

REPORT TO: Grants Advisory Committee 29/07/2022

LEAD CABINET MEMBER: Cllr John Williams, Lead Member for Finance

LEAD OFFICER: Gareth Bell, Service Manager, Comms and Communities

Service Support Grants to the Voluntary and Community Sector: Review of the Scheme

Executive Summary

1. SCDC reviews all grant schemes each time a new cycle is due to be launched. The Service Support Grants (SSG) to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) scheme runs for three years and is due to be relaunched in December 2022 for grants to cover the period April 2023 to March 2026.
2. As with previous reviews of this scheme, the factors being considered are:
 - a. the total funding available within the scheme
 - b. the themes against which organisations can apply
 - c. the criteria for the scheme

Key Decision

3. No

Recommendations

4. The Grants Advisory Committee is asked to review this report and make recommendations to the Lead Cabinet Member for Finance to inform his decision-making in respect of the SSG scheme for 2023-26.

Reasons for Recommendations

5. To ensure a more streamlined and equitable approach to the Council's SSG scheme and ensure it is aligned with current Council priorities.

Details

6. The SSG scheme was designed as a contribution by the Council towards the costs that organisations in the VCS incur in delivering services for South

Cambridgeshire residents. The scheme offers funding via 3-year funding agreements to eligible VCS organisations. In advance of launching the scheme for 2023-26, the Council is undertaking its regular review of the scheme.

7. The most recent funding cycle for the period 2019-2022 was extended by a year until March 2023, owing to the significant adverse effects of COVID-19 on the sector. Organisations are beginning to recover to some degree from the effects of the Covid pandemic and would now be in a better position to bid for the SSG funding.
8. The Council has offered this scheme of grant funding to the voluntary and community sector for many years and the amount of funding in the scheme has remained static. Officers have consulted with the lead Cabinet Member and members of the Grants Advisory Committee as part of the review and this has resulted in a recommendation of an adjustment to the funds available that reflects average inflation rates over the last five years. This results in an increase in funds available from £151,610 to £167,400.
9. Consultation has also resulted in a proposal to revise the number of themes within the scheme from eight to six as set out in the table below.

Current Themes	Current £	Proposed 2023-26 Themes	Proposed funding amounts £
Independent Living	4,500	Mental Health and Wellbeing	24,000
Advice Services	97,110	Advice Services	100,000
Community Transport	9,000	Independent Living	22,000
Fit to Learn	4,000	Support for the VCS	11,400
Support for the VCS	10,000	Arts, Culture and Heritage	10,000
Combined Community Transport & Independent Living	18,500	-	-
Planning and Economic Development	8,500	-	-
Housing and Homelessness (service budget)	12,520	Housing and Homelessness (service budget)	14,250
TOTAL	151,610		167,400

10. The Housing and Homelessness Grants are part of a service budget and while treated in the same way as the other themes and advertised publicly for

transparency, they are not considered from a financial perspective to be part of the SSG grant scheme. Any uplift is applied separately.

11. All updates to the criteria and guidance can be found in Appendix A
12. Key changes and points of note within the criteria include:
13. Mental Health and Wellbeing - applications from children and young people's organisations are welcome, based on outcomes and learning from the Children & Young People's grant funding pilot that is running from January-December 2022.
14. Independent Living – applications are welcome from those whose objective it is to promote the independence, and reduce the isolation, of the District's vulnerable residents. This theme includes community transport.
15. Arts, Culture and Heritage is a new theme.
16. A new requirement that all funded organisations endeavour to join Cambridgeshire Council for Voluntary Service – a support organisation for the VCS in Cambridgeshire.
17. Timescales – the new scheme will launch in September 2022 for the period April 2023-March 2026. Grants provided through the SSG scheme are subject to satisfactory performance at each review. Three-year agreements are subject to confirmation of the Council's budget each year.
18. Organisations in receipt of annual grants greater than £10,000 are required to submit performance reports at 6-monthly intervals; those in receipt of funding of less than £10,000 are required to submit performance reports annually.
19. Grants over £15,000 will be made in two six monthly instalments and only on receipt of approved monitoring information.

Options

The Grants Advisory Committee could:

1. Note the contents of the paper and make a recommendation to the Lead Member for Finance to agree the proposed changes to the SSG scheme as presented; or
2. Note the contents of the paper and make a recommendation/s to the Lead Member for Finance to agree the changes with revisions, giving details.

Implications

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

Legal

21. Grant agreements will include provision for variation or discontinuation of funding should the need arise during the funding cycle. The grant agreements will be subject to the Council's annual budget setting process continuing to support the SSG programme.

Consultation responses

22. This review report follows extensive consultation with elected members including two preliminary meetings with the Lead Member for Communities, the Chair of the Grants Advisory Committee and the Lead Member for Finance, followed by a workshop to which all members of the Grants Advisory Committee were invited.

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

A Modern and Caring Council

We aim to ensure that South Cambridgeshire continues to offer an outstanding quality of life for residents. The Council's grant schemes promote a good quality of life for all residents, assisting directly or indirectly through voluntary and community sector schemes which help overcome the many and varied challenges faced by residents.

We will continue to work with public sector partners and a network of parish councils and voluntary groups to support the most vulnerable people in the district ... throughout the response and recovery phases of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Appendices

Appendix A: DRAFT Service Support Grants for the VCS Scheme Criteria and Guidance Notes 2023-2026

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