

Agenda Item

Part I

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Executive Member: Cllr Max Holloway All
Wards

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
GRANTS BOARD – 26 JULY 2023
REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (PLACE)

ANNUAL COMMUNITY GRANTS 2024/25 - LAUNCH

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 £73,000 is anticipated to be ring fenced for the distribution of Annual Grants payments for the financial year 2024/25.
- 1.2 This report provides an update on the annual grants process for 2024/25.

2 Recommendation(s)

Members of the Grants Board are asked to:

- 2.1 Approve the amendments to the Annual Community Grant application process.
- 2.2 Ringfence funding of £2,500 from the Annual Community Grants for the award of small Community grants (maximum £500.00 per organisation) to enable local organisations to access funding for activities, including; assist with administration which will develop constitutions, produce policy documents and facilitate a bank account to enable access to wider funding streams.
- 2.3 Note the proposed opening & closing dates for applications of 4th September 2023 to 8th October 2023.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 In June 2023, the Grants Board met and discussed the Council's annual grants programme. The application period is typically open throughout the summer, with grants awarded in November for payment the following financial year.
- 3.2 At the meeting, a number of comments were made regarding the criteria and application process. In particular, it was felt that with the launch of the community lottery and the scaling back of small community grants, an element of the annual grants programme should be made more accessible for smaller charities.
- 3.3 Whilst Members discussed a range of other factors, such as the maximum amount that can be awarded, it was felt that the rest of the criteria should remain as they are. Grants Board would be able to use their discretion to consider applications and award funding, with a more detailed evaluation criteria to be developed by Officers

over the summer.

- 3.4 The process for 2023 is due to open in the summer. There are some changes required to the application form and an intention to put this online as an easier process, however this will delay the process and push the start back to the end of August.
- 3.5 The budget expected to be made available for Annual Grants for the financial year 2024/25 is £73,000. This is subject to the Council's annual budget-setting processes and will be inclusive of the funding ring-fenced for small organisations
- 3.6 Through the grants process Members are able to fully fund, part fund or not fund at all any of the applications that have been received.
- 3.7 It should be noted that applications can only be considered by members of the Grants Board if the organisation meets all the essential criteria. Some of those key criteria are list as follows:
 - Applications must come from an organisation that is incorporated or an unincorporated charity or a voluntary/community/not-for-profit group.
 - At least 50 per cent of the organisation's members/clients/users must live or work in the borough of Welwyn Hatfield. The organisation must be able to provide monitoring information on its membership/users.
 - The organisation must be committed to Equal Opportunities and have an Equalities Policy in place (where applicable). However, organisations may target some or all of its activities at specific groups, where the intention is to address discrimination or disadvantage.
 - The organisation must be sustainable and able to show budgetary information. They also must be able to provide recent audited/independently examined accounts or projected income/expenditure figures (in the case of organisations that are less than a year old) to demonstrate its need for financial assistance.
- 3.8 Detailed costs for the applicant must be provided within the application and it should be noted that within the criteria it is highlighted what can and what cannot be funded through the Annual Grant fund.
- 3.9 A more detailed set of evaluation criteria will be developed during the summer, to support the Grants Board with assessing each of the applications, and ultimately determining whether they should receive a grant, and how much that should be. It is proposed that within this, priority funding will be given to new applicants.
- 3.10 The ringfenced funding for small organisations, as part of the annual grants process, is aimed to address informal feedback that smaller charities are sometimes put off from applying to larger funding pots, as they do not feel they will be successful. With the community lottery set to replace the small community grants, this funding will bridge the gap for organisations that require specific, targeted funding in a shorter time-frame, to enable them to start or grow their operations.
- 3.11 Providing a small start-up or growth grant of £500.00 per organisation will enable them to become more self-sufficient and have a governance structure in place

allowing them to apply for larger grants. The introduction of the Community lottery in September 2023 will enable more organisations to raise money for their cause and reduce the dependency on the Council for support, with the opportunity raise money throughout the year, but it is recognised that some organisations may need financial support to reach that stage.

- 3.12 Given the level of staff resource involve, it is recommended that £2,500 (five charities) are supported in the first year, so that the Council can test demand whilst managing the number of applications. Officers will review how successfully this works and look to adjust the figure for next year based on market response and the intensiveness of support required.

Implications

4 Legal Implication(s)

- 4.1 A Service Level Agreement is entered into between the council and each successful grant applicant.

5 Financial Implication(s)

- 5.1 The budget for annual grants is included in the Council's budget-setting.
- 5.2 Grants awarded are subject to agreement from the Council's Cabinet during the budget setting process for financial year 2024/25.

6 Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 There is a risk related to providing grants to voluntary organisations in that there is the possibility that the organisation could go into administration and as such the funding would be lost. There is also the possibility that organisations do not spend the grant provided on the agreed projects or costs as per their applications.
- 6.2 The risks are mitigated as much as possible through the application process, where information is provided about the organisation, its governance and financial structures and the reason it has applied for funding. All successful grant applicants sign up a service level agreement with the council which sets out the terms of the grant and also what information is to be provided to monitor the outcomes. The information provided includes evidence on where the funding was spent.

Risk Score Likelihood Low; Impact Medium. Overall risk score Low.

7 Security & Terrorism Implication(s)

- 7.1 In complying with the Prevent duty Local Authorities need to ensure that publicly owned resources do not provide a platform for extremists and are not used to disseminate extremist views.

8 Procurement Implication(s)

- 8.1 There are no procurement implications. The funds will be issued as grant payments.

9 Climate Change Implication(s)

9.1 There are no climate change implications

10 Human Resources Implication(s)

10.1 There are none arising from this report.

11 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)

11.1 Providing grants to community organisations for the benefit of Welwyn Hatfield residents assists the council in meeting its objectives to improve the health and wellbeing of the borough.

12 Communications Plan

12.1 All successful organisations are required to actively promote the Council when market their event or project.

12.2 The Council will also put out a press release detailing the successful applicants and highlighting some of the projects/initiatives that the Council is supporting through this round of Grants.

13 Link to Corporate Priorities

13.1 The subject of this report is linked to several of the council's recently adopted priorities especially around a sense of community where people feel safe.

14 Equality and Diversity

14.1 An EqIA was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies.

14.2 Those organisations applying for a council grant are required to produce evidence of their commitment to equality and diversity.

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