

## **Corporate Policy Committee**

**5<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

### **Community Grants Programme 2023/24 and 2024/25**

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**Report of: Helen Charlesworth-May - Executive Director of Adults,  
Health and Integration**

**Report Reference No: CP/55/23-24**

**Ward(s) Affected: All**

### **Purpose of Report**

- 1 The report seeks approval for several community grant schemes that are provisionally scheduled to be delivered and associated funding allocated during 2023/24 and 24/25. In accordance with the Council's financial procedure rules all grant schemes of £100,000 or more require Corporate Policy Committee approval.

Some of those associated strategic aims and objectives set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25 are as follows:

- Look at opportunities to bring more income into the borough
- Work together with residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient
- Reduce health inequalities across the borough
- Reduce impact on the environment
- A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel
- Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all
- Be a carbon neutral council by 2025

### **Executive Summary**

- 1 This report seeks approval to proceed with several community grant schemes during 2023/24 and 2024/25.

- 2 There are four proposed community grant schemes worth £568,860 in 2023/24 and a further four in 2024/25 worth £748,627 totalling an overall value of £1,317,487 over the two years.
- 3 Investing in the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector provides value for money and increases capacity in the community to deliver on a range of objectives. Each community grant scheme will have a bespoke set of objectives that meet a combination of national criteria, local need and Council strategic outcomes.
- 4 All of the proposed community grant schemes are using non-recurrent Central Government funding. Each community grant scheme will meet the expected requirements set out by the funder.
- 5 The report aims to provide assurance to Corporate Policy Committee that each community grant scheme will be delivered and associated funding allocated in accordance with the Corporate Grants Policy and Crowdfunding Policy as per proposed process and associated officer decision making set out in Appendix 1 “Community Grant Processes”.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Policy Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the community grant schemes as set out in paragraph 7 of this report for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

## Background

- 6 The Crowdfunding Policy<sup>1</sup> was approved by Cheshire East Cabinet on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 2020 and the Corporate Grants Policy<sup>2</sup> was approved by Corporate Policy Committee on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 2022. Both policies provide frameworks and guidance to follow for setting up competitive grant schemes.
- 7 The community grant schemes are listed below along with the mechanism for grant allocation, total funding allocations and source of external income to be allocated.

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<sup>1</sup> [Appendix 1 Crowd Funding Policy.pdf \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Corporate Grants Policy.](#)

<b>Fund name and purpose</b>	<b>Community grant mechanism</b>	<b>Budget 2023/24 allocation</b>	<b>Budget 2024/25 allocation</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Central government external funding source</b>
1. Cheshire East Crowd – Community Buildings	Crowdfunding	£110,000	£312,627	£422,627	Rural England Prosperity Fund
2. Cost-of-Living Community Response Fund	Competitive grant application	£96,000	£94,000	£190,000	UK Shared Prosperity Fund
3. Increasing Volunteering and Community Action Fund	Competitive grant application	£180,000	£192,000	£372,000	UK Shared Prosperity Fund
4. Rural Community Transport Fund	Competitive grant application	NA	£150,000	£150,000	Homes for Ukraine Grant Fund.
5. Health and Wellbeing Grants	Competitive grant application	£182,860		£182,860	Better Care Fund – ICB allocation
Totals		£568,860	£748,627	£1,317,487	

- 8 Each grant scheme is required to have its own agreed process which is aligned to the Corporate Grants Policy. These processes are provided within Appendix 1.

### **External funding source: Rural and UK Shared Prosperity Community Grant Funding:**

<b>Fund name and purpose</b>	<b>Community grant mechanism</b>	<b>Budget 2023/24 allocation</b>	<b>Budget 2024/25 allocation</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Central government external funding source</b>
1. Cheshire East Crowd – Community Building's	Crowdfunding	£110,000	£312,627	£292,627	Rural England Prosperity Fund
2. Cost-of-Living Community Response Fund	Competitive grant application	£96,000	£94,000	£190,000	UK Shared Prosperity Fund

3. Increasing Volunteering and Community Action Fund	Competitive grant application	£180,000	£192,000	£372,000	UK Shared Prosperity Fund
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- 9 Corporate Policy Committee noted the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan and delegated authority to the Executive Director of Place<sup>3</sup> to make any amendments, accept and manage the fund on behalf of the Council on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2022 which applies to the following community grant schemes.
- 10 In addition to the Crowdfunding Policy, the Council have an existing contract with an external Crowdfunding platform provider (Spacehive). Using this platform<sup>4</sup>, the Community Buildings Fund would be advertised allowing the Council to contribute towards project proposals along with the community during two crowdfunding rounds in 2023/24 and 24/25.
- 11 On the 23rd June 2022 the Council organised a collaborative Spotlight Review Event<sup>5</sup> to bring together a range of stakeholders including elected member's, public sector officers and representatives of VCFSE sector to discuss poverty. The full day's facilitated session highlighted 5 strategic areas of focus.
- 12 On October 2022, 21 residents of Cheshire East came together to form the Cheshire East People's Panel on the Cost of Living<sup>6</sup>. The purpose was for a diverse group of residents to decide upon recommendations to ease the effects of the increasing costs of living. The panellists met over two weekends to discuss "what can be done to make life more affordable for those most affected by the cost of living?" and to develop a set of recommendations to present to Cheshire East Council. A final report from the People's Panel was received by Cheshire East Council in December 2022 which contains the 12 recommendations of the People's Panel. These recommendations were grouped into three themes: community and appropriate support, energy, transport and planning, and rethinking funding and distribution.
- 13 In December 2022 the Poverty Joint Strategic Needs Assessment<sup>7</sup> was complete across Cheshire East providing key data around our

<sup>3</sup> [UKSPF Funding Delegated Decision](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Cheshire East Crowd - Home \(spacehive.com\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Issue details - Outcome of the "Right to Food" Spotlight Review | Cheshire East Council](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Peoples Panel Recommendations](#)

<sup>7</sup> [lived](#)

population and 8 recommendations the Council and partners could focus on to alleviate financial pressures in our communities.

#### **External funding source: Homes for Ukraine Community Grant Funding**

4. Rural Community Transport Fund	Competitive grant application	NA	£150,000	£150,000	Homes for Ukraine Grant Fund.
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- 14 Full Council delegated authority to the Chief Executive to distribute the Homes for Ukraine<sup>8</sup> grant monies, as deemed necessary on the 18th May 2022.
- 15 As part of the Council's responsibilities to deliver the Homes for Ukraine scheme an emerging need has arisen due to the significant pressures Sponsors are under caused by the cost-of-living crisis and increased fuel costs. The reliance on sponsors to transport guests to/from services and appointments is causing tensions and relationship breakdowns between sponsors and guests.
- 16 On the 18th May 2023 Community & Voluntary Services (CVS) hosted a community transport network meeting with 18 public and VCFSE sector representatives where the following concerns were raised concerns in gaps of transport services across Cheshire East for hospital/primary care appointments and VCFSE provision. Alongside that there was an agree perceived perception that an expectation the VCFSE sector can fill this gap with no available funding.

#### **External funding source: Better Care Fund Community Grant Funding**

5. Health and Wellbeing Grants	Competitive grant application	£182,860		£182,860	Better Care Fund – ICB allocation
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- 17 The Council & Integrated Care Board would like to jointly administer the agreed grants process, through a section 75 agreement setting out respective roles and responsibilities which has been approved through Better Care Governance. The delegated authority around the decision making for these grants once evaluated falls to the Cheshire East Place Director in consultation with the Executive Director of Adults, Health and Integration which applies to the following community grant scheme.

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<sup>8</sup> Homes for [Ukraine](#) Cheshire East Delegated Decision

## Consultation and Engagement

18 On approval:

- An internal cross directorate project group will be set up for each community grant scheme to ensure the grants meet the criteria set but also further current pressures on services and our communities.
- Each of the community grant schemes will be presented for comment with the following town and parish council and VCFSE infrastructure organisations: CVSCE (Community and voluntary services Cheshire East), Cheshire Connect, ChALC (Cheshire association of local council), Cheshire community foundation and Cheshire community action, this will take place through the Cheshire East Local Infrastructure Alliance (CELIA)
- A wider community funding survey will be shared with the VCFSE sector to obtain views on gaps in service, which will strengthen objectives and example projects for funds. We also intend to seek preferences on future grant giving mechanisms and preferential ways to engage with the sector.
- Focussed market engagement sessions will be held for each of the community grant schemes. The outcomes of these sessions will be to coproduce the further detailed objectives, achieve higher quality and quantity of applications and to consider how to capture outcomes best collectively from each of the funded organisations.

19 The outcomes of this engagement will be produced as part of a community grants annual brochure<sup>9</sup> which informs stakeholders about the organisations that received funding and what they are expected to achieve.

## Reasons for Recommendations

20 Approval of the community grants programme for 2023/24 and 2024/25 will allow efficient forward planning and required engagement for each community grant scheme. The organisations represented within the VCFSE sector are key delivery partners in meeting the Council's strategic aims and objectives. Whilst through our commissioning intentions the Council procures goods and services through contractual arrangements, grant funding is a mechanism we can use to react to emerging or short-term pressures, local needs and to pilot new services.

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<sup>9</sup> [Cheshire East Grants Our Community Offer April 2023 \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](https://cheshireeast.gov.uk)

## Other Options Considered

Option	Impact	Risk
<p>Not to implement each grant associated with the rural and main UK Shared Prosperity Fund</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cheshire East Crowd – Community Buildings</li> <li>2. Cost-of-Living Community Response Fund</li> <li>3. Increasing Volunteering and Community Action Fund</li> </ol>	<p>These schemes are linked to “intervention E9” of the submitted and approved investment plan to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.</p> <p>Not delivering on these schemes would lose investment into the VCFSE sector to deliver on tangible outcomes set out within the plan</p>	<p>The council would not be delivering on the approved investment plan therefore the funding could be requested to be returned to central government.</p>
<p>Not to implement the grant associated with the Homes for Ukraine Fund</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Rural Community Transport Fund</li> </ol>	<p>Fewer people accessing employment opportunities, services and become further isolated.</p> <p>Sponsors becoming under increased pressure caused by the cost-of-living crisis and increased fuel costs to provide transport to amenities for their Ukrainian guests.</p>	<p>Additional Ukraine and Sponsor breakdowns leading to an increase in families going into temporary accommodation.</p>
<p>Not to implement the grant associated with the Better Care Fund</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Health and Wellbeing Grants</li> </ol>	<p>A reduction in physical and mental health provision in the community</p>	<p>Funding to be re-allocated to other ICB services.</p>

## Implications and Comments

*Monitoring Officer/Legal*

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- (a) The Council has the power to develop grant schemes and to award grants to organisations pursuant thereto, using its general power of competence in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. In exercising the power, the Council must satisfy its public law duties. In essence this means that in making the decision and evolving any grant schemes the Council must have taken into account only relevant considerations, followed procedural requirements, acted for proper motives and not acted unreasonably. The Corporate Grants Policy acts as a clear statement of the criteria that the Council should apply for grant schemes and in doing so demonstrates open and consistent decision making and so reduces the risk of challenges. It is therefore important that the schemes which are being established are designed and operated in accordance with the policy.
- (b) The Council is obliged to consider compliance with the Subsidy Control regime when awarding grants to organisations. Though it is felt that given the nature of the schemes in question it is unlikely that an award of a grant will fall subject to consideration under these rules, this will need to be checked on each occasion.

*Section 151 Officer/Finance*

- 22 The recommendations are affordable within the approved medium term financial strategy. The grants are to be fully funded from specific external funds. These funds are in addition to the council's core base budget.
- 23 All the proposed grant schemes meet the expenditure conditions for the associated external funding.
- 24 The associated costs will be captured on suitable cost centres to enable monitoring & reporting of actual expenditure incurred:

Grant Scheme	Code	Code Description	Note
1. Cheshire East Crowd – Community Buildings	E762220	Shared Prosperity Fund	CE holds the funds.
2. Cost-of-Living Community Response Fund	E762220	Shared Prosperity Fund	CE holds the funds.
3. Increasing Volunteering and Community Action Fund	E762220	Shared Prosperity Fund	CE holds the funds.
4. Rural Community Transport Fund	E136131	Homes for Ukraine	CE holds the funds.
5. Health and Wellbeing Grants	E780610	Community Grants	ICB hold the funds. The funding is listed within the Better Care Fund plan for 2023/24. ICB to be invoiced for expenditure incurred. Expenditure to be coded and monitored against E780610 "Community Grants".

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## *Policy*

- 26 The process of awarding applications via this fund will fall under the Corporate Grants Policy.

## 27 Corporate Plan

<b>An open and enabling organisation</b>	<b>A council which empowers and cares about people</b>	<b>A thriving and sustainable place</b>
Look at opportunities to bring more income into the borough	Work together with residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient  Reduce health inequalities across the borough	Reduce impact on the environment  A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel  Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all  Be a carbon neutral council by 2025

## *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

- 28 An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed aligned to the grant process.

## *Human Resources*

- 29 No human resources implications. Community Funding/Grants are managed by officers within the Council's Communities Team.

## *Risk Management*

- 30 Each community grant scheme operates within the Corporate Grants Policy which provides a framework to deliver grants in a competitive way alongside undertaking due diligence. Each community grant scheme would have a project group which would also have a live risk register. Any high rated risks would be escalated to the Head of Service, Communities and Integration.

## *Rural Communities*

- 31 All of the funds will consider the rural action plan as part of its engagement and development and are expected to have a positive impact on the rural community.

- 32 Cheshire East Crowd - Community Buildings Fund and the Rural Community Transport Fund are specifically aimed at Rural Communities and address carbon reduction and transport which have been identified as priorities for rural areas. The rural action plan priorities have been taken into consideration as part of both of these schemes, specifically creating better access for residents to access services, and improving health and wellbeing outcomes.

*Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)*

- 33 The funds will provide opportunities for children and young people who have been impacted by the cost of living to access support to tackle poverty, those that have been impacted by a lack of health and wellbeing services and those who may be isolated in rural communities. Without these funds then some services might not be available to those most affected by the cost of living, health and wellbeing and a lack of rural community transport and their families.

*Public Health*

- 34 The cost of living is having detrimental effects on mental and physical health and is causing an increase in demand on services. By delivering grants to the VCFSE sector more residents will be able to access the support they need earlier and at a local level. This will decrease the demands on public health. The Cost-of-Living fund will aim to address target areas identified through the Poverty JSNA, which is currently awaiting approval, for those highest affected by the Cost-of-living crisis.
- 35 The Increasing Volunteering and Community Action Fund and Health and Wellbeing grants will specifically address challenges raised in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and fund projects which contribute towards the strategic outcomes, this will have a positive impact on Public Health.
- 36 There will be several objectives within each of the community grant schemes that have direct links to the Public Health wider determinants and health improvement outcomes. The grants will also pay particular focus on the 14 locally agreed Cheshire East joint Public Health Outcomes and the four strategic outcomes aims within the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

*Climate Change*

- 37 Cheshire East Crowd - Community Buildings Fund will invite capital projects onto the platform which are contributing towards a net zero infrastructure for rural community buildings. The fund will also link closely with other pieces of work to begin to fund the outcomes of

decarbonisation plans which are being produced for Town Council Buildings and VCFSE buildings.

- 38 The Cost-of-Living Fund will be able to fund reducing food waste projects which will have a positive impact on the effects of Climate change.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Dan Coyne, Head of Service Communities and Integration. <a href="mailto:Daniel.coyne@cheshireeat.gov.uk">Daniel.coyne@cheshireeat.gov.uk</a>
Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Community Grant Processes