

Crawley Borough Council

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Commission 27 September 2021

Report to Cabinet 29 September 2021

Community Grants Procedure & Outcomes Framework

Report of the Head of Community Services, **HCS/29**

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to agree the Community Grants Procedure and Outcomes Framework to the Voluntary and Community Sector.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To the Overview and Scrutiny Commission:

That the Commission consider the report and decide what comments, if any, it wishes to submit to the Cabinet.

- 2.2 To the Cabinet:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) Approve the Community Grants Procedure and Outcomes Framework including the associated proposal, process, priorities and outcomes and decision making delegations as set out in sections 5.1 to 5.20.
- b) Approve a ring fenced sum of £140,569 for the new Community Advice and Support Service (CASS) contract from the strategic grants & commissioning allocation as set out in section 5.6.
- c) Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Community Engagement in consultation with the Head of Community Services, and Head of Legal, Governance and HR to enter into an Inter-Agency Agreement to support continued partnership working, and approve the award of the CASS contract following an appropriate procurement process.
- d) Delegate the negotiation, approval and completion of all relevant legal documentation, following the awarding of the contract to the Head of Community Services, Head of Legal, Governance and HR, Head of Corporate Finance, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Community Engagement.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 The recommendation supports the Council to achieve a balanced budget position for 2022/23 onwards.
- 3.2 It responds to the approach agreed at Cabinet on 3 February 2021, to develop a strategic/commissioned and small grants funding programme with a focus on high quality outcomes that, with the new priorities, better responds to particular needs of our community.

4. Background

- 4.1 The 2021/22 grants programme was put on hold due to the context of the budgetary challenges and the remedial actions required to deliver a balanced budget.
- 4.2 As part of the budget setting process for 2021/22, the Council stated its intention to reduce the overall community grants fund by £212,000 in two tranches. The reduction in 2021/22 is £120,000, retaining a fund totalling £512,000. The total reduction of £211,000 applies for 2022/23 leaving an overall grants budget allocation of £421,000.
- 4.3 This allowed the Council to take a transitional approach to the reduction and fulfil its contractual obligation to Citizens Advice West Sussex for the local information and advice service in 2021/22.
- 4.4 Officers have actively engaged with all funded organisations in relation to the reduction to the community grants budget, the proposed changes to the allocation of funds, and the decision making process.
- 4.5 A closed main grants round was successfully completed for 2021/22, this only included organisations that had been in regular receipt of large grant funding from the Council over a number of years.
- 4.6 The budget and agreed approach to delivering the transitional year for the Community Grants programme was ratified at Cabinet on 3 February 2021.

5. Proposals

- 5.1 The Council will implement a refreshed funding programme for 2022/23 consisting of three distinct components; strategic grants, commissioned services (contracts) and a small grants offer including crowdfunding. The total annual budget for the programme is £421,000 and will be provisionally allocated as follows;
 - £371,000 for strategic grants and commissioning
 - £50,000 for small grants and crowdfunding

Strategic Grants

- 5.2 The Strategic Grants application process will launch in October 2021 with funding awarded to successful applicants commencing from April 2022.
- 5.3 The following revised priorities and outcomes will apply to the new grants programme 2022/23 and be revised periodically as required;

Priority 1 - Known Vulnerable

- Reducing homelessness and the impact of homelessness
- Improving health and wellbeing outcomes for those with a dementia diagnosis and their carers

Priority 2 - Emerging Vulnerable

- Bringing people closer to the job market and securing employment
- Reducing domestic abuse and violence
- Narrowing inequalities within our diverse community

Priority 3 - Future Vulnerable

- Supporting those who have experienced adverse childhood experiences to increase educational attainment and achievement and improve social mobility

Priority 4 - Community Spirit

- Supporting events that promote community spirit & cohesion
- 'Connecting' community groups and residents through the delivery of positive events and activities

Commissioned Service

- 5.4 It is envisaged that a revised Countywide 'Community Advice and Support Service' (CASS) will remain as a jointly commissioned service. This will provide for an information and advice service such as currently provided by Citizens Advice West Sussex to be delivered in Crawley.
- 5.5 West Sussex County Council will manage the joint procurement process, working in partnership with the Borough and District Councils, from September 2021 for the new service to commence 1 April 2022. The new service will have a Local Delivery Plan to be agreed by Crawley Borough Council (the Head of Community Services and the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Community Engagement). The following decision making process is recommended for the commissioning plan.
- 5.6 It is envisaged that the level of annual funding required for the new CASS contract will remain in line with the current commitment of £140,569 per annum. Therefore, £140,569 will be ring fenced from the strategic grants and commissioning allocation of £371,000. If the full amount is not required for the new contract, the remaining funds will be added to the strategic grants allocation.
- 5.7 Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Public Protection & Community Engagement in consultation with the Head of Community Services, and Head of Legal, Governance and HR to enter into an Inter-Agency Agreement to support continued partnership working, and approve the award of the CASS contract following an appropriate procurement process.
- 5.8 Delegate the negotiation, approval and completion of all relevant legal documentation, following the awarding of the contract to the Head of Community Services, Head of Legal, Governance and HR, Head of Corporate Finance, in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member.

Small Grants

- 5.9 The new small grants scheme will be implemented from October 2021 with an online application process to support local groups in need. The budget for 2021/22 is £63,024 (funds provided for the transitional period).
- 5.10 From April 2022, the 2022/23 budget £50,000 will be allocated as listed below, and reviewed annually by the Head of Community Services and the Cabinet member for Public Protection and Community Engagement;
- £30,000 funding pots for a revised small grants scheme (for awards of up to £2,500).
 - £10,000 funding pot for a crowdfunding pilot scheme (such as Spacehive or a similar platform for awards of £2,501 - £5,000).
 - £10,000 further funding pot to be allocated to boost either the small grants or crowdfunding funds to be allocated in consultation with the Cabinet member for Public Protection and Community Engagement (providing flexibility as new funding schemes).
- 5.11 The overarching aim of the new small grants scheme is to “**Foster greater levels of community connectivity and cohesion**”. Further outcomes will be aligned with those priorities stated within the outcomes framework document.
- 5.12 The Crowdfunding scheme will follow the same framework and generate additional funding by individual giving. Crowdfunding is the practice of funding a project or venture by raising small amounts of money from a large number of people, typically via the Internet. The Council currently has access to the Spacehive platform for Crowdfund Crawley which already promotes the Neighbourhood Improvement Fund.

Funding Decision-Making Process

Strategic Grants

- 5.13 The revised grants programme will launch in October 2021 with successful bidding organisations receiving allocated funding from April 2022. Organisations should apply online securely via the Council’s website.
- 5.13 All bids will be assessed according to the eligibility criteria and the new outcomes framework. An initial assessment will be undertaken by a panel of Community Services officers, consisting of;
- Community Services Manager
 - Funding and Commissioning Officer
 - Community Development Manager
- Additional council officers may be consulted where an application is relevant to their service area of expertise.
- 5.14 Recommendations for funding will be made to the Head of Community Services and the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Community Engagement, who will have the authority to make a decision. Awards will be from £5,000 for projects or services.
- 5.15 Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing. Applicants who do not agree with the outcome will be able to submit a valid and detailed appeal in writing within 15 working days of the decision. In the event of an eligible appeal the

[Grants Appeal Panel](#) will convene. This currently consists of 5 Councillors drawn from the pool of Councillors appointed to the Grants Appeals Panel and their decision is final.

- 5.16 On completion of the decision making process, funding agreements will be issued setting out the standard terms and conditions or any special conditions. Funding will commence from the start of the new financial year.
- 5.17 Quarterly performance monitoring meetings will be mandatory for commissioned services and those organisations in receipt of a strategic grant award.

Small Grants

- 5.18 The small grants scheme and Crowdfunding scheme will commence annually in April subject to available funds. All grant funding requests (including crowdfunding ‘pitches’) will be submitted by way of a simple online application process.
- 5.19 All funding applications will be assessed according to the published eligibility criteria and the outcomes framework. An assessment of the case for support will be undertaken by Community Services.
- 5.20 Recommendations for funding will be made to the Community Services Manager and the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Community Engagement, who will have the authority to make a decision.
- 5.21 Awards are for up to £2,500 and £5,000 for small grants and crowdfunding respectively. Standard funding terms and conditions will apply. An end of project report will be required.
- 5.22 The following comparison table provides an overview of the process and decision making delegation for all funding types. If a Cabinet Member is unable to act, the Leader may act on their behalf or authorise another Cabinet Member to do so. (Leader and Cabinet Procedure Rules in the [Constitution](#))

| Funding type | Level | How to apply | Decision making Delegation |
|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Small Grants | Up to £2,500 | Online - open | Community Services Manager in consultation with the Cabinet Member |
| Crowdfunding | Up to £5,000 | Online – from April 2022 | Community Services Manager in consultation with the Cabinet Member |
| Strategic Grants | From £5,000 | Online – Autumn 2021 | Cabinet Member |
| Commissioning/Contract | As required/specified | Procurement process | Cabinet Member |

6. Implications

6.1 Financial

Report [FIN/514](#) 2021/2022 Budget and Council Tax, section 6.4 outlines the long term savings requirement of £212,000, however, the Lower Tier Services Grant allows a transition, with a savings requirement of £120,000 in 2021/22, and of £212,000 in 2022/23.

6.2 Legal

WSSC will lead the countywide procurement process for the new West Sussex Community Advice and Support Service. This contract is due to be awarded before the new contract commences on 1st April 2022. If the Borough Council continues with the WSSC arrangement then this will be a contractual obligation.

Any future funding awards that are deemed suitable for a commissioning process will then become legally binding contracts.

Grants awarded are not legally binding contracts however performance is expected and will be monitored.

6.3 Equalities

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and can be found at Appendix A.

7. Background Papers

[Report to OSC & Cabinet Community Grants Future Options HCS24 1 & 3 February 2021](#)

[Report to OSC & Cabinet Budget Strategy 2021/22 - 2025/26 FIN/508 23 & 25 November 2020](#)

[Report to OSC & Cabinet 2021/2022 Budget and Council Tax FIN/514 1 & 3 February 2021](#)

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