

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: New Communities Portfolio Holder

8 March 2011

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Operational Services) / Corporate Manager (Planning and New Communities)

Carry forward of uncommitted grant balances to 2011-12

Purpose

1. To seek approval of the New Communities Portfolio Holder to carry forward uncommitted grant balances in respect of Community Capital Grants.
2. This is not a key decision but it has been brought before the Portfolio-Holder to facilitate the consideration of all grant applications together in a consistent and fair way.

Recommendations

3. That the New Communities Portfolio Holder resolves that the following balances be carried forward into 2011-12 financial year:
 - Community Facilities Grant, £32,922
 - Village Sports Facilities Grant, £29,069
 - Arts Capital Grants, £14,940

Reasons for Recommendations

4. To allow all grant applications to be considered at the May Portfolio-Holder meeting.

Background

5. The current budget and policy framework rules allow that any uncommitted grant balance that is unused at the end of a financial year can be carried forward into the following year with the approval of the Portfolio-Holder. This unused carried forward sum is then available to in the new financial year in addition to the approved budget estimate.
6. It should be appreciated that in addition to the presented uncommitted grant balances, the Council's reserves also include amounts necessary to meet the payment of grant commitments already approved but not yet paid over. The period between approval of grant and final payments can be years in some cases. These amounts will be carried forward except where it is established that the grant is no longer required.

Considerations

7. The uncommitted community capital grant balances to be considered for carry forward in the New Communities Service are as follows:
 - Community Facilities Grant, £32,922
 - Village Sports Facilities Grant, £29,069
 - Arts Capital Grants, £14,940

8. In the past, funding bids were received throughout the year; officers were aware of pending projects and were able to manage the budget available to cover all eligible bids, and made regular recommendations to the Portfolio Holder for decision.
9. However in September 2009, it appeared likely that the budgets were going to be over subscribed, in particular the Village Facilities budget. A number of unexpected village hall schemes were being discussed with officers, which had not previously been on the 'pending projects' list.
10. In order to be as fair and equitable as possible, the Portfolio Holder decided to freeze all capital grant awards until early 2010, when all bids could be considered at the same time. It was also agreed that officers would draw up simple criteria for allocating what funds were left for 2009/10. Following the approval of the grants budget for 2010/11 it was agreed that the same methodology be applied to capital grants for this year, with applications considered in two batches in October 2010 and March 2011.
11. A deadline was set of 18 February 2011 for the second batch of applications and in total 14 grant applications have been submitted for consideration. This deadline left limited time to consult with relevant local Members and in one or two instances further information is required from the applicants to inform the level of grant that should be awarded.
12. To progress one or two of these schemes ahead of others would be to take a piecemeal approach to the consideration of grant allocations. It would run contrary to the principle of ensuring applications were considered together as a batch to ensure consistency and fairness.
13. It has therefore been agreed that the award of grants should be deferred until the May Portfolio-Holder meeting. Officers have checked with the applicants to ensure that no scheme would be adversely affected by this delay, and in turn it is recommended that the total balance of £76,931 be carried forward.

Options and Implications.

14. The decision is simply whether or not to carry forward the balance in each case. The current Medium Term Financial Strategy assumes that all uncommitted balances are fully utilised, with any savings required to be made out of future year allocations. The recommendation is to carry forward the balances from 2010-11. If the recommendation is not followed, a number of key projects in villages could be adversely affected.

15.	Financial	Balances carried forward overall will have nil effect on Council expenditure, in accordance with the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Any balances not carried forward will result in an under-spending in 2010-11 and will add to the overall General Fund Reserve.
	Legal	None.
	Staffing	Existing officer resources
	Risk Management	Failure to carry forward the grant reserves would have a detrimental effect on the plans of a number of local community groups.
	Equality and Diversity	Grant applications are welcome from all community groups whose project fits the criteria.
	Equality Impact Assessment	No

completed	EQIA to be performed as part of the Grant Review project, currently underway.
Climate Change	Grant applications are encouraged that are designed to reduce the carbon footprint of the facility in question. Ensuring adequate amenities are available in our villages reduces the need for residents to travel elsewhere.

Consultations

16. Consultations have been carried out with relevant officers across the authority. The result of discussions with applicants, mentioned in paragraph 13 above, will be reported verbally at the meeting.

Effect on Strategic Aims

17. The proposals in this report seek to ensure the continued availability of funding to support the spending plans of the Council and support local villages.

Conclusions / Summary

18. That the New Communities Portfolio Holder resolves that the following balances be carried forward into 2011-12 financial year:
- Community Facilities Grant, £32,922
 - Village Sports Facilities Grant, £29,069
 - Arts Capital Grants, £14,940

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

None unpublished

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