

REPORT TO: Cabinet

5 September 2018

LEAD OFFICER: Head of Sustainable Communities and Wellbeing

Community Chest Review 2018

Purpose

1. To agree changes to the criteria for the Community Chest grant scheme.
2. This is not a key decision.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that Cabinet agrees the proposed changes to the Community Chest guidance notes, which include the criteria, as set out at Appendix A, as recommended by the Grants Advisory Committee.

Background

4. The Community Chest was first set up by the South Cambridgeshire Local Strategic Partnership in 2008/09 with funding provided by government. In 2011/12, once the government funding had stopped, the Council decided to continue to fund the scheme. The scheme has evolved and developed over the years.
5. The base budget for the Community Chest has remained stable since 2012/13. The base budget in 2011/12 was £30,000 and from 2012/13 to 2018/19 is £57,000. The amount of funding actually awarded has varied each year due to additional funding sometimes being vired into the Community Chest where, for example, other grants schemes have underspent or been returned.
6. The number of grants awarded per annum, plus the total amount of funding awarded each year is set out below:

Year	Number of Awards	Funding allocated (£)
2011/12	46	29,457
2012/13	78	56,762
2013/14	58	50,213
2014/15	65	73,678

2015/16	73	84,470
2016/17	63	78,977
2017/18	103	88,963

7. Applications are mainly submitted online, via a short online form. Paper copies are available where this is not possible.
8. On 24 May the Leader and Finance Portfolio Holder decided to temporarily close the Community Chest and Community Energy Grants scheme to allow elected members to review the schemes' criteria. It was also agreed that applications received on or before 31 May 2018 would be considered using the schemes existing criteria.
9. The terms of reference for the Grants Advisory Committee state that the Committee's function is:
- “To consider and make recommendations to the Portfolio Holder responsible for grants, or Cabinet as appropriate, including, but not limited to:
- Review of the Council's grant schemes to ensure they reflect Council priorities.
 - Design of any new or revised grants schemes, including consideration of criteria and guidance applicable in respect of each scheme.
 - Consideration of applications made under the Council's grants schemes.”
10. At its meeting on 21 June, the Grants Advisory Committee agreed to hold an elected member and officer workshop to review the Community Chest criteria. The workshop was held on 12 July and included the following participants, which included all members of the Committee and any substitutes that were able to attend:
- (a) Councillor Jose Hales
 - (b) Councillor Clare Delderfield
 - (c) Councillor Claire Daunton
 - (d) Councillor Sue Ellington
 - (e) Councillor Peter McDonald
 - (f) Councillor Sarah Cheung Johnson
 - (g) Councillor Shrobona Bhattacharya
 - (h) Councillor Bunty Waters
 - (i) Gemma Barron – Head of Sustainable Communities and Wellbeing
 - (j) Katherine Southwood – Project Officer
11. At its meeting on 27 July the Grants Advisory Committee formally agreed the changes that it will be recommending to Cabinet.

Considerations

12. In considering the Community Chest criteria, the following points were discussed at the workshop on 12 July:
- (a) Keep name as Community Chest (good brand awareness).
 - (b) Parish Councils should be ineligible, however, non-precepting Parish Meetings should be able to apply (parishes have the ability to use s137; more money available for other local groups).
 - (c) Where a charity applies, officers to make checks re charity status.
 - (d) Educational establishments and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) should remain eligible as long as there is wider community benefit.
 - (e) Faith groups should remain eligible as long as there is wider community benefit or under historic buildings category.
 - (f) Membership groups such as scouting groups and sports clubs should remain eligible, but priority to be given to community projects/activities that have a youth development focus.
 - (g) Should amend requirements to:
 - i. Remove reference to delivery of SCDC priorities/aims (Corporate Plan)
 - ii. Add 'Promote healthy and active communities', 'develop skills' and 'Enhance the natural environment'.
 - (h) Should amend to 'community activities and projects' where the eligibility currently mentions projects.
 - (i) Suggest remove specific mention of 'Tree and hedge planting' (to be covered under wider heading of enhancing the natural environment).
 - (j) Should not fund activities or projects that are deemed to be the responsibility of parish councils or other public sector organisations.
 - (k) Should not fund promotional materials.
 - (l) Restriction of maximum of £3,000 per parish to be replaced with a new formula based upon size of ward.
 - (m) New communities could receive additional funding at the decision-makers discretion.
 - (n) Keep maximum award at £1,000.
 - (o) Should require 50% match funding from parish council if project on parish council land.
 - (p) Suggest 50% funding to be released on 1 April annually and remaining 50% to be released on 1 October annually. Applications to continue to be allocated on first-come first-served basis.

- (q) If related land/buildings are leased, applicant must state length of lease. Decision-makers discretion regarding award based on lease length.
 - (r) If parish council not financially contributing to project/activity, ask applicant to provide reason.
 - (s) The Council should provide “Funded by South Cambridgeshire District Council” stickers where appropriate (plaques are already available).
13. Following discussion at its meeting on 27 July, the Grants Advisory Committee delegated responsibility to the Chairman of the Committee, in liaison with the Portfolio Holder, to further amend the criteria to ensure that:
- (a) smaller parish meetings, whether precepting or not, be able to apply to the fund. A definition of ‘smaller’ to be agreed prior to Cabinet.
 - (b) the formula for the maximum amount of funding that would be available to groups within parishes is made more equitable. It was agreed that the proposal put forward at the workshop, based on ward size, would not create a more equitable scheme, although that was the aim.
 - (c) ‘enables inclusive communities’ is added to the list of what the community activity or project must deliver.
14. The existing Community Chest guidance notes, which include the criteria, have been updated (shown as tracked changes) based on the discussions at the workshop, the Committee meeting on 27 July and changes made under delegation following the 27 July meeting (see Appendix A). With regard the outstanding matters that were delegated at the 27 July meeting, it is now proposed that:
- (a) any Parish Council or Parish Meeting with under 160 electors can continue to apply to the Community Chest, and
 - (b) discretion be given to the Grants Advisory Committee and Portfolio Holder to recommend/award varying amounts to villages based upon funding available, size of electorate, parish precept, indices of deprivation, number and type of applications received at any given time, priorities for the financial year and value for money.
15. The Community Chest is a popular grant scheme and there have been a number of enquiries regarding the timeline for re-opening the scheme since its temporary closure on 31 May.

Options

16. Cabinet could:
- (a) agree the proposed changes to the Community Chest guidance notes, which include the criteria, as set out at Appendix A, as recommended by the Grants Advisory Committee, or
 - (b) agree, with amendments, the proposed changes to the Community Chest guidance notes, which include the criteria, as set out at Appendix A, or

- (c) decide not to make any changes to the current scheme.

Implications

17. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

Financial

18. This report is not seeking to amend the amount of funding available in the Community Chest. It is assumed that the funds, as agreed by Council in February remain in place for 2018/19.

Risk Management

19. Risk to the Council is managed via the documentation that is required of applicants plus agreement of the grant conditions.

Equality and Diversity

20. Depending on the amount of changes recommended it may be necessary to carrying out an EQIA screening.

Consultation responses

21. Scrutiny and Overview Committee considered the proposed changes at its meeting on 14 August. Comments received were:
- (a) 12e – listed buildings were mentioned and that private persons should not benefit from the fund.
 - (b) 12f – emphasis could also be given to schemes combating loneliness (healthy, active and inclusive communities included to ensure these projects can be funded).
 - (c) 12L – scrutiny expressed concerns on the decision to apportion funds by number of ward members (members were advised that this would be re-looked at before Cabinet).
 - (d) 13a – questions about small parish councils being unable to apply to fund (members were told that the proposal is to protect this group).

Effect on Strategic Aims

22. The recommended changes continue to reflect the Council priorities.

Report Author: Gemma Barron – Head of Sustainable Communities and Wellbeing
Telephone: (01954) 713340