

Report to:	Grants Advisory Committee	28 October 2022
Lead Cabinet Member:	Councillor John Williams Lead Cabinet Member for Resources	
Lead Officer:	Gareth Bell	

Community Chest Grant Criteria: Cost of Living Crisis Adaptations

Executive Summary

1. The purpose of this paper is to propose time-limited alterations to the criteria for the Community Chest Grant (CCG) funding scheme. The proposals will enable CCG funding to reach projects that have a positive impact for residents and communities affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

Key Decision

2. No

Recommendations

3. The Grants Advisory Committee is asked to make recommendations to the Lead Cabinet Member for Resources with regard to:
 - expanding the CCG criteria to allow Parish and Town Councils of any size to bid for Community Chest grants that provide a benefit to those affected by the cost-of-living crisis
 - expanding the criteria to allow applications for revenue costs or overheads (for example, salaries, rent, advertising, promotional materials) to be included for all projects that provide a benefit to those affected by the cost-of-living crisis
 - including a £20,000 ringfenced sum for applications referred to in the previous two recommendations. It is proposed that this £20,000 would come from the Integrated Care System funding, which SCDC is administering, and which must be committed by end March 2023, for the purposes of delivering projects that provide a benefit to those affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

- reviewing these changes to the criteria at the end of March 2023 with a view to assessing whether continued funding is needed to support ‘cost-of-living’ work or whether the changes to the criteria should revert back to the current position.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. The Grants Advisory Committee’s role is to consider and make recommendations to the Lead Cabinet Member responsible for grants, or Cabinet as appropriate, including, but not limited to:
 - a) Reviewing the Council’s grants schemes to ensure they reflect Council priorities.
 - b) Designing any new or revised grants schemes, including consideration of criteria and guidance applicable in respect of each scheme.
 - c) Considering applications made under the Council’s grants schemes.
5. A motion was agreed at Full Council on Thursday, 22 September 2022 September to declare a cost-of-living crisis. One element of the motion was to “ask the Grants Advisory Committee to review the Community Chest Grant Scheme to consider having applications that demonstrate not only wellbeing benefits to their community but also support for those on low incomes and make recommendations to the Lead Cabinet Member for Resources or Cabinet as appropriate.” The changes proposed are designed to deliver on this commitment.

Details

6. The cost-of-living crisis is having a major impact on:
 - individuals, families, and businesses nationally, including those living and working in South Cambridgeshire.
 - people with moderate to good incomes as well as those already in hardship. The increase in day-to-day bills, especially energy and food, is pushing those struggling deeper into hardship and poverty. We know from news reports, and from feedback from our own service areas including Housing, Revenues and Benefits, that some families will have to choose between “heating and eating” this winter.
7. The cost-of-living crisis may also present more problems for our Health Services, which are still recovering from the demands caused by the Covid pandemic. Individuals who are unable to keep themselves warm, or feed themselves sufficiently, many of whom have underlying health conditions or are considered vulnerable, may develop health conditions as a result which require GP or hospital treatment.

8. A successful funding bid from the Council was made to the Integrated Care System (Health) for £220,000 to develop projects to mitigate the impact of rising fuel prices on health inequality. Key outcomes should include a reduction in health harms as a result of the cost-of-living crisis and the empowerment of local communities through engagement and co-production of schemes and ideas.
9. The Council has been working with the Integrated Care System to pursue a range of initiatives that will address the cost-of-living crisis. £20,000 of the Integrated Care System funding would be ring-fenced for projects to address the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis.
10. This funding would cover the period to end March 2023 at which point the Grants Advisory Committee would be asked to review the impact of the changes and decide whether to seek to continue to offer CCG funding on these terms and, if so, to identify Council funding for this.
11. The total amount of funding made available for Community Chest Grants 2022/23 is detailed in the below table, with the grey highlighted section showing the proposed cost-of-living crisis ringfenced fund:

Type (total fund for the period)	Date fund expires	Total budget at last month	Applications received this month	Total applied for this month	Remaining budget if all projects funded this month
Community Chest (£48,225.31)*	31 March 2023	£15,569.35	0	0	£15,569.35
Biodiversity (£20,000) **	31 March 2023	£17,045.01	0	0	£17,045.01
Community-Led Plans (£48,000)	October 2023	£48,000	0	0	£48,000
Cost Of Living (£20,000)	31 March 2023	£20,000	0	0	£20,000
Total	-	£100,614.36	0	0	£100,614.36

* £58,000 (annual allocation) minus £9,774.69 (- £9,774.69 being the balance after the applications received in March were funded in April).

**£10,000 plus remaining £10,000 from 2021/2022 financial year

12. Communications on any decision to amend the CCG criteria would include a press release and all other usual comms channels, including social media and direct communications with Parish Councils and community groups and organisations.
13. Examples of projects that might be considered cost-of-living crisis projects:
- Repair cafes where the local community can help in getting household items fixed for free
 - Timebanking projects - an exchange-based work trading system in which hours are the currency instead of money
 - Lunch clubs - low-cost meals for those in need
 - Community support initiatives that provide food/ activities/ support services/ educate individuals on reducing food waste and cooking low-cost meals
 - Setting up/running a group or charity where people can obtain free furniture, clothing, food, toys
 - Establishing or building the capacity of food hubs, food banks or community fridges.
14. It is proposed that the existing funding within the Community Chest remain unaffected and that voluntary and community sector groups, charities and public sector bodies wishing to further improve quality of life in South Cambridgeshire may apply for up to £2,000 to deliver one or more of the following:
- Improvements to community buildings and spaces (i.e., village halls / pavilions / play areas etc)
 - Repairs to historic buildings / monuments / memorials
 - Equipment / capital purchase
 - Materials
 - Start-up costs (may include training of staff / volunteers, hall hire and other revenue costs)
 - Costs involved with the creation of a Community-Led Plan (not the resulting projects)
 - Enhance the natural environment / result in a sustainable increase in local biodiversity
15. All other criteria (e.g. the upper funding limit, monitoring requirements and the need to return unspent funds) would remain in place.
16. Guidance notes and full eligibility criteria, including changes (highlighted in grey) to reflect the proposals in this paper, can be found at Appendix A. This is being provided now to ensure the decision and changes can be implemented as quickly as possible to benefit communities as the colder weather and increased cost pressures begin.

Options

17. The Grants Advisory Committee may consider the information provided in this report and recommend to the Lead Cabinet Member for Finance to:

- A) expand the criteria to allow parish and town Councils of any size to apply for funding, providing projects to support those affected by the cost-of-living crisis
- B) expand the criteria to allow applications for capital and/or on-going revenue costs or overheads (for example, salaries, rent, advertising, promotional materials) for all projects that provide a benefit for those affected by the cost-of-living crisis
- C) include a £20,000 ring-fenced fund for projects that have a positive impact for communities affected by the cost-of-living crisis
- D) defer a decision on any or all of the above if further information is required or
- E) reject any or all the above options, stating the reason(s) for this and proposing alternatives to support the delivery of the commitment made at Full Council on 22 September 2022.

Implications

18. There are no significant implications

Alignment with Council Priority Areas

19. The corporate aims are referenced in the criteria and guidance notes for the Community Chest and the proposals within this paper support the Council's commitment to support those affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

Background Papers

Grants Advisory Committee Meetings

<https://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=1096&Year=0>

Appendices

Appendix A: Guidance notes for Community Chest

Report Author:

Emma Dyer –Development Officer
e-mail: emma.dyer@scambs.gov.uk
Telephone: (01954) 713344