

REPORT TO: CABINET

DATE: 24 MARCH 2022

TITLE: ALLOCATION OF GRANT AID TO THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR (PARTNERSHIP GRANTS)

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COUNCILLOR JOEL CHARLES, DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY RESILLIENCE

LEAD OFFICER: JANE GREER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT (01279 446146)

CONTRIBUTING OFFICERS: JULIE HOUSTON, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY RESILLIENCE (01279 446445)

CHRISTINE HOWARD, YOUTH AND CITIZENSHIP MANAGER (01279 446192)

ANGELA STREET, ADMIN CO-ORDINATOR (01279 446518)

This is a Key Decision.
It is on the Forward Plan as item I013579
Call-In procedures may apply.
This decision will affect no ward specifically.

RECOMMENDED that:

- A** the allocation of Grant Aid (Partnership Grants) is delegated to the Director of Communities and Environment, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Business and Community Resilience, as set out in paragraph (7) of this report and will be published as a Portfolio Holder report at the appropriate time.

REASON FOR DECISION

- A** To enable the provision of financial support to voluntary sector organisations in line with council policy.
- B** To support the delivery of council priorities as set out in paragraph two (included below) following consultation with the community and voluntary sector in November 2021.

BACKGROUND

1. In November 2021, in preparation for the allocation of Grant Aid to the voluntary sector (Partnership Grants) for the period 2022/23 - 2024/25, the council undertook a review of the current process. The review included the opportunity to deliver a face-to-face consultation event with a range of local community and voluntary sector groups and organisations to establish their view on the current process and how best the 2022/23 - 2024/25 fund could be utilised to ensure maximum benefit to the community.
2. As a result of the discussions that took place at the consultation event, the council decided to make some minor changes to the process for allocation of Grant Aid (Partnership Grants), including focusing the allocation of funds for the period 2022/23 - 2024/25 on local priorities identified by participants at the consultation event – namely:
 - a) Support the town's financial, health and social recovery from COVID-19 and address issues of the impact of long-COVID on residents and business
 - b) Improve social inclusion and reduce inequality
 - c) Tackle financial, food and digital insecurity and debt
 - d) Reduce loneliness and social isolation
 - e) Improve opportunities for employment, training and skills development
 - f) Increase volunteering opportunities; and
 - g) Support physical and mental health and wellbeing initiatives and promote suicide prevention work
3. The value of the Partnership Grants fund is £131,000 per year for three years. The cash grants currently received by community and voluntary organisations are due to cease on 31 March 2022 therefore an opportunity to apply for a Partnership Grant for the period 2022/23 to 2024/25 was advertised on the council's social media and website in January 2022.
4. Community and voluntary organisations were invited to submit an Expression of Interest with a closing date of 30 January 2022. Thirty-Five Expressions of Interest were received and following evaluation by officers all organisations that submitted an Expression of Interest were subsequently invited to submit a full funding application.
5. Twenty-seven full funding applications were received. All the applications have been reviewed by a panel of officers and assessed against agreed priorities. The submission of mandatory supporting documents, including an Equal Opportunities

Policy or statement and most recent set of financial accounts, were requested as part of the due diligence undertaken.

6. The total amount of funding requested by applicants has far outweighed the budget available (£131,000 per year for 3 years) with in excess of £530,000 per year being requested resulting in the scheme being heavily over-subscribed. The number of applications received was also significantly higher than for the 2019/20 – 2021/22 funding period.
7. Officer recommendations for the allocation of Partnership Grants have been spread across three funding bands, and are set out in paragraph eight below. Funding band descriptors are as follows.

Organisations must demonstrate:

- a) Band 1 – has evidenced six or more of the council’s Partnership Grant priorities; the organisation is multi-faceted with a proven track record and provides wide reaching services that support all sections of the community
- b) Band 2 – has evidenced four or more of the council’s Partnership Grant priorities; the organisation has a proven track record and provides services that reach targeted sections of the community
- c) Band 3 – has evidenced a minimum of one of the council’s Partnership Grant priorities; the organisation has a proven track record and provides services that reach targeted sections of the community

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

8. It is proposed that the funding available (£131,000 per year) be allocated across three funding bands as follows to support delivery against agreed priorities to meet identified need and ensure maximum benefit to the community.

Band one – £20,000 and over
Band two – £5,000 to £20,000
Band three – under £5,000

9. Organisations will be awarded the grant for a period of three years, subject to budget availability and satisfactory performance against agreed targets. Targets will be monitored by a Balanced Scorecard method to ensure that grant recipients can clearly evidence outcomes and positive change for the benefit of the community.
10. Organisations will be paid their grants six-monthly in advance and at the end of each six-month period, using the Balanced Scorecard, and will be required to report on

how the funding has been used and what has been achieved during the period. On a twice yearly basis, an overview of the achievements of each organisation will be provided to the Director of Communities and Environment, and organisations will be challenged constructively on and required to justify any identified under-performance.

11. Final checks on the eligibility for award of grant funding are currently being made and will be considered when the final recommendation for award is made.

IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Growth and Regeneration

None specific.

Author: Andrew Bramidge, Director of Strategic Growth and Regeneration

Finance

The cost of the Partnership grants are met from approved service budgets.

Author: Simon Freeman, Deputy to the Chief Executive and Director of Finance

Housing

None specific.

Author: Andrew Murray, Director of Housing

Communities and Environment

As contained within the report.

Author: Jane Greer, Director of Communities and Environment

Governance and Corporate Services

The proposals seek to allow the determination of grants based upon clear priorities previously approved by the Cabinet.

Author: Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Services

Appendices

Appendix A - Cabinet Report dated 2 December 2021