

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader's Portfolio Holder Meeting 15 September 2011
AUTHOR/S: Chief Executive/Corporate Manager (Community & Customer Services)

GRANTS REVIEW 2011

Purpose

1. To outline proposed changes to the existing grant schemes in place across the Council.
2. To provide an update on the grant funding remaining at the end of the 2nd quarter of the 2011-12 financial year and options regarding timescales for the development of a Community Chest grant fund.
3. This is not a key decision.

Recommendations

4. That the Leader considers research undertaken so far and agrees to the outline proposal for streamlining the Council's existing grant schemes as outlined in **Appendix B**. Following further development and discussions with partners the final proposal will be presented to the Leader's January PFH meeting, for proposed implementation in April 2012.
5. That, with regard to the remaining grant funding across the Council as at September 2011, the Leader considers the options outlined below in para. 19 regarding timescales for the development of a Community Chest grant fund.

Background

6. The intention of the review was to develop a new grant giving framework that is transparent and flexible, consolidates activity and ensures that grant aid is used to support corporate aims and actions.
7. The information provided in this report follows this review of all capital and revenue grants provided by the Council, to individuals, community and voluntary sector groups, parish councils and businesses, in their entirety to see if they are in line with the Council's aims, approaches and actions. The review is focused upon the non-statutory grants that SCDC provides to its communities.
8. SCDC has provided grants to not-for-profit organisations, individuals and parish councils for many years. The majority are non-statutory. Most local authorities provide an amount of non-statutory grant funding.
9. The non-statutory grants that are available from SCDC have emerged and evolved over a number of years based upon Council priorities and funding available.
10. A summary of the current grants available from SCDC can be found at **Appendix A**. The summary also includes the 2010-11 budget for each.

11. Research undertaken so far indicates that the Council's grants schemes would benefit from reorganisation under three clear themed headings, under which all grants would sit, namely: Service Support Grants; Capital Grants; Community Chest Grants (**Appendix B** outlines under which heading it is suggested existing grant schemes should fall). In summary, this would cover;

Service Support Grants – where SCDC is providing grants to support agencies or voluntary sector groups to deliver their service either across the district or in a specific geographical area. This would include grants to CAB's, village warden schemes, housing grants etc.

Capital Grants – to include New Communities Capital grants, i.e. for community sports, arts and facilities, covering community resource capital development projects and for the construction or renovation of community/historic/ environmental resources and assistance to private individuals to improve their homes.

Community Chest Grants - for community based initiatives and one off projects. These would be limited to <£1,000 and applied for through a simple grants application form. They would be determined bimonthly through the Leaders Portfolio Holder meetings.

12. Research also shows that a fourth strand of Council funding exists and should be called Commissioned Services / Partnership Funding (or similar). This funding currently sits outside the existing grants application process as it is not currently administered through a grant giving process i.e. organisations/agencies do not apply for funding against set criteria, rather they are approached by service areas to deliver a service on behalf of the authority. Examples of these are given below;

- Parish Paths
- Archaeology
- Parish Planning
- Young People's Work
- Museum
- Travel for Work
- Arts Development Managers

Discussions are required with each service area administering this funding to ensure that VfM is being achieved, there are clear links to the 3 A's and that there are synergies between this and the grants scheme. It is suggested that these discussions should be had through the service planning process, in conjunction with the relevant PFH's.

13. Following the reorganisation of grant schemes practical changes to the existing process will be necessary including the development of an online grants 'portal' to receive applications, criteria linked more explicitly to the Council's 3A's and common application forms (where possible). We will work with partners to help to shape some of these ideas. If the recommendations of this report are accepted it is intended that the time between September and December will be used to develop these practicalities (new application forms, criteria, website etc) so that they can be presented to the Leaders January PFH meeting as part of the final proposal.

Considerations

14. South Cambridgeshire District Council is a signatory to the Cambridgeshire Compact and as such, any review of grants and emerging decisions should be undertaken with a view to remaining Compact compliant at all times.
15. Grants are currently allocated in line with the Council's 3A's (**Appendix D**) against different criteria, dependent on the purpose of the fund. These criteria include: differing timescales (open-ended or closed); terms (over one year / over three years), target recipient groups (individuals / voluntary and community sector organisations / parish councils); conditions (requirements for match-funding / monitoring and evaluation). As outlined above, criteria will need to be streamlined in line with the recommendations of this review.
16. In some cases, multi-agency joint monitoring meetings take place where more than one statutory organisation funds a voluntary or community sector organisation. Joint monitoring ensures that double funding does not occur and means that if one statutory organisation makes a change to its grant funding the impact upon another organisation can be limited. The elite athletes grants are currently awarded by a multi – agency panel.
17. It is rare that a voluntary or community sector organisation receives a grant from more than one grant scheme in any given year and applications to more than one scheme are not prohibited. There is generally good co-ordination between officers who are managing the different grant schemes. Where there is duplication it should be to enable specific, but different, pieces of focused work to be carried out. In addition, an organisation will invariably, if they are based in the district, also receive discretionary rate relief, although the link between DRR and grant funding needs to be strengthened as part of the development of new grant awarding criteria.
18. A position statement regarding how much funding has been awarded in the current year (2011/12) is outlined in **Appendix C**. In summary, approximately £317,000 remains from a number of grant schemes, primarily in New Communities around the capital grants for community facilities, village sports facilities and conservation and arts grants. However in these areas, there are currently applications (due for consideration by the Leaders PFH meeting in October), totalling £163,061. Assuming these are approved, which of course they may not be, that leaves £170, 268 remaining. This presents the opportunity to develop a Community Chest fund during 2011/12 using this, or a percentage of this, remaining funding, subject to financial regulations and criteria/timescales in existing published schemes.
19. Regarding timescales for proceeding with the creation of a new Community Chest grant scheme, there are three options for consideration.
 - (a) Immediately to create a new Community Chest grant fund for the 2nd half of the 2011-12 period from a percentage of remaining grant funding in other schemes.
 - (b) To create a new Community Chest grant fund from a percentage of remaining grant funding in other schemes beginning in January 2012, i.e. allowing the results of further work to influence the design of the scheme.
 - (c) Begin a new Community Chest grant fund on 1 April 2012 for the 2012-13 period and launch this scheme alongside any broader changes to the Council's grant schemes.

Implications

20. This review seeks not only to streamline the Council's existing grant schemes but also to ensure clarity for the South Cambridgeshire community and transparency regarding the availability of funds, timescales and eligibility.
21. Officers are currently managing grant schemes with maximum possible communication to avoid duplication. However, a formal process is required to ensure that commissioned services and partnership grants do not duplicate the grants allocated through the formal application processes.
22. It is important that any changes to the existing grant process are communicated effectively and pro-actively with all affected parties. The move to a new process will be accompanied by a clear communications plan, highlighting the benefits of a more transparent, flexible and robust system and its links to the localism agenda.

23.	Financial	There are no planned changes to the total grant scheme funding provided by the Council. However, any future funding will have to have a clear link to the emerging MTFs to be presented to Cabinet in November 2011. Also any changes in criteria to each scheme may require the Council to commit funds over a 3-year period instead of 1-year, and vice versa.
	Legal	Changes to grant scheme names, criteria and supporting paperwork must take account of the Council's legal position on the difference between a Contract, a Service Level Agreement and a Grant Funding Agreement, as well as accommodating procurement regulations.
	Staffing	Existing staff will continue to manage their grant schemes as they currently do.
	Risk Management	Changes to the grant schemes will be implemented in order to improve them for our customers, to ensure they are open and transparent and to continue to prevent duplication wherever possible. There is a risk about mid-year changes to published capital grant schemes, without notice or consultation, leading to potential adverse feedback
	Equality and Diversity	Consultation will be carried out in accordance with the Engagement Toolkit and in a Compact compliant way to ensure equality of opportunity to respond and diversity of response.
	Equality Impact Assessment completed	No An Impact Assessment will be completed when any proposed changes are drafted and in advance of implementation.
	Climate Change	Grants are available to organisations wishing to carry out environmental work and to projects set up to limit climate change.

Consultations

24. The proposed consultation will ensure public engagement in the review and streamlining of the Council's grants processes.

Consultation with Children and Young People

25. Children and young people will have the opportunity to be involved if they or their organisations have been in receipt of grant funding in the past and in accordance with their organisation's youth engagement strategy.

Effect on Strategic Aims

26. Grant schemes already have a clear link to the 3 A's however this review will ensure that this link is strengthened and grants are allocated by the Council in accordance with the 3A's and with the priorities set out in service plans.

Conclusions / Summary

27. This grants review is necessary for the improvement and streamlining of grants allocated to individuals, voluntary and community organisations and parish councils. A transparent, clearly defined and robust process will ensure that duplication is further limited and that Council Aims are met through the support of local projects.
28. The proposals in this paper form part of a broader approach to the support of the South Cambridgeshire community, and are inextricably linked to Localism and the Big Society.

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

Cambridgeshire Compact

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