

Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 10 September 2019

Report Title: Early Help and Asset Based Community Development Grants Policy 2019-22

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Mick Warren Cabinet Member for Communities

Senior Officer: Mark Palethorpe – Acting Executive Director People

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. The Council's Early Help and Community Grants Scheme has been refreshed. In order to provide guidance for the operation of the grants scheme the revised Policy for the Allocation of Early Help and Asset Based Community Development Grants Scheme requires approval from Cabinet.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet

- 2.1. Approve the revised 'Policy for the Allocation of Early Help and Asset Based Community Development Grants Scheme' set out in Appendix 1.
- 2.2. Delegate authority to the People Executive Director to make decisions on grant applications for funding up to the budgeted £200k pa value, and any in-year minor policy changes for the 'Early Help and Asset Based Community Development Grants Scheme'.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. The Policy for the Allocation Community Grants Scheme required annual revision. As recommended by the internal audit, improvements to the scoring of applications have been considered in the proposed changes.
- 3.2. The Policy has been reviewed and amended to fit more closely with the Early Help Framework and to target the money to ensure that a greater impact is made on individuals and their wellbeing by empowering local residents and community groups to initiative local projects to target local needs. The idea of inspiring and empowering local people to implement local solutions is at the heart of the proposed changes.

- 3.3. Early Help and Asset Based Community Development Grant applications are considered at quarterly intervals with recommendations being considered by the Executive Director for People. Approval of this policy to enable decisions to be made on applications made going forwards.
- 3.4. The changes to the Policy are to better meet the needs of our communities by providing grant opportunities to local people and the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector. The changes and the re-launch of this Community Grants can be done borough wide and a local level using Community Networks and Connected Communities Centres to support the process and encourage social innovation.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. Other options considered would be to continue to use the previous policy to manage the Community Grants scheme which would be ignoring the reasons for the 50% allocated to the scheme was underspend from the previous financial year and the ongoing informal feedback from the Voluntary Community and Faith Sector of the required changes.
- 4.2. Another option would be to end the Community Grants scheme. The ongoing dialogue with local residents people and the VCF sector would indicate that the Community Grants scheme is a crucial resource to keep community activities and local services thriving with focus on the early intervention and prevention agenda.

5. Background

- 5.1. The Integrated Commissioning Team has developed an Early Help Framework to offer a single contractual mechanism for relevant commissioning activity for early help services. The Early Help Framework Specification and the Early Help and Asset Based Community Development Grants Policy together can form the Council's strategic vision for early help and prevention which is a key focus of the Cheshire East Health and Wellbeing Strategy, thus orientating Cheshire East Council to reduce or delay the need for people to access statutory health or social care services. This is because their needs will have been addressed 'upstream', before their health deteriorates.
- 5.2. Cheshire East Council has operated a grants scheme since 2009. The aim of this scheme is to support individuals to initiate community activity and to support the voluntary, community and faith sector with developmental projects and activities that improve the quality of life for local communities. This scheme is operated under the Policy for the Allocation of Early Help

and Community Grants, and grants awarded meet the Council's Corporate Outcomes.

- 5.3. Grants being awarded under the Policy for the allocation of Early Help and Asset Based Community Development Grants will result in local people being helped to 'live well and for longer', promoting social innovation and building community resilience so that residents are empowered to recognise and address their own health and wellbeing needs. This includes making the most of assets within communities.
- 5.4. The Early Help and Community Grants Scheme previously had one category:
- Start up grants and community activity – up to a maximum award of £5,000
Organisations could apply for:
 - Equipment, materials or specialist kit to help the organisation develop;
 - Volunteer training courses such as food hygiene, health and safety, first aid, sports coaching;
 - Specialist coaching or teaching sessions from outside organisations;
 - Contributions towards running costs, excluding salaries, for organisations that have been established for less than 6 months only;
 - Publicity / advertising / promotions / establishing a new website.

The Community Grants budget is currently £200k. It is important to focus this limited grant funding on activities and initiatives where clearly defined outcomes can be achieved.

The proposed changes to the Policy will replace the above with two new categories for funding:

Asset Based Community Development Grants - up to a maximum award of £250

- The Council wishes to support new community activities, promoting social innovation in local residents recognising local solutions are often found by local communities.

Early Help and Community Development Grants - up to a maximum award of £10,000

- The Council wishes to support the continuation and development of existing not-for-profit organisations with community activity which will target grant money to ensure

that a greater impact is made on individuals and their wellbeing.

- 5.5. The refreshed outcomes are inline with Cheshire East Corporate Outcomes also using the nationally recognised Themes, Outcomes and Measures created by the Sustainable Development Unit as part of the Social Value work. A number of proposed projects have set alongside those outcomes to provide the applicants additional information. With the refreshed criteria for funding, along with the introduction of a multi-agency evaluation panel a more collaborative systematic place based approach to the allocation of this Community Fund which will maximise it's potential to achieving the desired outcomes set out within the Policy.

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

- 6.1.1. 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. An overarching Corporate Grants Policy provides a consistent basis upon which policies are created and reviewed regularly.
- 6.1.2. The Policy for the Allocation of Early Help and Asset Based Community Development Grants 2019 - 2022 deals with the allocation of grants which are awarded to defined organisations following an application process and against 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 Executive Director for People in accordance with the financial limits set out in the Corporate Grants Policy.
- 6.1.3. Grant funding to organisations based on the application of the Council's Early Help and Asset Based Community Development Grants policy satisfies the Council's public law duties. 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. It is a means to distribute limited resources

amongst such organisations and to support and encourage the introduction of new community initiatives.

6.2. Finance Implications

6.2.1. The base budget for the Early Help and Asset Based Community Development Grants is £200k pa.

6.2.2. This paper recommends a policy change to grant allocation criteria and evaluation. There are no financial implications from recommendations 2.1, 2.2 and in this report.

6.3. Policy Implications

6.3.1. This is a revised policy and does not conflict with other Council policies

6.4. Equality Implications

6.4.1. An Equality Impact Assessment is underway and will be completed before a proposed go live date of the 1st October to ensure all processes have taken all equality characteristics in to consideration

6.5. Human Resources Implications

6.5.1. The Early Help and Community Development Grants Scheme will be managed through existing resources within the Communities Team.

6.6. Risk Management Implications

6.6.1. The risk of not agreeing an approach to provide funding opportunities to the voluntary, community and faith sector is that some organisations may be unable to continue to undertake activities which the Council would wish to see in place and which support the Council's aims and objectives, resulting in a loss of community benefit.

6.7. Rural Communities Implications

6.7.1. There are no negative implications on the rural community as the Council's Early Help and Asset Based Community Development Grants scheme is open to anybody to apply, as long as they meet the schemes criteria.

6.8. Implications for Children & Young People/ cared for Children

6.8.1. Moving towards an outcome focussed approach gives greater opportunity for organisations to meet the needs of children and young people.

6.9. Public Health Implications

6.9.1. The Early Help and Asset Based Community Development Grants scheme gives a positive health outcome as people are coming together in community groups and meeting other, like-minded, community members, which reduces social isolation.

6.10. Climate Change Implications

6.10.1. The changes to the expected outcomes have included initiatives to reduce energy consumption, reduce single use plastics, minimising waste and promoting sustainable clean air travel alternatives. This can also be used to act as match funding to release existing, external grant funding.

7. Ward Members Affected

7.1. All wards and members.

8. Consultation & Engagement

8.1. Engagement took place with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector during the development of the Early Help Framework.

8.2. Informal feedback with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector during 2018/2019 has led to the proposed recommended changes to the Policy.

9. Access to Information

9.1. Appendix 1 - Early Help and Asset Based Community Development Grant Policy

10. Contact Information

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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