

Record of Cabinet portfolio holder decision

Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Decision made by	Councillor Lynn Lloyd
Key decision?	Yes
Date of decision (same as date form signed)	3 July 2018
Name and job title of officer requesting the decision	Shona Ware, Community Enablement Manager
Officer contact details	Tel:01235 422188 Email: shona.ware@southandvale.gov.uk
Decision	To approve a new policy for awarding Councillor grants, which is attached in appendix 1.
Reasons for decision	<p>To improve the existing policy to reflect the feedback received from councillors and applicants about simplifying the application and decision-making processes.</p> <p><u>Background</u></p> <p>The council launched a pilot councillor grants scheme in 2017/18 and due to the resource constraints at the time the scheme relied heavily on councillors to undertake all the eligibility and monitoring checks, usually carried out by officers.</p> <p>The checks required are resource intensive even for officers that review governance documents and financial records on a daily basis, so additional resource was made available to support councillors with this work until the end of the pilot.</p> <p>The pilot ended at the end of 2017/18 and officers began a review of the scheme at the start of this year. The review involved inviting feedback from councillors and applicants on both the policy and process.</p> <p>The feedback received was that the scheme was very welcome and successful, but needed to switch to a more officer led approach and the amount of paperwork required from applicants needed reducing given the relatively small value of the grants.</p> <p>A working group of councillors met with the grants team to discuss the scheme in general and some suggested improvements.</p>

	<p>The revised policy addresses all the feedback received and incorporates all the recommendations from the councillor working group.</p> <p>The main change to the policy is that officers, rather than councillors, will lead on the processing and checking of applications to make the best use of the expertise and additional resource available and to reduce the decision-making period from eight weeks to four to six weeks.</p> <p>The review also proposed maximum project cost criteria should only apply to capital projects.</p>			
Alternative options rejected	To continue with the status quo but we rejected this on the basis that it would not address the issues highlighted in the pilot or the feedback received and could discourage potential applicants from applying to the scheme.			
Legal implications	<p>According to the council's scheme of delegations, the cabinet member with responsibility for grants can approve changes to the Councillor Grant Scheme policy and procedures.</p> <p>The individual councillors will continue to make decisions for their ward area under section 236 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 as per the existing policy.</p>			
Financial implications	None. The council agreed a budget of £180,000 for the Councillor grant scheme at its budget-setting meeting in February 2018 and the additional resource was added to the base budget in 2017.			
Other implications	Delaying the approval of this new policy would mean delaying opening the scheme.			
Background papers considered	The old Councillor grants scheme policy			
Declarations/conflict of interest? Declaration of other councillor/officer consulted by the Cabinet member?				
List consultees		Name	Outcome	Date
	Ward councillors	Invited to give feedback and join a working party	14 Cllrs gave feedback and 8 joined the working party	By 15 May 2018
	Legal	Pat Connell	No Comment	21/6/2018
	Finance	Richard Spraggett	No issues	22/6/2018
	Human resources	N/A		
	Sustainability	N/A		
	Diversity and equality	N/A		
	Communications	N/A		
	Strategic Management Team			

Confidential decision? If so, under which exempt category?	No
Call-in waived by Scrutiny Committee chairman?	
Cabinet portfolio holder's signature To confirm the decision as set out in this notice.	

ONCE SIGNED, THIS FORM MUST BE HANDED TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES IMMEDIATELY.

For Democratic Services office use only		
Form received	Date: 3 July 2018	Time:12:45
Date published to all councillors	Date: 3 July 2018	
Call-in deadline	Date: 10 July 2018	Time: 17:00

Councillor Community Grant Scheme

Every South Oxfordshire District Councillor has a budget of £5,000 to award to projects or services that will benefit the communities in their ward.

Basic rules of the scheme

- Projects must benefit the communities in the councillor's ward
- The minimum grant is £250 and the maximum £5,000 for each councillor (budget permitting)
- The total project cost of applications for capital projects must be £10,000 or less, (revenue projects have no such maximum).
- A councillor can fund up to 100 per cent of the total cost of a project (budget permitting)
- The project must complete within 12 months of the award decision
- Any unallocated budgets at the end of the financial year will return to the council's general reserves
- Councillors will make their decision within four - six weeks of receiving an application.

Who is eligible?

- Town/parish councils and parish meetings (unless they have their own grant scheme and/or giving budget)
- Local 'not for profit' organisations whose primary purpose is to *benefit* the residents of South Oxfordshire who can:
 - Provide with their application a copy of a recent bank statement for the organisation (no more than two months old)
 - Provide on request a copy of the organisation's detailed financial records
 - Provide on request a copy of their governing document (like a constitution, set of rules, articles of association etc)
 - Confirm their organisation has named officers, members or trustees on a management committee/board.

To mitigate against any misuse of a grant or to the council's reputation from this relaxed criterion to apply for a grant, officers will request the governance and financial documents mentioned above for every fifth application and any organisations who have not received council funding in the last 12 months.

Who is not eligible?

- Other local authorities/public sector bodies (for example Oxfordshire County Council, NHS trusts)
- Groups who raise funds on behalf of or will improve/create facilities that will predominately benefit an ineligible organisation (like PTA's delivering projects to benefit their school)
- Individuals (this includes making any payments to individuals on behalf of community groups)
- Profit-based businesses (private businesses)
- Political and lobbying groups
- Organisations who operate a grant scheme of their own or who budget for giving grants/donations in their annual budget
- Nationwide organisations

What kind of work/services can we fund?

Applications should focus on projects that deliver a clear and demonstrable *benefit* to the people of South Oxfordshire, specifically in the ward of the district councillor(s) considering the request.

South Oxfordshire District Council accepts no liability or responsibility for any of the projects funded by this grant scheme or any activities that take place as a result now or in the future.

Appropriate projects could include, but are not limited to:

- Replacement equipment or improvements to community centres/halls
- Initial design/creation of a community newsletter, walking routes/tourist trails, community website or digital archive (but not ongoing publishing, maintenance or hosting costs)
- Improvements to community facilities for older people and minority groups (for example accessibility improvements and hearing loops)
- Buying and installing community play and exercise equipment
- Buying equipment the community can use like anti-flooding equipment, marquees/gazebos, defibrillators, equipment banks or IT equipment. (All equipment must remain the property of the organisation funded)
- Community festivals and event costs
- One-off hire costs (for example, excavator hire for a project or coach hire for a specific, one-off trip)
- One-off revenue costs, like feasibility studies, consultancy fees and seed funding for new organisations
- One-off major repairs, like repairing a section of flat roof or major boiler repairs (but not routine servicing) to community buildings

Applicants must make sure they have all necessary permissions in place **before** applying for funding including; planning, listed building, licensing, landlords etc.

The council is committed to promoting equality and diversity and welcomes applications from all sectors of the community, regardless of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, status, religion or belief.

What we will not fund?

- Retrospective funding for work/projects already commenced or that will complete before our decision is made
- Statutory activities/requirements that either the council or another public-sector organisation is responsible for delivering
- Recurring revenue costs, like salaries, rent, rates and maintenance (like boiler servicing)
- Ongoing or regular hire fees (for example, weekly hire of a cricket pitch roller or regular hire/lease of vehicles for a community transport scheme)
- Alcoholic refreshments
- Clothing, including uniforms, sports kit, and personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Projects that specifically benefit private businesses
- Political activities, lobbying or campaigning
- Projects that don't align with the council's equalities objectives and/or the Equality Act 2010.

Opening and closing dates

The scheme will usually open in April and close in December each year (budget permitting), unless there is a district wide election that year, when we will open after the election.

In the event there is an unexpected by-election for a district councillor we will put any applications for that vacancy on hold during the purdah period. This will include requests already in consideration and any new applications submitted. In this instance the decision may not be made in 4-6 weeks.

New councillors will receive an overview of the scheme as part of their councillor induction programme.

Application and Award Process

1. Organisations apply using the council's online grants management system ('the system'), accessible from our website www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants. They will select all the councillors they wish to apply to when completing their application. Applicants should read the guidance notes on our website before completing an application.
2. Once submitted, the grants team will notify the relevant councillor(s) of the application for information, but they should not make any decision at that point.
3. The Grants teams will check the eligibility of the application (including the additional checks if required) and liaise with the applicant if necessary to establish eligibility.

If eligible, officers will prepare a short summary of the application for the councillor including key information from the application, concerns and any recommended

payment terms and/or special conditions and send it to the councillor's Southoxon.gov.uk email address.

If an application is not eligible the grants team will discuss the issues with the applicant (if they can be resolved) and return the application to them for resubmission once the issues are resolved. If the issues cannot be overcome they will reject the application on eligibility grounds. They will also notify the councillor of the reasons why any applications that aren't eligible could not go forward.

4. The district councillor will review the summary provided by the grants team and reply using their official council email address confirming:
 - their award decision
 - the reasons behind the decision
 - any pecuniary interests relating to the application
 - any other conflicts of interests relating to the application.

The councillor can request additional information (via the grants team) before making their decision if necessary.

5. Once the grants team receive the councillor's decision by email they will save it on the grants system, publish the decision on the council's website and either;
 - a. send a grant offer letter to the applicant that will include our standard (and any special) conditions and a grant acceptance form they must complete and return
 - b. inform the applicant that they were unsuccessful.
6. The applicant must sign and return the acceptance form to the grants team, confirming they will meet all our conditions and give the bank details for their organisation.
7. On receipt of the acceptance form the grants team will release the grant payment in line with the offer letter. **All payments must be made by BACs to an account in the name of the organisation receiving the grant.**

Standard conditions

- 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
- If requested, the organisation will return a proportionate amount of the grant if the project costs less than expected or they receive additional funding towards the project.
- The funding is non-transferrable unless agreed by the council in writing in advance of any spending. Any unspent funds will be returned to the council upon request.
- The organisation will comply with all relevant statutes and regulations related to its status, objectives and delivery of its core activities
- The organisation must have appropriate policies in place to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults, and comply with equalities, GDPR and any other relevant legislation

- The organisation must consult the grants team before making significant changes to the project/work covered by the grant and officers will confirm with the councillor(s) that they agree to these changes before responding to the applicant.
- The organisation will acknowledge the council's support in any press, publicity or promotion of the project.
- The organisation acknowledges the council accepts no responsibility or liability for this project or the facilities it provides now or in the future.

Monitoring the grants

- The grants system will record all applications, decisions and remaining balances. These will also be linked to the council's website and regularly updated.
- The grants team will monitor every grant awarded to ensure spending is appropriate.
- If the awarded project has not started by the expiry date (12 months from the award date), the organisation must repay the grant in full to the council. If the project has started, but is not complete the councillor(s) can, at their discretion allow a single, three-month extension to the grant, by which time work/spending must be completed.
- All grant repayments will return to the council's general reserves.
- Any councillor budget not awarded by 31 March will return to the council's general reserves as carry forwards are not be allowed.
- If repayments are necessary, the grants team will liaise with the organisation to recover the funds, keeping the relevant ward councillor informed.

For more information about the scheme, advice on potential projects and other possible funding sources please contact the grants team on or 01235 422405 or grants@southandvale.gov.uk.