

COUNCILLOR LOCAL COMMUNITY FUND

Cabinet Member for Community Engagement

Date: 11 May 2021
Agenda Item: 3
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Key Decision? YES
Local Ward Members: All Wards

Lichfield
district council
www.lichfielddc.gov.uk

CABINET

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 A councillor community grant fund is being proposed to enable councillors to directly award funding to grassroots organisations in their ward. Small amounts of funding can make a big difference to communities at a local level and elected members are well placed to identify local needs.
- 1.2 It is proposed that the scheme is run as a pilot over 2 years in order to assess its impact and value for money.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet members agree the setting up of a pilot Councillor Local Community Grant Scheme as detailed in Appendix A.
- 2.2 That Cabinet agree to delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and the Head of Regulatory Services, Housing and Wellbeing to make any minor changes to the pilot scheme if improvements are identified at any point.

3. Background

- 3.1 Voluntary and Community organisations vary enormously both in terms of their size and structures and how they support local communities. Whilst many rely on significant grant funding to deliver key support, for some more grass root organisations a small amount of funding such as £50 towards a new cooker for a lunch club can make a massive difference. Some of these groups are not eligible for most funding because they are not charities or constituted organisations.
- 3.2 Elected members are often well placed to identify local needs and are in touch with grass root organisations operating in their ward. Making funding available to each Councillor in order to support this organisation is proposed. Those members who are county councillors will be familiar with similar schemes through the county council.
- 3.3 A councillor community grant fund has previously been considered by councillors but has not progressed due to the fact that if the scheme is supported by officers the administrative cost, in proportion to the funding available, would not represent value for money. A more streamlined scheme is now being proposed with a minimum of administration.
- 3.4 Attached at Appendix A is a proposed scheme. If agreed, it is recommended that this is run as a pilot over 2 years (starting in June 2021) in order to assess the impact and value for money. To make it as easy as possible for grassroots organisations to apply it would be supported by a simple on line application form focussing on the purpose of the organisation and what they need funding for. Any funding awarded would be paid into a bank account in the name of the group or to an organisation who

agrees to accept the funding and passport it to the group. Where this is not possible, it can be paid to an individual where it can be shown the individual is acting on behalf of the local community, for example through a letter of endorsement from a local organisation.

3.5 If each member is given £300 for their ward then £14,100 would be available across all wards. At this stage this funding has been taken out of the £177k larger Voluntary and Community sector funding scheme, currently open for applications.

3.6 Prior to the launch of the scheme, a training session will be offered to all councillors. The training will set out member roles and responsibilities, including issues to consider when awarding funding, transparency, data protection and signposting to other funding support options.

Alternative Options	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The funding earmarked for the scheme could be made available through the funding prospectus currently open but as this has a minimum award of £5k this isn't available to small grassroots organisations. 2. It could also be made payable direct from finance but this would significantly increase the administrative burden to the council if small amounts of funding were to be awarded.
Consultation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Housing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Leadership Team have been consulted on the draft scheme. Clarification was sought about how the scheme would work and Members sought assurances that the appropriate monitoring and guidance would be in place and value for money assessed. Overall it was felt that the scheme would be beneficial to local communities. 2. The outline proposals have also been presented to the local Voluntary and Community Forum.
Financial Implications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This is not additional funding as the £14k required to fund the scheme has been taken from the £177k available for projects to support local communities. 2. The funding has potential to make a significant difference to local grass root organisations at minimum cost. As the scheme will be managed and administered by members the costs would be minimal. 3. As members will manage their funding and make payments direct to the successful organisation the main costs to the council will be making payments to Members.
Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding voluntary and community sector organisations makes a significant contribution to Enabling People and Shaping Place.
Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The funding could be used to fund activities that support groups with protected characteristics and therefore support the council's equalities objectives.
Crime & Safety Issues	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The funding could be used to impact (positively) on our duty to prevent crime and disorder within the District (Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act, 1988) – e.g. security measures.

Environmental Impact	1. The funding could be used to fund grassroots activities that have a positive environmental impact.
GDPR/Privacy Impact Assessment	1. A Privacy Impact Assessment has been completed. This identified risks as inappropriate sharing of data and data being kept longer than required. The training and Member Code of Conduct provide the key mechanisms for minimising the risk and Data privacy notices will be developed.

	Risk Description	How We Manage It	Severity of Risk (RYG)
A	Inappropriate awarding/ use of funding	Members would make declarations about the use of funding, which would be in the public domain ensuring awards are transparent. The amount of funding available ensures there is no significant financial risk. Members are required to adhere to their code of conduct and training would help minimise the risks.	Risk - Yellow Impact – Red Likelihood - Yellow
B	Funding not allocated	The responsibility for allocation funding would rest with members	Risk – Yellow Impact – Yellow Likelihood - Yellow
D	Disproportionate officer support required	Clear and concise training with simple processes in place to ensure minimum support required	Risk - yellow Impact – yellow Likelihood - yellow
E			

Background documents

Relevant web links

www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/cvsfunding

www.welovelichfield.com

Councillor Local Community Fund

The Councillors Local Community Fund is designed to help empower local residents to be active in their community and made easy for groups to apply. It will initially be piloted over a 2 year period.

Purpose:

- To enable Councillors to respond to local funding needs by awarding one-off funding for grass roots community activities that enable people and shape place in their ward.

How it Works

Each Councillor has £300 to award to support local projects and activities which can make a positive impact in their area. To apply applicants simply need to explain what they need funding for and how it will benefit the local community. Applications are made on line and the application form goes direct to the ward Councillor(s). When an application is received each Councillor will decide whether or not to support the funding request in accordance with what can be funded under this scheme. The Councillor lets the applicant know of the outcome of their decision.

Awards can be made from a minimum of £50 to a maximum of £300. There is an option for applications to be made to more than one Councillor in a ward or across wards up to a maximum award of £900. In multi member wards Councillors should liaise with each other to ensure that a reasonable distribution is made.

Applications can be made at any time from June to October but will be awarded on a first come first served basis for use by 31 March the following year.

The fund will be advertised on the Council's website and promoted by local Councillors via their own neighbourhood, including Town and Parish Councils and voluntary and community sector forums.

Payments are made by each Councillor by bank transfer or cheque, preferably to an account in the name of the group on the application form. Funding can be awarded directly to individuals at the Members discretion. All awarded funding must be used within the relevant financial year. Any unspent funding must be returned at the end of the grant period and cannot be carried forward into the next financial year.

At the point of agreeing funding, Councillors will be required to sign a declaration stating that, as far as they are aware, the funding will be used for the benefit of the local community and making the payment to the community group would not result in fraudulent or illegal activity or any practices that would bring Lichfield District Council into disrepute.

Details of the funding awarded will be published on the Council's website in line with the council's commitment to openness and transparency.

What can be funded?

- Projects that provide local solutions to local needs
- One-off events that benefit the local community and support community resilience
- Current projects/activities that need a small amount of support to continue or grow
- Capital items (equipment, materials etc.)
- New projects and activities that need some funding to get going
- Projects that stimulate new community activity, such as setting up new local community events and clubs

Who can apply?

Any community groups can apply. Unlike most funding schemes groups do not need to be formally constituted.

An individual can apply for funding providing they can show that the application is on behalf of a local community project or activity. Alternatively other local groups can act as the accountable body for a group / individual.

A faith group can apply where the activity is open to all faiths and is not seeking to promote a faith or belief as the main purpose of the activity.

What can't be funded?

- Projects or activities that will only benefit an individual or an individual family or a private business
- Political organizations or groups and campaigning/lobbying organisations
- Projects or activities that are the statutory responsibility of other public sector organisations
- Projects/ activities that have already taken place
- A Councillor cannot fund a group or activity if they or a member of their close family are a trustee of the Organisation applying for funding.

Responsibilities

Given the small amounts of funding involved the scheme is deliberately streamlined so as to involve the minimum amount of administration. Each Councillor is responsible for promoting the scheme in their area, assessing applications and making payments for the funding. Before the end of each financial year they will be asked to complete a return setting out how their funding has been allocated. All supporting evidence should be retained (for 3 years) to enable potential inspection by internal or external audit, subject to data protection requirements.

The Members Code of Conduct sets out the rules governing the behaviour of Councillors. Any concerns about the inappropriate awarding of funding will be looked into on that basis. Each Councillor would be responsible for handling any personal data in accordance with data protection requirements.

Training will be offered to all Councillors to help them assess applications, understand their responsibilities and signpost groups to the most appropriate funding sources.

Evaluation

The pilot will be evaluated against the overall purpose of the scheme. The extent to which it has supported grass roots groups in local communities not eligible for funding from other funding sources. It's effectiveness in enabling local community groups and individuals to set up and deliver and expand their community activities.