

REPORT TO: Leader's Portfolio Meeting

24 September 2015

LEAD OFFICER: Director, Health and Environmental Services

Service Support Grants to the Community and Voluntary Sector

Purpose

1. To examine the justification and scope for a further three year programme for Service Support Grant funding, 2016/17-2018/19 to the Community and Voluntary sector.
2. This is a key decision because it commits the Council to a further three years of expenditure via the Service Support Grant fund. It has been brought before the leader following agreement within the Grants Review of 2013.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended the Leader approves the proposal for a further three year programme of the Service Support Grant fund (subject to three year funding agreements) to run from April 2016 to March 2019.
4. It is recommended the Leader approves the reworked priorities for the Service Support Grant fund and agrees the proposed schedule for the application process.

Reasons for Recommendations

5. The refined priorities reflect the outcomes of the member lead Task and Finish Group which addressed this Council's work around Localism, Health and Wellbeing, Ageing Well and Children and Young People's agendas.

Background

6. South Cambridgeshire District Council concluded its Grants Review in February 2013, a process first begun in 2011. As a result significant changes were introduced allowing a tighter focus on priorities, with grants and partnership funding arrangements simplified into six themes.
7. For each of the six themes lead responsibility was given to the respective Portfolio Holder (as detailed in Appendix 1 of the Background Paper, Leaders Portfolio Holders Meeting 1 February 2013). These themes and grant programmes were:
 - (a) Supporting Parishes and Communities
 - (i) Community Chest
 - (b) Voluntary Sector – Advice and other grants
 - (i) Service Support Grants
 1. Generalist and Specialist Advice
 2. Community Transport
 3. Independent Living
 4. Support Parishes and Communities
 5. Homelessness Prevention
 - (c) Sustainable Energy
 - (i) Travel for Work and energy projects

- (d) Housing and Independent Living
 - (i) Mortgage advice
 - (ii) Benefit Reform transition grant to CAB
 - (iii) Mobile Warden Scheme
- (e) Planning and Economic Development
 - (i) Museum
 - (ii) Wildlife Enhancement
- (f) Young people
 - (i) Young peoples partnership
 - (ii) Young peoples work
 - (iii) Elite Athletes grants programme

Out of scope: Home repairs (£100k); Disability Facilities Grant (£10k)

8. The three-year programme of Service Support Grants (approved at the joint portfolio holder meeting May 2013), saw the Community Transport strand of this grant fund undersubscribed by £3,626 in year 1 (13/14) and £4,835 in year 2 (14/15). It was agreed that these unallocated funds be held in reserve, in the light of reducing levels of subsidised bus services resulting from the on-going Cambridgeshire Future Transport review, with a view to offering further bidding rounds to Community Transport operators later in the three year programme.

The under-subscribed Community Transport Service Support Grant fund stream for the first two years of the programme had a combined value of £8,461, which was deemed sufficient to justify opening a new round of grant applications, for projects which could be completed within the existing three year programme. A further round of applications was held at the Leader's agreement and funds distributed following a competitive bidding process.

9. Over the course of 2014 a member-led Task and Finish Group examined the work that the Council undertakes (whether by ourselves or in conjunction with partners or via our grant programmes) with regard to the Localism, Health and Wellbeing, Ageing Well and Children and Young People's agendas. This review achieved a refreshed focus and refined corporate priorities for action.
10. Although many of the existing priorities remain key for this district, such as the provision of Community Transport to support independent living, others emerged from the process as priorities for action, such as the increasing need to provide support to carers and the need for interventions to support children and families so that youngsters are "fit to learn" when of school age.
11. We are currently in the third year of the three year Service Support Grant fund, which has seen a planned reduction in budget to £134,000 as a result of a tapering of 15% applied to the allocation for General Welfare Advice in the third year. as agreed on 23 May 2013 (Joint Leader, Planning Policy and Localism and Environmental Services Portfolio Holders). Historical inflationary pressures have been considered when allocating current levels of grant funding and thus £134,000 should be seen as a starting point for future allocations.

Considerations

12. The grant programme to support services provided by the community and voluntary sector should align with our corporate objectives and the schemes funded be both

effective (i.e. evidence based) and offer good value for money. The proposed priorities for a further three year Service Support Grant programme have been refined to align with these refreshed corporate priorities (see Appendix 1) and developed with the benefit of further discussions with the Portfolio Holders responsible.

13. The allocation between the themes has also been revised to reflect the change in emphasis. The proposed outline allocations by theme are as follows:

Theme	Services supported	Indicative allocation p.a.
Community Transport	Delivery, development and promotion of Community Transport services	£15,000
Specialist Welfare Advice	Free, independent, confidential and impartial advice and advocacy to residents who are disabled, carers and to families with disabled children	£5,000
General Welfare Advice	Free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to residents on their rights and responsibilities in the following areas: Debt, Benefits, Employment, Housing, Legal, Relationship and Family matters	£80,000
Independent Living	Delivery of services that allow residents to maintain their independence; reduce rural isolation; tackle loneliness, depression and isolation; offer support to carers	£20,000
Fit to Learn	The delivery of services that help pre-school children develop strength, coordination, language and communication skills and good mental health	£4,000
Support for parishes and communities	Delivery of services to support and enable effective, sustainable and legal operation of community and voluntary sector organisations and their representation at a strategic level	£10,000

14. Accepting that the community and voluntary sector is well positioned to offer services which the Council is itself unable to directly provide or are best placed to provide, one strand of this programme is proposed to continue to support the sector to support and enable itself into a flourishing community and voluntary sector and the entire fund operate in a way that supports the healthy functioning of that sector, i.e. adhere to Compact principals.
15. Funding agreements lasting only a year do not encourage or allow longer term planning on the part of community and voluntary organisations delivering valued services. Compact principles invite statutory organisations to support the community and voluntary sector through longer term funding arrangements, therefore a three year programme is a reasonable period over which community and voluntary sector organisations can properly plan the development and delivery of their services.
16. Currently funded organisations will need to be given an adequate period of notice if the grant fund from which they currently benefit substantially alters in nature or terminates, in order that they can plan appropriately. For this reason the renewed focus for any subsequent grant round should be made available at the earliest opportunity.

17. Similarly, should a currently funded organisation be unsuccessful in any subsequent bidding round Compact principals require a 12 week period of notice before their current grant comes to an end. Therefore the outcome of any bidding round should be determined within a timescale which allows for this period of notice.
18. For the reasons given above the following timetable is proposed:

Activity	Timescale
Bidding round launches	Monday 12 October 2015
Bidding round closes	Friday 20 November 2015
Applications assessed and panel meets	Assessment week commencing 23 November, panel meets 30 November
Officer recommendations brought to Portfolio Holder meeting	16 December 2015
Organisations notified of decisions, following call-in	23 December 2015
Grant schedules agreed and signed	March 2016
First funding instalments payable	April 2016

19. The Leader will be expected to make a decision on grants under all of the themes set out in paragraph 13; officers will discuss the scoring with other relevant Portfolio Holder's prior to the meeting. The Homelessness Prevention theme will be run concurrently by staff in Affordable Housing.

Options

20. The Leader could approve or vary the proposal for a further three year grant funding proposal for the Service Support Grant fund (subject to three year funding agreements).
21. The Leader could approve, vary or reject the refined priorities for a further three year programme of the Service Support Grant fund and associated schedule for inviting and approving bids to this fund.
22. The Leader could reject in principal the renewal of the three year service support programme (if conforming to Compact principles this decision should be the subject of general consultation, to include the community and voluntary sector).

Implications

23. 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

24. The proposed programme requires the Council to make a three year financial commitment of £402,000, however, grant agreements will make clear that funding beyond year is subject to the continued availability of budget. There is also a staffing implication; there is a staff requirement to monitor and oversee the work of the grant recipients, report on activity and administer payments.

Legal

25. Arrangements would be put in place with grant recipients, which would allow variation or termination of grant under certain circumstances.

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

The themes proposed in this paper were put before the Compact group; no objections to the themes proposed were raised.

The Portfolio Holders for Environmental Services and Strategic Planning and Transportation were supportive of the themes relating to their Portfolio Holder activities.

Effect on Strategic Aims

26. Ensure that South Cambridgeshire continues to offer an outstanding quality of life for our residents: the grant programmes promote a good quality of life for all residents, assisting directly or indirectly through voluntary organisations schemes which help overcome the challenges faced by residents imposed by age, infirmity, disability, low income or rurality.

Background Papers

Leaders Portfolio Meeting 1 Feb 2013

<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=883&MId=5969&Ver=4>

Joint Leader, Planning Policy and Localism and Environmental Services Portfolio Holders Meeting 23 May 2014

<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=883&MId=6132&Ver=4>

Leaders Portfolio Meeting 16 Jan 2014

<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=883&MId=6032&Ver=4>

Leaders Portfolio Meeting 17 July 2014

<http://moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=883&MId=6335&Ver=4>

Cabinet, 12 February 2015

<http://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=293&MId=6280&Ver=4>

Leaders Portfolio Meeting 11 March 2015

<http://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s79459/Community%20Chest%20Eligibility%20Report%20110315.pdf>

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