action Tam (CHAT)	£12,500
Citizens Advice	£15,500
Involve – Voluntary Action in Mid Devon	£12,000
Mid Devon Mobility	£22,000
Grand Western Canal	£45,000
Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life	£27,500
Tourist Information Service	£4,000
<b>Total Grants</b>	<b>£138,500</b>

This report sets out the framework for a grants review process to take place between October and December this year.

## 2.0 Strategic Grants Review 2021

2.1 The purpose of the Strategic Grants Review is:

- To ensure that the Council's investment is directed appropriately to meet the needs of residents and supports the Council's own priorities as expressed in its Corporate Plan
- To report back to members on what has been achieved with the previous year's funding
- To ensure that funding achieves real outcomes for the community and value for money for taxpayers.

The review also provides an opportunity for strategic partners to discuss with members the emerging needs, challenges and opportunities facing the community and the sector.

2.2 In order to facilitate the review process and to allow for a more detailed scrutiny by members, it is proposed that the Community PDG sets up a working group to receive information and presentations from the Council's strategic partners and to make recommendations on priorities and funding level. The report therefore recommends:

That the Community PDG nominates members for a working group to look at the Council's funding priorities for the period 2022-23.

2.3 At the same time, in view of the continuing pressure on local government finances, which is likely to require an 8-10% reduction in general fund expenditure over the coming year, it seeks clarification from the cabinet on funding levels throughout the period 2022-23 and ideally a longer-term commitment to provide certainty to the voluntary and community sector partners. There is a case to be made that a proportionate reduction would be easier to manage if funding certainty were available beyond a single year period. Therefore it is recommended that:

The Committee asks Cabinet to set the level of strategic grants funding as part of the budget setting process.

2.2 In order to undertake the review, and give voluntary and community sector organisations sufficient notice of intended funding levels for 2022-23, the following timetable is proposed.

Step	Milestone	Date
	Report to Community PDG	21 <sup>st</sup> Sep 2021
	Set up Strategic Grants Working Group	Sept 2021
	Invite written submissions from strategic partners	1 <sup>st</sup> week Oct 2021

	Evaluation of written submission	1 <sup>st</sup> – 2 <sup>nd</sup> week Nov 2021
	Presentations to Strategic Grants Working Group	Nov-Dec 2021
	Report to Community PDG	25 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2022
	Decision by Cabinet	1 <sup>st</sup> Feb 2022
	Funding agreements issued	March 2022

2.3 A more detailed timetable will be produced once the strategic grants working group has been nominated.

**Contact for more information:**

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**Circulation of the report:** Cllr Dennis Knowles

**List of background papers:**