

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 12 April 2016

Report of: Steph Cordon, Head of Communities

Subject/Title: Policy for the Allocation of Community Grants 2016/17

Portfolio Holder: Paul Bates – Portfolio Holder for Communities and Health

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. The Community Grants Policy was first adopted in 2009/10 to provide legal guidance for the operation of the Council's community grant scheme and requires approval from Cabinet each financial year in order to delegate decision making powers to the portfolio holder responsible for community grants.
- 1.2. Applications to the scheme are invited from voluntary, community and faith sector organisations who meet the policy criteria. The scheme has enabled funding to be focused on those organisations that contribute to meeting the Residents First Outcomes.
- 1.3. As a Residents First Council we recognise the valuable input that the voluntary, community and faith sector brings to the quality of life in the community. The Policy for the Allocation of Community Grants ensures that these organisations are assessed fairly and that grant awards are open and transparent and stand up to public scrutiny.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That Cabinet approves the Policy for the Allocation of Community Grants.
- 2.2. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Health to make decisions on grant applications for each round of community grants within the financial year of 2016/17.

3. Other Options Considered

- 3.1. There are no alternative options for consideration.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1. All Council departments have budgetary pressures and all funding must be able to be justified and stand up to public scrutiny.
- 4.2. The Policy for the Allocation of Community Grants 2016/17 needs adopting to allow the continuation of the community grants scheme throughout the financial year of 2016/17.
- 4.3. Community grant applications are considered at quarterly intervals with recommendations considered at a portfolio holders meeting. This meeting is open to the public to ensure transparency and fairness about the Council's decision making.

5. Background/Chronology

- 5.1 In 2015/16 114 organisations were awarded with grants which has contributed to total project costs of over £1.6 million. Collectively these organisations employ over 650 staff ranging from casual to full time and have over 3,400 unpaid volunteers.
- 5.2 A wealth of community activity has taken place across Cheshire East, through the grants awarded which includes:
 - a) One World 2015 was awarded £800, as a contribution to a total project cost of £4,275. This was to hold a festival in Alsager involving local residents that originate from other cultures and countries providing a unique insight to the community including national dishes, costumes and artefacts which contributes to community cohesion.
 - b) Friends for Leisure, based in Congleton were awarded £500 as part of a £6,500 volunteer training programme to provide the best opportunities and friendships for disabled children and young people.

6. Wards Affected and Local Ward Members

- 6.1. The recommendations relate to all wards within Cheshire East.

7. Implications of Recommendation

7.1. Policy Implications

- 7.1.1 N/A

7.2. Legal Implications

- 7.2.1 The Council has the power to award grants to organisations 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 the Council must have taken into account only relevant considerations, followed procedural requirements, acted for proper motives and not acted unreasonably. A grant policy is a clear statement of the criteria that the Council is applying and is essential if the Council is to defend any challenge to its decision making process.
- 7.2.2 The Policy for the Allocation of Grants to Voluntary and Community organisations 2016/17 deals with the allocation of community grants which are awarded to defined organisations following an application process, and against a set criteria. There are conditions requiring that organisations report back to the Council upon expenditure of the grant and to enable further appropriate conditions to be imposed. The decision making process is delegated to the Portfolio Holder in order ensure that decisions can be made expeditiously and at the appropriate level.
- 7.2.3 Grant funding organisations based on the application of the Council's grant policy satisfies the Council's public law duties.
- 7.2.4 Direct award of grants favour organisations and can potentially be challenged on the basis that they exclude other organisations. A competitive grants process is an open, transparent and fair means to afford all eligible organisations the opportunity to compete for and obtain grant funding from the Council.

7.3 Financial Implications

- 7.3.1 There will be no overall financial impact to the Council as total Cheshire East budgets will remain the same.

7.4 Equality Implications

- 7.4.1 There are no negative equality implications as the community grant scheme is open to all across Cheshire East to apply.
- 7.4.2 The community grant scheme is advertised through a variety of different means, including: on the Council's own website, on Grantfinder and other grant search organisations websites, through newsletters and mailshots and attendance at funding fairs and other events. It will soon also be advertised on The Chest to ensure that the voluntary, community and faith sector throughout Cheshire East are aware of the scheme and how to apply for funding.

7.5 Rural Community Implications

7.5.1 There are no specific implications on the rural community as the community grant scheme is open to all across Cheshire East.

7.6 Human Resources Implications

7.6.1 No extra personnel will be required to implement the recommendations.

7.7 Public Health Implications

7.7.1 The scheme gives a positive health outcome as people are coming together in community groups and meeting other, like-minded, community members, which along with other benefits, helps to reduce social isolation and facilitates community pride and self-resilience.

7.8 Other Implications (Please Specify)

7.8.1 There are no other implications.

8 Risk Management

- 8.1 The risk of not agreeing a robust approach to funding the voluntary, community and faith sector leaves the Council open to scrutiny and challenge.
- 8.2 There is a risk that the amount of funding allocated to the scheme is not enough to meet demand, which means that the expectations of the voluntary, community and faith sector will need to be carefully managed.

9 Access to Information/Bibliography

9.1 Access to more information can be made by contacting the report writer.

10 Contact Information

Contact details for this report are as follows:-

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