

Cabinet Report



Listening Learning Leading

Report of Head of Communities

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Wards affected: All South Oxfordshire

South Cabinet member responsible: Cllr Georgina Heritage

To: CABINET

Dates: 28th November 2024

South Oxfordshire Performing Arts Grant

Recommendation(s)

(a) Agree the Performing Arts Grants Policy as detailed at appendix 1 of this report and implement the distribution of the £60K grant funding each year for the next 3 years (2024 – 2027), subject to annual Full Council budget approval.

(b) Authorise the assessment and allocation of grant awards as detailed in this report and delegated to the Head of Communities in consultation with the Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and relevant Cabinet Member.

Implications (further detail within the report)	Financial	Legal	Climate and Ecological	Equality and diversity
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Signing off officer	Hannah Makins	Nil response	Kim Hall	Allison Holiday

Purpose of report

1. To adopt a new Performing Arts Grant policy and grants award procedure, to distribute grants to community arts and culture groups that seek to benefit the South Oxfordshire District Council area.
2. The policy sets out the purpose of the grant scheme and guidance on who is eligible for funding and what type of activity can be supported. The process, standard conditions and monitoring of awards is also explained.
3. The proposed timeline is to open the scheme on Monday 13 January 2025 and close on Friday 7 March 2025 (and similar timescales in subsequent years). Grants will be awarded on a first come first served basis.

Corporate objectives

4. The Performing Arts Grants Scheme aligns with the District Council's Corporate Plan by fostering the following objectives:
 - **Enhance community well-being:** Foster mental, emotional, and physical well-being through accessible performing arts initiatives that bring people together.
 - **Support voluntary and community groups:** Strengthen local voluntary, non-profit, and grassroots organisations involved in the performing arts, empowering them to deliver impactful projects.
 - **Promote sustainability:** Encourage environmentally sustainable practices within the performing arts, from production to performance, minimizing environmental impact.
 - **Encourage inclusivity:** Provide opportunities for diverse groups to participate in and access the performing arts, ensuring inclusivity across all demographics, including marginalised or underrepresented communities.
 - **Build local capacity:** Provide resources and support to develop skills, talent, and infrastructure within the local performing arts community.

Background

5. At the Full Council meeting on 22 February 2024¹ members approved the allocation of £60,000 to support community and voluntary sector performing arts groups within the district. This scheme is designed to enhance the cultural landscape by providing financial assistance to projects that demonstrate a significant community impact, meet identified needs, and ensure broad reach, engagement, and access.

¹ [Agenda for Council on Thursday, 22 February 2024, 6.00 pm \(southoxon.gov.uk\)](https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/Agenda-for-Council-on-Thursday-22-February-2024-6.00-pm)

paragraph 17 of the main report refers to Appendix B1 which is the discretionary growth that was approved.

Local Need

6. South Oxfordshire District Council recognises the diverse cultural landscape within the district. While there are areas of affluence with strong established arts scenes, there are also pockets of relative deprivation where access to cultural activities is limited.
7. In recent years the cost-of-living crises and Covid recovery has also affected many arts and creative sector organisations in all parts of the district. This has led to them being resilient in managing in a changing environment. This funding will be helpful in supporting the transition and development of new and sustainable cultural activity and establish strong partnerships for the future.

Aligning with National and Regional Priorities

8. The proposed Performing Arts Grant Scheme aligns with the priorities of both Arts Council England and OxLEP:
 - **Arts Council England:**
 - **Cultural Value:** The scheme supports the Arts Council's commitment to promoting the cultural value of the arts, as outlined in Arts Council England's *Let's Create* strategy.
 - **Creative People and Places (CPP):** The principles as defined in the CPP scheme can contribute to the development of creative hubs and networks, as advocated by Arts Council England's *Creative People and Places* program.
 - **OxLEP:**
 - **Economic Growth:** The scheme supports OxLEP's goal of driving economic growth through the creative industries.
 - **Cultural Development:** The scheme aligns with OxLEP's commitment to enhancing the cultural offer of the region.
9. By investing in the performing arts, South Oxfordshire District Council can contribute to the national and regional cultural and economic agendas.
10. Based on this evidence, officers recommend investing in the performing arts through a dedicated grant scheme. This investment will:
 - **Address local need:** Provide opportunities for cultural participation in areas of deprivation.
 - **Stimulate economic growth:** Support the creative industries and boost tourism.
 - **Enhance the district's cultural offer:** Foster a vibrant and diverse arts scene.
 - **Align with national and regional priorities:** Contribute to the cultural and economic goals of Arts Council England and OxLEP.

11. By supporting the performing arts, South Oxfordshire District Council can create a more vibrant, inclusive, and prosperous community.

Performing Arts Grant Scheme Purpose

12. The South Oxfordshire District Council Performing Arts Grant scheme aims to improve the cultural landscape by financially assisting initiatives that significantly impact the community, address identified needs, and make performing arts accessible to a wider audience.

13. The objectives for the Performing Arts Grant Scheme are to:

- Enhance community well-being through performing arts.
- Support and empower voluntary and community performing arts groups.
- Promote environmentally sustainable practices within performing arts.
- Encourage inclusivity and participation in performing arts across all demographics.
- Build the capacity of the local performing arts community.

14. The grant program will be open to not-for-profit groups, arts or community groups, town/parish councils, and schools (for non-core curriculum activities).

15. Grants applications can range from a minimum of £500 up to a maximum of £5,000 and must be used within a year of being awarded.

16. Applications will be accepted from 13 January 2025 to 3 March 2025.

17. Decisions will be made on a rolling basis and successful applicants will be notified by 10 March 2025.

18. Applications will need to meet the following basic criteria:

- Must take place in or benefit the residents of South Oxfordshire
- Have a formal governance structure.
- Have audited accounts.
- Have public liability insurance.
- If the project is for building alterations planning permissions must in place

These will be assessed as a pass or fail. If all questions are deemed as a pass the project will then be assessed on value and impact of the project

19. Project value will be assessed based on:

- Achieving community benefit and meeting genuine need
- Demonstrating sustainability.
- Demonstrating value for money
- Collaborative approaches will be scored higher.

- Reach or breadth of work (i.e. number of participants or audience members that do not normally access the performing arts or value of work to achieve community impact).

Community Arts Grant Process

20. Applications are assessed and awarded using the following process:

- The community arts team will first check if the application meets the eligibility criteria.
- If eligible then the team will assess the application and recommend a grant award. This will then be approved by the Head of Communities who will consider any concerns and payment terms.
- Once a decision is made, the applicant will be notified by the community arts team. The applicant will either receive a grant offer letter with conditions or be informed if their application was unsuccessful.
- If they accept the grant offer, the team will release the payment according to the offer letter.

Reporting and Monitoring

21. The council will monitor how applicants spend the grant and ensure they comply with the conditions using the following process:

- After completing the project, the applicant will need to submit a report with photos, participant numbers, and details on how the grant was spent.
- A full report of all applications will be provided in an annual update to the relevant Portfolio Holder.
- The council will record all applications, decisions, and remaining balances and will also publish a list of awarded grants on the council website.
- Applicants have 12 months to start their project from the award date. Extensions can be requested but require approval from a head of service or other senior officer.
- Any unused grant money or equipment purchased with the grant must be returned to the council.
- Failure to complete the project or meet the conditions could put future applications at risk.

Standard Conditions

22. There are several conditions that come with accepting a grant. These include:

- Having all necessary permits and permissions for their project.

- Consulting the community arts team before making any significant changes to their project.
- Spending the grant on the approved project within 12 months.
- Keeping any equipment purchased with the grant for at least 12 months.
- Returning a portion of the grant if the project costs less than expected or they receive additional funding.
- Acknowledging the council's support in any publicity for the project.

Options

23. To not carry out the project will not deliver on a task set by Members at the Budget Meeting on 22 February 2024. [Agenda for Council on Thursday, 22 February 2024, 6.00 pm \(southoxon.gov.uk\)](#) paragraph 17 of the main report refers to Appendix B1 which is the discretionary growth that was approved.
24. To take forward the scheme outlined in this report meets members expectation and adds to the sector and enhances the offer to the arts community for learning, participation, audience development and community pride.

Financial Implications

25. The funds of £60,000 have been approved as a discretionary growth bid and are allocated to the South Oxfordshire Arts Development budget for 2024/25 (and for the next two financial years of 2025/6 and 2026/7) and is awaiting spend.
26. Grants will range from £500 to £5000, therefore between 12 and 120 groups could apply for this funding. Due to the volume of transactions, direct payments into bank accounts will be made rather than the usual batches and new suppliers set up through our finance system, Unit 4.

Legal Implications

27. This grants scheme has been developed with the advice of the Community Enablement Team and existing Terms and Conditions Templates are being used. Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) Subsidy Control is within the policy and seeks a declaration in the application. The process is designed to achieve specific local policy objectives while minimising any negative effects on competition or investment within the United Kingdom by maintaining that very local focus.

Climate and ecological impact implications

28. The policy itself has no climate implications, however artists and applicant organisations will be encouraged to consider the climate and ecological impacts of their project. The application form will ask applicants to demonstrate how the proposed activities will reduce emissions, and this may include the use of sustainable materials or other climate-friendly options such as encouraging active travel for artists or audiences. Further guidance will be provided as part of the

application pack. Where equipment is being applied for, we will encourage applicants to procure the most sustainable option, which may include the hiring rather than the purchase of equipment and using local suppliers.

Equalities implications

29. In making decisions the council is required to have regard to its equalities duties and in particular to those set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and eliminate any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act, to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic namely age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, and persons who do not share it and to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
30. An Equalities statement of “**We encourage all applicants to make their projects inclusive and accessible to all**” will be included in the application guidelines and application form. There is also exclusions on performances and projects with religious or political content.

Risks

31. Risk Management have been consulted and a risk register have been created. All mitigating actions were considered and are included in this policy. A Risk Assessment table has been developed.

Other Implications

Communications have been made aware of this scheme and once approved, a Communications Plan will be developed to ensure all community groups, voluntary organisations, youth groups and Town and Parish Council are made aware of the scheme and its closing date. We will also create content for the council website and social media. In addition, the Community Arts team will hold a drop-in session at a suitable local venue for interested organisations to ask questions and find out more about the scheme.

Conclusion

32. The development of this policy and giving to the culture and arts sector will benefit many communities across the district to stimulate activity, opportunities for education and training and help to develop audiences for existing and new arts and culture activity.
33. Approving this policy will allow officers to proceed in setting up the grant scheme that members committed to in February 2024. The grant scheme will open for applications from January – March 2025 and projects will generally be given 12 months from this date to deliver the scheme and claim the funding award (and for the subsequent 2 years, delivering on this commitment).
34. In future it is anticipated that this activity and outcomes will form part of a broader Culture and Creative Arts Strategy and therefore the performance and

measurement of the outcomes of this work will be essential to the development of policy and action plans moving forward.

Background Papers

- Appendix 1 Draft Performing Arts Grants Policy
- [Agenda for Council on Thursday, 22 February 2024, 6.00 pm \(southoxon.gov.uk\)](#)

Appendix 1

[Draft] Performing Arts Grant Scheme

COMMUNITY ARTS

1. Introduction

The South Oxfordshire District Council Performing Arts Grant Fund aims to support community and voluntary sector performing arts groups within the district. This scheme is designed to enhance the cultural landscape by providing financial assistance to projects that demonstrate a significant community impact, meet identified needs, and ensure broad reach, engagement, and access to the performing arts in South Oxfordshire.

2. Objectives

The Performing Arts Grants Scheme aligns with the South Oxfordshire District Council's Corporate Plan by fostering the following objectives:

- **Enhance community well-being:** Foster mental, emotional, and physical well-being through accessible performing arts initiatives that bring people together.
- **Support voluntary and community groups:** Strengthen local voluntary, non-profit, and grassroots organisations involved in the performing arts, empowering them to deliver impactful projects.
- **Promote sustainability:** Encourage environmentally sustainable practices within the performing arts, from production to performance, minimizing environmental impact.
- **Encourage inclusivity:** Provide opportunities for diverse groups to participate in and access the performing arts, ensuring inclusivity across all demographics, including marginalised or underrepresented communities.
- **Build local capacity:** Provide resources and support to develop skills, talent, and infrastructure within the local performing arts community.

3. Guidance notes for applicants

3a. Funding Priorities

Funding will be awarded to projects that align with the following community values and priorities, fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable performing arts scene in South Oxfordshire:

- Increase the range of arts opportunities available to local communities.
- Support inclusive practice and celebrate diversity.
- Develop local artistic talent.
- Promote innovation and excellence.
- Develop new audiences and participants in performing arts initiatives.

3.b What type of projects can we fund?

Projects must demonstrate a clear benefit to the community in South Oxfordshire and help us to deliver our arts objectives and priorities, could include but not limited to:

- Introducing new or improving performing arts projects and opportunities, like theatre, music or dance classes, offered for free or low cost to the community e.g., a Parish Council/ arts group can apply for funding to hire a hall, purchase equipment, pay the tutor and promote the activity.
- Introducing an established activity or performing arts opportunity at a **new** location.
- Funding to hire professional arts companies to deliver workshops or performances to audiences and participants.
- Start-up or hire fees for a new initiative that then become self-sustaining
- Costs associated with marketing and developing **new** audiences or **new** participants.
- Initiatives that teach or share performing arts skills, especially for young people, the elderly, or underrepresented groups.
- Performing Arts projects that focus on accessibility, ensuring participation from individuals with disabilities, low-income families, or address the issues of rural isolation, by offering activities in areas that lack opportunities locally.
- Capacity Building and projects that demonstrate sustainability with ongoing benefit
- Funding for skill development, leadership training, or the purchase of equipment that enhances the capacity of community arts groups.
- Partnership Projects: Collaborative arts projects that involve local schools, community centres, or other voluntary organisations to increase impact and reach.
- Cultural Diversity Programmes: Initiatives that celebrate cultural diversity through music, theatre, dance, or other performing arts forms.

We encourage all applicants to make their projects inclusive and accessible to all.

We encourage applicants to consider the climate and ecological implications of their project. This may include the use of sustainable materials or other climate-friendly options to reduce energy use where appropriate.

3c. What will we not fund?

- Retrospective funding for goods/projects/activities that will complete before our decision is made (We will consider projects that have started; however, we will not be able to fund any retrospective costs.)
- Projects that are contrary to the Equality Act 2010.
- Private or Commercial Enterprises: Projects led by for-profit organisations or individuals seeking financial gain.
- Core Operational Costs: Routine expenses such as staff salaries, rent, utilities, or ongoing operational costs that are not directly related to a specific project.

- Projects Outside the District: Initiatives that take place outside the Council's district, unless there is clear and direct benefit to the local community.
- Political or Religious Activities: Activities that promote political or religious viewpoints, as opposed to inclusive or cultural artistic expression.
- Individuals (not part of a community group): Funding is generally not provided to individuals unless they are part of a larger community initiative and can demonstrate a wider impact of their work
- Regular or Long-Term Programs: Ongoing activities without a clear, one-time project outcome, unless they show significant community impact.
- Events solely intended to raise funds for a cause, rather than provide direct community benefits through performing arts.

3d. Who is Eligible?

Projects should provide benefit to more than one individual engaged in the performing arts (namely, theatre, music and dance), to groups of residents in South Oxfordshire. The scheme is open to the following organisations:

- Not-for-profit groups and arts or community groups, voluntary, third sector, community organisation, any of whom must have a constitution and committee structure.
- Town/parish councils and parish meetings.
- Not-for-profit preschools, PTAs and local authority-run schools or Academies (for non-statutory elements of the education programme not funded through school budgets and are out of hours school provision)

3e. Who is not eligible?

- Other local authorities/public sector bodies.
- Individuals who are the supplier of the service (artists and performers).
- Groups raising funds on behalf of or improving/creating facilities that will primarily benefit an ineligible organisation.
- Profit-based businesses (private businesses).
- Political and lobbying groups.
- Nationwide organisations (except with a local constitution and/or local bank account, or projects clearly related to a local hub/branch).

4. Funding Allocation

- A total of £60,000 is available annually for the next 3 years.
- Minimum of £500 up to a maximum of £5,000, per application we are happy to receive multiple applications from the same organisation, but benefits must be for a different groups/audiences
- Projects must be completed within 12 months of the award decision.

5. Scoring and weighted evaluation

- a. **Mandatory** Applicants will be asked mandatory eligibility questions such a;
 - Must take place in or benefit the residents of South Oxfordshire
 - a formal governance structure
 - audited accounts
 - Public liability insurance
 - If the project is for building alterations planning permissions must in place

These will be assessed as a pass or fail. If all questions are deemed as a pass the project will then be assessed on value and impact of the project

b. Project value will be assessed based on

- Achieving community benefit and meeting genuine need
- Demonstrates sustainability
- Value for money
- Collaborative approaches will be scored higher
- Reach or breadth of work (ie number of participants or audience members that do not normally access the performing arts or value of work to achieve community impact).

6. Opening and closing dates

- The scheme will be open from Monday 13th January 2025 and close on Monday 3rd March 2025.
- The deadline for applications is 12noon on Monday 3rd March. Grants will be awarded and applicants will be notified on Monday March 10th 2025.
- We will publicise the dates on our website, in our Town and Parish newsletters and through our social media platforms.

7. Application and award process

- Applications will be assessed and awarded on a rolling basis as received.
- Enquiries can be directed to the community arts team at performingartsgrants@southandvale.gov.uk.
- Council officers will check the eligibility of the application and liaise with the applicant, if necessary, to establish eligibility.
- If eligible, officers will assess the application and recommend the grant award. The application will then be approved by the relevant head of service or the service manager when authorised to act on behalf of the head of service, who will take into consideration any concerns and recommended payment terms and/or special conditions.
- Once the community arts team receive notification that the relevant head of service or service manager when authorised to act on behalf of the head of service, has made a decision on the award, officers will either;
 - send a grant offer letter to the applicant that will include our standard (and any special) conditions. The applicant will then accept or decline the grant award confirming they will meet the conditions.
 - inform the applicant that they were unsuccessful.
- On receipt of the notification of acceptance the community arts team will release the grant payment in line with the offer letter. **All payments will be made by BACs (no confirmation of your bank account details) to an account in the name of the organisation making the grant application.**

8. Reporting and Monitoring

- The council's community arts team will monitor grant spending and ensure compliance with the terms and conditions.
- Grantees should submit a report on completion of their project with images, participant/ audience figures and an account of how the grant was spent.
- The community arts team will record all applications, decisions and remaining balances. We will publish grants awarded on the council's website.
- If the awarded project has not started by the expiry date (12 months from the award date) the relevant head of service or service manager, when authorised to act on

behalf of the head of service, can at their discretion allow an extension to the grant term.

- All grant repayments will return to the council's general reserves.
- If repayments are necessary, the community arts team will liaise with the organisation to recover the funds.
- Future applications to any of the council grant schemes could be at risk if organisations have not completed and submitted the project monitoring form via our email address

9. Standard conditions

- The organisation must have all the necessary consents in place such as planning permission, listed building consent, Diocese faculty, landlord or Head lease consent, compliance with any restrictions on the property title, any other licences/insurance etc., and could provide these on request.
- The organisation must consult the community arts team before making significant changes to the project/work covered by the grant and officers will confirm with the service manager that they agree to these changes before responding to the applicant.
- The organisation must spend the grant on the project listed in their application and within 12 months from the decision to award a grant or they will return the funding, unless they have requested permission to change the project and/or an extension in writing.
- Any equipment purchased with the grant should be retained by the organisation and in community use for a minimum of 12 months from the purchase.
- If requested, the organisation will return a commensurate amount of the grant if the project costs less than expected or they receive additional funding towards the project.
- Confirmation the organisation has not received any Minimal Financial Assistance, in excess of £315,000 in the elapsed part of the current Financial Year and in the two Financial Years immediately preceding the current Financial Year. 'Financial Year' means a period of twelve (12) months ending with 31 March. Providing relevant evidence if subsidy has been paid.
- The organisation will acknowledge the council's support in any press, publicity or promotion of the project.
- The applicant will submit photos of the project and a short monitoring form upon completion.
- The organisation acknowledges the council accepts no responsibility or liability for this project or the facilities it provides now or in the future.

10. Contact Information

- For more information about the scheme, advice on potential projects, and other possible funding sources, please contact the community arts team via performingartsgrants@southandvale.gov.uk.