

Agenda item 11

Committee	Finance & Establishment
Month	February 2022
Report Title	Update report on the Town Council's Grant System
Report Author	Grants Working Group (Cllrs Millward and Hawke-Smith, Lisa Courtney, Town Clerk)
Attachments	None

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Purpose of the Report

For Committee to receive a brief update from the Grants' Working Group. This report is not intended to be a final report but is intended to provide Committee with an overview of the work undertaken by the Working Group to date and for Committee to sense-check the directional work of the Working Group. A final report will be presented to the F & E Committee in June 2022.

Findings of the grants review

(this is a summary of the information as provided in the original report and presentation given to Committee in December 2021)

1. Most respondents said the form was 'easy to complete' but with room for improvement
2. Most respondents said their experience of applying for funding was 'good' but that clarity in funding streams could be improved
3. Of those that hadn't previously applied to SWTC community grants scheme – 52% said they were not aware of it
4. 66% of respondents were received for the small community grants scheme which makes up 20% of the council's grant budget. 11% of respondents applied for the Youth Grants Scheme which makes up 52% of the Council grants budget
5. Every respondent stated that Council funding would have made a difference to their project

Recommended proposals from the Working Group

From the earlier review and work, Committee determined to address four key parts of the grant process. These are given below, along with recommendations from the Working Group on how these matters can be addressed.

1. To agree the funding goal of the Council community grants offering
 - a. **Propose:** 'to issue grants to groups (and individuals?) that deliver community benefit for the residents of Saffron Walden'

SWTC could determine to align funding goals with its own corporate priorities but that has the potential to actively exclude those who have an offering outside of those priorities. The Working Group therefore recommends that a generic objective is set for grant applications.

2. To streamline the process for applicants

- a. **Propose:** to consolidate the 'pots' under one 'Community Grants Scheme'.
 - i. Benefits: simpler for applicants to understand and apply to
 - ii. Benefits: greater transparency and coordination of the grants function at the Council's disposal (currently Youth Grants sits under a different committee which could lead to missed opportunities/double funding and trickier for applicants to navigate unless they know of internal process and set up)
 - iii. Benefits: allows Councillors to have the 'big picture' of all the funds to leverage and at their disposal and make informed decisions for the benefit of the community (eg: an applicant with a youth focus applying for community grants could receive funding from the 'community grants' or 'youth' pot - giving greater freedom to fund more groups and organisations?)
- b. **Propose:** Funding cap to be raised to £1,000 to better reflect rising costs and budgetary needs
- c. **Propose:** given increase in funding cap, for the number of applications by any one organisation to be limited to 1 per year
- d. **Propose:** Maintaining a monthly consideration of applications by the F&E Committee to ensure that we are responsive funders
- e. **Propose:** encourage, but do not require mandatory attendance at the F&E Committee by a representative. This is to ensure we are an inclusive funder but it is noted that attendance at a meeting allows for supplementary information to be requested and given. Attendance could be via a remote channel, using Zoom rather than in person.
- f. **Propose:** the following amendments to the application form:
 - i. Assess what information the Council needs and wishes to know about applicant organisations (due diligence and to learn about project/charity/community group) to make an informed decision about offering a grant.
 - ii. Assess what information the Council wishes to measure to know if it is meeting its goal*see proposal 1*
 - iii. Use these parameters to devise an easily accessible and useable application document - taking the principle of starting at a minimum

3. To discuss the type of funding offered

Core organisational costs as well as items/specifics/restricted are vital to the survival of community and small charitable organisations. There is a lack of opportunities for seeking this type of funding elsewhere and time is often spent 'cherry-picking' the most 'attractive' project/restricted costs to approach a funder with.

- a. **Propose:** include funding for core organisational costs to be part of the TC's grant offering.

4. To discuss marketing and advertising of community grants:

a. **Propose:**

- i. Re-launch with coordinated advertising across print and SM
- ii. Advertising in Town Hall, Library, on UDC and other local funder websites, posters to local Schools/in TC-run community centres/TIC, add a banner to the TC for a period of time
- iii. Consider prioritising positioning and signposting to grants on TC website
- iv. Review other funders' websites to inform a 'Community Grant' webpage: 'What We Do', 'How and Who We Fund', FAQs etc.

Recommendation

- a. Committee to discuss the points as raised within this interim report, with particular regards to points raised under items 1-3
- b. To agree a launch date and action plan for point 4 (note a final update along with final recommendations is to be made to Committee in June 2022)
- c. To note the contents of this report and to issue any further direction to the Working Group