

Cabinet Report



Listening Learning Leading

Report of Head of Community Services

Author: Suzi Wild

Telephone: 01235 422171

E-mail: Suzi.Wild@southandvale.gov.uk

Wards affected: All wards

Cabinet member responsible: Lynn Lloyd

Tel: 01844 354313

E-mail: Lynn.Lloyd@southandvale.gov.uk

To: CABINET

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Proposed volunteering grant scheme one-year pilot

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

- (a) approves the grant policy to support volunteers with some of the costs of volunteering, attached at appendix 1.
- (b) delegates the authority to release payments of up to £750 to the head of service with responsibility for community grants.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of the report is to seek cabinet's approval for the volunteering grants policy attached at appendix 1 and to agree a delegation to the head of service with responsibility for community grants to release any payments.

CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

2. Introducing a pilot grant scheme to support some of the costs associated with volunteering, will contribute to the council's corporate priority 'Build thriving communities'. In particular, the three actions relating to this priority are;
 - To provide additional support to voluntary and community groups to help them to find the volunteers they need, to provide vital services to residents, including a website to link potential volunteers with volunteering opportunities.
 - To increase the number of people volunteering in the district.

- To promote, create and support volunteer roles and opportunities for sports volunteering within the local community.

BACKGROUND

3. In February 2017, the council approved its budget, which included a revenue growth bid of £25,000 for a pilot grant scheme in 2017/2018 to support volunteer costs.
4. Following discussions with the cabinet member for community services, officers have developed a draft grants policy to encourage more South Oxfordshire residents to volunteer more of their time in their local community by contributing to the costs associated with volunteering. We will keep the decision-making process simple, clear, transparent and justifiable.
5. The intention is to operate the scheme as a pilot in 2018/19 and then evaluate its success before deciding whether to continue it in the future.
6. To launch the new scheme in August we need to approve the policy in June to give the community enablement team sufficient time to set up the application and decision-making processes and to promote the scheme.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7. Full council approved a one-off growth bid of £25,000 in 2017/2018 to fund a volunteering grants scheme, which has been carried forward into 2018/19 to fund this pilot.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8. The Council is using its general powers under Chapter 1 Localism Act 2011 to offer this funding.
9. The head of service with responsibility for community grants will need delegated authority to release payments of up to £750 in accordance with the decisions of the relevant council officer. Officers will ensure the policy is complied with and the necessary procedures are in place to ensure decisions are taken in accordance with the policy. In addition the terms of the grant will be embodied in a grant offer letter and acceptance form that the grant recipient must sign and return to accept the grant and our terms.

RISKS

10. There is a reputational risk that the council could receive criticism if council officers make awards that are outside of the policy. To mitigate this risk details of all grant applications and decisions made, will be published on the council's website.
11. Following councillors feedback on the draft scheme, officers have refined the eligibility criteria to encourage and enable smaller grass roots organisations to apply.
12. To mitigate against the risk of grant misuse and reputational risk to the council, we will require organisations to complete an online declaration confirming the appropriate insurance, safeguarding policies/procedures and financial arrangements are in place for the project/activity. Officers will also carry out additional eligibility checks on every

fifth application received and any organisations who have not received funding from the council in the last 12 months.

CONCLUSION

13. The council has £25,000 set aside in the 2018/19 revenue budget for a volunteering grant scheme; the next step is to consider and approve a policy for delivering this scheme.
14. Cabinet is asked to approve the recommendations which will enable the head of service with responsibility for community grants to award up to £750 per successful organisation.

Appendix 1 - Volunteering grant scheme 2018/19

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

South Oxfordshire District Council is committed to supporting communities to help themselves. We want to encourage and support more South Oxfordshire residents to volunteer. We have decided to introduce a new grant scheme to support some of the costs of volunteering.

Key rules of the scheme

- Any small voluntary, community or social enterprise sector organisations (with a whole revenue turnover of less than £100,000 per year) operating in South Oxfordshire can apply.
- The grant scheme is open from August 2018 until January 2019 with a series of decision rounds programmed within this period.
- Volunteering must take place in South Oxfordshire and specifically benefit residents of the district.
- The scheme is designed to help fund new volunteers and increase volunteering and sports coaching hours across the district.
- Usually eligible organisations can apply for one grant within the year at the council's discretion.
- Grants can only cover agreed volunteering expenditure costs, as detailed below and in the application.

Who's eligible?

This fund is for small voluntary, community or social enterprise sector organisations (with less than £100,000 turnover per year) operating in South Oxfordshire and whose purpose is to benefit the people/communities of South Oxfordshire. These can include but not limited to;

- Local action groups – young people, environmental, community associations.
- Sport organisations/clubs.
- Scouts, guides or similar young people's organisations.
- Religious groups, but only if the project offers wider community benefit and does not include specific religious activities.
- Local disability or other minority support groups/organisations.
- Town and parish councils and parish meetings.
- Organisations can apply for costs relating to volunteers who are also South Oxfordshire District Council employees/councillors, so long as their volunteering activities are delivered outside of their council duties and the individuals declare the benefit received to the council.

Who's not eligible?

- Other local authorities/public sector bodies (for example Oxfordshire County Council, NHS trusts or schools/colleges – including academies, free schools and private schools).
- Individuals.

- Profit-based businesses (private businesses).
- Political and lobbying groups.
- Organisations who give grants to/fund other not-for-profit organisations.
- Organisations with an annual revenue turnover of over £100,000 per year.
- Organisations not operating within South Oxfordshire.

Eligibility criteria

In addition to providing a copy of their organisation's latest bank statement applicants must confirm the following are available **on request**:

- A suitable governing document (for example, a constitution, club rules, articles/memorandum of association).
- Appropriate financial records (minimum income and expenditure records).

Organisations to complete an online declaration to confirm that:

- They have a bank account in the name of the organisation.
- They have suitable insurance in place for staff, volunteers, users and activities.
- The applicant has permission from the organisation to make the application.
- They have the appropriate policies and procedures in place to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults and volunteers (as relevant for their organisation).
- They have an equality and diversity policy/statement.
- The information in the application is accurate and not misleading.

As a council we see the value in having volunteering statements/policies for organisations, volunteers and users. We will encourage organisations without existing volunteering policies/statements to adopt one, and will offer ongoing support to help achieve this. Support could include officer time, draft policies and guidance materials.

How much will we fund?

Usually the minimum grant amount in one year will be £250 to a maximum of £750.

Eligible costs

Usually only the items outlined below are eligible and to a set limit/contribution;

- Cost of protective clothing/ specialist equipment.
- Refreshments and meals whilst volunteering.
- DBS checks, if appropriate.
- Travel to and from the place of volunteering – public/own transport.
- Additional insurance needed to be a volunteer driver.
- Gaining coaching qualifications and associated courses.
- Accessibility support – costs associated with a volunteer's physical and other impairment that prevents or limits them from volunteering will be considered eligible.

What's not funded?

- Retrospective funding for previous volunteering costs.
- Any revenue costs, like salaries, rent, rates, repairs and maintenance.
- Hire fees for machinery or equipment.
- Community festivals and event costs.
- Political activities, lobbying or campaigning.

- Exclusively religious/faith activities (although faith groups can apply towards projects that will bring wider community benefit, if the activity is not religious).
- Volunteering programmes which, in the assessment of South Oxfordshire District Council, show actual or potential unlawful discrimination within the terms of the Equality Act 2010.
- Statutory activities/requirements that either the council or other public-sector bodies should deliver (including education and healthcare).

OPENING AND CLOSING DATES

The scheme will **open** in August 2018 unless there is a district council election that year, when we will not open until after the election has taken place.

Applications to the scheme will be online www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants.

There will be regular decision rounds until the scheme **closes** in January 2019.

We will publish each successful organisation on our website, together with details of all grants.

We will usually make our **decisions** within 10 weeks of receiving the online application.

CRITERIA, APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS

Criteria – what are we looking for in applications?

The volunteering activities must start within three months of the award and support the following scheme priorities;

- The grant will directly result in new volunteers to the organisation.
- The grant will result in extra sports activities/opportunities for South Oxfordshire residents to participate in.
- The grant will lead to an increase in the number of volunteering/sports coaching hours within the organisation.

Within the decision-making process, we will map the locations of organisations applying to ensure a fair geographical spread across the market towns and rural communities of South Oxfordshire.

Application

Organisations apply using the council's online grants management system ('the system'), accessible from our website www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants. Applicants should read the guidance notes on our website before completing an application.

Once submitted, the appropriate council officer will receive an email notification that there is a new application to determine using the system.

The council officer will use the system to complete their evaluation to confirm the application's eligibility, any additional grant conditions and noting any declarable interests. The officer may contact the applicant to complete their evaluation.

Evaluated applications will then be put forward to a decision round and the council officer will share the recommendation with the head of service for consideration and approval.

Award process

Once the head of service has made their decision the officer will either;

- a) send a grant offer letter and acceptance form to the applicant that will include our standard (and any additional) conditions.
- b) inform the applicant that they were unsuccessful and why.

The council officer will publish all decisions for this scheme on our website.

The applicant must sign and return the grant offer to the council officer, confirming they will meet all our conditions and the bank details for their organisation.

On receipt the council officer will release the grant payment. The council officer will only make payments by BACs to accounts in the name of the organisation.

Throughout the grant period council officers will monitor the project/activities to confirm the organisation has met the grant conditions.

Receiving a one-off grant does not guarantee successful future applications.

OFFICER ELIGIBILITY CHECKS

Checks for every application

- Confirm they have provided a recent bank statement (no more than two months old) in the organisation's name
- Confirm the project costs add up and seem reasonable.
- Confirm that the application meets the grant scheme criteria.

Checks for applications selected for detailed eligibility checks (every fifth application and any groups who have not received councils grants/funding in the last 12 months)

- Confirm the organisation has a suitable governing document and that their listed objectives/activities allow them to complete the project under consideration.
- Detailed financial records (minimum income and expenditure log)
- If applicable, confirm all necessary permissions/approvals are in place.
- Confirm they have relevant policies in place for any necessary areas (e.g. Safeguarding, Health and Safety).

It is the responsibility of the organisations receiving funding to ensure that all required permissions, insurances and safeguarding arrangements for children, young people and vulnerable adults are in place prior to the start of the volunteering opportunities, and that adequate health and safety risk assessments are in place, if they are necessary.

STANDARD CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL ORGANISATION

- They must start the agreed volunteering activity within three months of the award date and spend the grant/ complete the volunteering activity within one year of the award date.
- They must agree to return a proportionate amount of the grant (if requested) if the volunteering costs are less than expected or the full grant if the volunteering activity does not complete within one year of the award.
- They will consult the council officer before making significant changes to the project/work covered by the grant.
- Agree to acknowledge the council's support in any press, publicity or promotion of the project (consulting our communications team beforehand).
- They have all necessary permissions, insurances, safeguarding arrangements (for children and vulnerable adults), adequate health and safety risk assessments and other relevant policies in place for the project.
- If the organisation does not currently have a volunteering policy/statement they will adopt one before the expiry date for this grant. Officers will offer help to achieve this condition, including their time, draft policies and guidance materials.

MONITORING THE GRANTS

Throughout the period officers will request monitoring updates from the organisation, asking for the following:

- Confirmation that volunteer(s) have started and how many extra volunteering hours this has resulted in.
- If the volunteering role(s) have not started the organisation must either repay the grant in full or formally request an extension (after one year) giving clear reasons why they were unable to complete (or at least start) volunteering within the deadline agreed on their acceptance form. The head of service with responsibility for community grants has delegated authority to decide whether to agree to an extension.
- Copy of invoices or evidence of expenditure.

If repayments are received in the same financial year and before January, the money will go back into the grant scheme for re-allocation.

If repayments are received after January in the financial year they were awarded the money will return to the council's general reserves.

MONITORING THE GRANT SCHEME

Officers will review the scheme after four months and at the end of the financial year.

ADVICE

For more information about the scheme please contact:

Suzi Wild, Volunteering Development Officer suzi.wild@southandvale.gov.uk
01235 422171.