

Surrey Heath Borough Council

Executive

25 January 2021

Surrey Heath Community Grants Review

Portfolio	Support & Safeguarding – Cllr Shaun Garrett
Strategic Director/ Head of Service	Louise Livingston – Head of HR, Performance & Communications
Report Author	Jayne Boitout – Community Partnership Officer
Key Decision	Yes
Wards Affected	All

Summary and purpose

To review the existing Council Community Grant Schemes.

Recommendation

The Executive is advised to RESOLVE that the Community Support Working Group's recommendations relating to the Council's Community Grant Schemes, as set-out in Annex A to this report, be agreed.

1. Background and Supporting Information

- 1.1 The Executive reviewed at its meeting on the 16th February 2021 the Community Fund Grant Scheme which is a discretionary grant scheme introduced over 20 years ago that supports local groups up to a maximum contribution of £25,000 to meet in general one-off costs normally related to capital expenditure. The funds for this scheme were originally set a side, which results in a reducing balance to operate from which at the 31st December 2020 was 158,000 (as at 1st April 2021 this stood at £151,372). It was agreed to allocate a further £50,000 from this fund to the Emergency Food Poverty Scheme which is outlined in minute 102/E. This leaves a balance of £87,272 within this specific budget.
- 1.2 During the past year the community continues to be impacted from the pandemic and the Council continues to support with enabling opportunities via local organisations. The Government Furlough scheme sustained many families, but with this ceasing to operate during the autumn of 2021, the local picture relating to need and vulnerability continues to evolve and so does the Council's role in continuing to assist where possible.

This paper sets out the review of the Council's range of existing Community Grant Schemes to ensure that the local needs and priorities can be met beyond the pandemic in annex A, this in consultation with the Community Support Working Group.

Further discussions suggest that the Ward Councillor Grant Scheme be reviewed sooner and for any changes to be implemented from 1st April 2022.

2. Resource Implications

- 2.1 The funds for the Community Fund Grant scheme were originally set aside, which results in a reducing balance to operate from, at 1st April 2021, this is £151,372, and with a further allocation of £50,000 (plus £20,000 from October 2020) to the Emergency Food Poverty Grant Scheme, the balance stands at £87,272.
- 2.2 Over the past year the Council has introduced a number of shorter term grant schemes with the aim of enabling community support to meet local need and vulnerabilities. These are detailed in Annex A.
- 2.3 The Executive has not received any applications for consideration in 2021 from the Community Fund Grant Scheme, and for the period 2016-2020 the scheme has averaged just under 7 applications a year with at a cost of £27,216, which equates to each application receiving an award of £3,888. It is appreciated that during the pandemic this may have impacted applications to this fund, but a number of enquiries have been received now, resulting in 1 application.
- 2.4 The Community Fund grant, and other schemes outlined within annex A are administered by the Community Partnership Officer and Grants Officer.

3. Proposal and Alternative Options

- 3.1 The Executive has the option to:
 - 3.1.1 Agree the recommendations as set out at Annex A;
 - 3.1.2 Agree some of the recommendations set out in Annex A;
 - 3.1.3 Retain as is, and not to make any changes to the grants schemes.
- 3.2 It is suggested to approve as outlined in 3.1.1 above.

4. Contribution to the Council's Five-Year Strategy

- 4.1 The funding of voluntary organisations allows the Council to meet its objectives to:
 - Work in partnership with local organisations to provide support to the community and diverse open space and recreation facilities.
 - Understanding and supporting local voluntary groups.

- Significantly contribute to civic pride through the provision of events and green spaces.
- Work in partnership with the voluntary and third sector to extend opportunities in the Borough.
- Encouraging greater involvement from local clubs and organisations including volunteering.

5. Resource Implications

- 5.1 The Council funds a number of voluntary organisations which either work in partnership with the Council or perform functions on the Council's behalf.

6. Section 151 Officer Comments:

- 6.1 The proposals contained in this report will be subject to approval of the available budget, by full Council, some of which will be included as part of the Council's Budget-setting meeting in February. Any potential recipients are made aware of this as part of the process. It is particularly important, given the financial challenges that the Council is facing, that funding decisions are made considering the Council's overall financial position and targeted where they will best support the aims of the Council, and meet the needs of our communities.

7. Legal and Governance Issues

- 7.1 New service level agreements will be checked by legal services.
- 7.2 Where applications for grant renewals are refused, or reductions agreed, the Council should ensure adequate notice is given.
- 7.3 Any exit provisions in service level agreements should be reviewed to ensure compliance and any concurrent leases should also be terminated in accordance with the terms of the leases.

8. Monitoring Officer Comments:

- 8.1 No matters arising.

9. Other Considerations and Impacts

Environment and Climate Change

- 9.1 Providing support to a number of these organisations helps protect the borough's environment.

Equalities and Human Rights

- 9.2 The organisations support vulnerable people with information, advice and/or funding and increase participation in activities to improve social inclusion.

Risk Management

9.3 No matters arising.

Community Engagement

9.4 No matters arising.

Annexes

Annex A. Review of all Community Grant Schemes

Background Papers

None