

# Executive Report



Report of head of corporate strategy

**Report No. 85/10**

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Wards affected: all

To: EXECUTIVE

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## Community grants

### Recommendations

Executive is requested to:

- a) agree the scrutiny committee's recommendations for managing and determining community grants in the future
- b) agree that the cost of grants management software is deducted from the proportion of the community grants budget allocation to the executive

### Purpose of Report

1. This report presents the recommendations of the scrutiny committee for the awarding of one-off discretionary grants (community grants) should a budget be made available in 2011/12.

### Strategic Objectives

2. This report contributes to the council's strategic objective 'managing our business effectively'.

## **Background**

3. From 2003/04 to 2009/10 community grants were determined by the Executive and four area committees (Abingdon, North East, South East and West). The details of the scheme are included in appendix 1.
4. The council does not have a community grants budget for 2010/11. However on 16 June 2010 the Scrutiny committee set up a working group to review and make recommendations for the awarding of community grants should a budget be made available in 2011/12.
5. Councillors Halliday, Hutchinson, Mayhew-Archer and Waite were appointed to a scrutiny working group. The working group was chaired by Councillor Hutchinson and the group met on three occasions. Officer support was provided by Toby Warren, shared community partnerships manager and Jayne Bolton, shared grants team leader.
6. At its first meeting the group agreed that the purpose of the review was to recommend any changes to the council's community grant scheme that:
  - aligns grant giving more closely to the council's priorities
  - maximises the impact on the needs of communities in the Vale
  - supports local initiatives e.g. parish action plans
  - increases the amount of external funding received by communities in the Vale
  - reduces administrative workload and costs to the council.
7. The working group was mindful that the council now has the equivalent of 0.5 of a full time officer for the management and administration of community and partnership grant schemes.
8. At its meeting on 16 December the scrutiny committee approved the working group's recommendations but requested that it was made clear that town and parish councils should be able to apply for both revenue and capital grants

## **The new community grants scheme - applications**

9. The working group recommends that the eligibility criteria for a new scheme remains the same as for the previous scheme (the eligibility criteria are included as appendix 2 to this report). However the system and process for awarding grants would be changed in a number of ways.
10. Applicants would be encouraged to use an online application form. The benefit of an online application form for the council is that the administrative support required to produce reports is greatly reduced. Community grants are for groups rather than individuals and the majority of applicants for a community grant will have access to a computer and the internet. Therefore the introduction of an online application form is unlikely to result in a group being unfairly excluded. However if a group can demonstrate that it is unable to access the online application form it will be allowed to complete a paper application.

11. South Oxfordshire District Council already uses an online application form and grants management software system called 'Benefactor'. As the Vale council is sharing resources with South Oxfordshire District Council it is recommended that the same system is used at both councils. The Vale's version of the online application form should have a format which is appropriate for the proposed community grants scheme. The cost of providing access to the software at the Vale council is estimated to be £780 a year plus an initial cost of £500. It is proposed that if a budget is made available these costs are deducted from the portion of the budget allocated to the Executive.
12. Once the online application form has been completed officers would check to confirm that the group and its project meet the eligibility criteria. Eligible applications would then be assessed by officers so that a recommendation on the amount of grant that should be awarded can be made. The assessment would be made using a scoring system. The benefit of a scoring system to the council is that it ensures that there is a consistent approach when prioritising applications for a share of limited funds. It is also transparent, fair to applicants and robust in the event of challenge.
13. The scoring system will place applications in one of three categories:
  - officers recommend that the project is a funding priority
  - officers recommend that the project receives some funding
  - officers recommend that the project does not receive funding.

Full details of the proposed scoring system are included in appendix 3 to this report.

### **The new community grants scheme - determination**

14. The working group recommends that the area committees should continue to determine the applications for projects in their area (and the Executive should continue to determine applications for Vale wide projects). However in order to reduce costs all the area committees should meet on the same day at the council's offices in Abingdon. Each committee would meet in turn during the day. The Executive could also meet on the same day to determine any Vale wide project applications.
15. The committees would meet no more than twice a year. There will be council elections in 2011/12 (in May 2011). It maybe possible for committees to meet to determine applications before these elections but sufficient time must be allowed for publicising the scheme, submitting applications, appraising applications and preparing committee reports.
16. If area committee members are unable to attend a meeting they would be able to submit written comments on the applications to be determined. Applicants would be able to make a presentation to the area committee before their application is determined.
17. In order to ensure the committee meeting workload is manageable the working group recommends that smaller grant applications should not be determined at a

meeting. Instead there would be delegated authority for a designated officer, in consultation with the chair of the relevant area committee (or Executive), to determine grant applications up to £1,000 (the existing delegation is £500).

18. In line with the Executive report of 5 January 2007 urgent grant applications between £1,000 and £4,000 that require determination before the next scheduled meeting of an area committee or the Executive should be determined by email.
19. The annual community grants budget would continue to be apportioned to the area committees according to the proportion of the district's electorate in each area on 1 January. The Executive would be allocated 20 per cent of the budget before it is apportioned between the four area committees.

### **Financial implications**

20. The proposed new scheme will reduce the cost of administering and determining community grants applications. However there is a cost for providing grant management software. This cost is estimated to be £780 a year plus an initial cost of £500. . It is proposed that if a budget is made available these costs are deducted from the portion of the budget allocated to the Executive.
21. The working group was mindful that the council now has the equivalent of 0.5 of a full time officer for the management and administration of community and partnership grant schemes. Staff time and costs would need to be carefully monitored to make sure that this allocation is not exceeded. If the allocation is exceeded a budget would have to be allocated to cover the cost of additional time.

### **Risk implications**

22. This report helps to mitigate the risk that if a community grants scheme is re-introduced it is ineffective in terms of management time and cost, and community benefit.

### **Legal implications**

23. The working group recommends that the area committees continue to determine grant applications using the delegated authority of the Executive. It also recommends that the existing officer delegation is increased from £500 to £1,000.

### **Conclusion**

24. The proposals made by the working group seek to deliver a scheme that is fit for the future; balancing the needs of the community groups applying with the resources available to deliver it..

### **Background Papers**

None

## **Appendix**

1. The Community Grants Scheme from 2003/04 to 2009/10
2. Criteria for eligibility (adopted by Council 20 July 2005)
3. The proposed scoring system

## The Community Grants Scheme from 2003/04 to 2009/10

In the budget for 2003/04 all former budgets for discretionary grants were pooled into one budget. The intention being to better co-ordinate grant spend with the then emerging community strategy and revised area committees (made up of elected members). The annual budget was allocated between area committees on the basis of the percentage of the electorate in each area on 1 January preceding the beginning of the relevant financial year. A proportion of the annual budget was made available to the executive to support grant applications that provided Vale wide benefits.

In 2009/10 a budget of £ 103,400 was available and was apportioned as follows:

Executive	£21,714
Abingdon	£26,096
North East	£18,682
South East	£22,495
West	£14,413
<b>total</b>	<b>£103,400</b>

Applications for this funding were invited from parish councils and voluntary or community organisations, (including clubs and societies) who were able to demonstrate that their project or service supports the Vale Community Strategy by working to 'improve the quality of life in the Vale '. The council would not fund projects or services that were more appropriately funded by other organisations and it would not act as the sole funder of a project. In the past limited budgets have meant that the executive or area committees may have had to sometimes decline an application that conformed to the grant scheme objectives and criteria.

In 2009/10 the following community grants were awarded and included grants to parish councils for additional street cleaning:

<b>Executive - Grants 2009/10</b>		
	£	£
<b>applicant</b>	<b>amount requested</b>	<b>amount awarded</b>
Oxfordshire Association for the Blind	5,000.00	3,000.00
Oxfordshire Chinese Community and Advice Centre	2,000.00	2,000.00
Wantage Counselling Service	1,800.00	1,000.00
Ryder-Cheshire Volunteers	2,000.00	1,500.00
Oxfordshire Rural Education Initiative (OREI)	2,000.00	500.00
Vitalise	2,716.50	2,250.00
K.E.E.N. (Kids Enjoy Exercise Now)	3,000.00	1,000.00
OCVA	2,500.00	2,500.00
MS Therapy Centre	1,020.00	1,000.00
My Life My Choice	2,782.23	1,000.00

<b>Abingdon Area Committee - Grants 2009/10</b>		
<b>applicant</b>	<b>amount</b>	<b>amount</b>
	<b>requested</b>	<b>awarded</b>
Compass Café	5,000.00	3,000.00
Vale of White Horse Foyer	1,670.00	670.00
Appleford Parish Council	200.00	75.00
Drayton Parish Council	800.00	300.00
Vale Housing Association	500.00	500.00
Northcourt Centre	3,000.00	2,500.00
The Abingdon Bridge	5,000.00	5,000.00
Abingdon Music Centre Education Trust	1,300.00	1,000.00
Abingdon Carbon Cutters	375.00	200.00
Abingdon Town Council	2,500.00	2,000.00
Drayton Twinning Society	500.00	500.00
Abingdon Sea Cadets	1,139.00	1,139.00
Abingdon Rugby Football Club	5,000.00	4,441.00
APAGE	3,000.00	2,750.00

<b>North East Area Committee - Grants 2009/10</b>		
<b>applicant</b>	<b>amount</b>	<b>amount</b>
	<b>requested</b>	<b>awarded</b>
Marcham Parish Council	125.00	125.00
Kennington Parish Council	500.00	500.00
Sunningwell Parish Council	500.00	500.00
Radley Parish Council	445.00	445.00
Wootton Parish Council	500.00	500.00
Wytham Parish Council	500.00	500.00
Wootton Parish Council	5,000.00	5,000.00
Cumnor Parish Council	5,584.00	5,584.00
Kennington Village Hall	2,000.00	2,000.00

<b>South East Area Committee - Grants 2009/10</b>		
<b>applicant</b>	<b>amount requested</b>	<b>amount awarded</b>
Ardington & Lockinge Parish Council	28.00	28.00
Blewbury Parish Council	120.00	120.00
Chilton Parish Council	247.00	124.80
Harwell Parish Council	2,647.91	973.20
Letcombe Regis Parish Council	406.00	374.40
Milton Parish Council	1,375.20	550.00
West Hendred Parish Council	34.00	28.80
Wantage Summer Festival	3,500.00	2,500.00
Grove Parish Council	6,000.00	2,500.00
Wantage Displays	2,500.00	2,000.00
Stockham School	2,000.00	1,500.00
Wantage, Grove & District Twinning Association	2,000.00	2,000.00
Hendreds Twinning Group	500.00	500.00
Wantage and Grove Street Pastors	5,000.00	3,000.00
East Hendred Community Centre	500.00	500.00
Wantage Betjeman Festival of Literature and Poetry	6,700.00	1,500.00
East & West Hendred Cricket Club	1,000.00	781.00
Letcombe Bassett PCC (St Michael & All Angels)	1,500.00	750.00

<b>West Area Committee - Grants 2009/10</b>		
<b>applicant</b>	<b>amount requested</b>	<b>amount awarded</b>
Bourton Parish Council	120.00	120.00
Kingston Bagpuize and Southmoor Parish Council	363.75	364.00
Longworth Parish Council	496.09	595.34
Shrivenham Parish Council	1,820.20	1,820.00
Stanford in the Vale Parish Council	905.00	905.00
Uffington Parish Council	150.00	125.00
Watchfield Parish Council	981.00	981.00
Viscountess Barrington's Memorial Hall & Recreation Ground Trust	3,000.00	2,000.00
Faringdon Community Bus	9,110.00	1,000.00
Bourton Village Hall	2,000.00	2,000.00
St John's Community Hall & Chapel, Fernham	12,000.00	1,500.00
Faringdon Folly Tower Trust	500.00	500.00
Faringdon Twinning Association	500.00	500.00
Stanford in the Vale Twinning Association	500.00	500.00



## **Criteria for eligibility (adopted by Council 20 July 2005)**

### **Introduction**

These criteria are designed to help organisations decide whether or not they are eligible for Council funding for a project or service. The criteria should be carefully read before an application form is completed. Application forms and information about the Council's priorities and the Vale Community Strategy is available from [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk). If an organisation has difficulty in accessing this website or requires further guidance on eligibility and completing the application form the Council can assist. Contact the Community Strategy Officer Tel (01235 547626 or email: [lorna.edwards@whitehorsedc.gov.uk](mailto:lorna.edwards@whitehorsedc.gov.uk))

### **Grant Scheme Objectives**

The Council has a limited budget to make discretionary grants to organisations, clubs and societies, wholly or partly based in the Vale of White Horse District (the Vale). Grants can be awarded to applicants who are able to demonstrate that their project or service supports the Vale Community Strategy by working to 'improve the quality of life in the Vale'. Particular priority is given to those applications that meet the Council's priorities.

Evidence of working in partnership with other community based organisations will assist an application.

If partnerships work well it is likely that:-

- Duplication of effort will be avoided by organisations working together to achieve common goals
- Resources will be maximised
- Economies of scale will be achieved

The Council will not fund projects or services that are more appropriately funded by other organisations and it will not act as the sole funder of a project. It requires that applicants demonstrate widespread support by obtaining some funding from other organisations.

### **Grant Application Procedure**

- i. All grant applications are assessed in a one stage process which is administered by the Community Strategy Officer. All applications for grants of more than £500 are decided by the Council's Executive Committee or one of its Area Committees (West, North East, South East and Abingdon). These committees are made up of elected district councillors.
- ii. Any organisation wishing to apply for a grant must complete a grant application form. On receipt of an application form the Community Strategy Officer assesses the proposed scheme and checks whether or not it conforms to the Council's grant scheme objectives. Once the application has been checked it is presented to the next available committee meeting. The Executive normally meets twice a

year (April and October) to decide Vale wide grant applications. The Area Committees normally meet four times a year to decide more local grant applications. Dates of the meetings will be publicised on the Council's web-site. Applicants should allow sufficient time for their applications to be assessed as missing or incomplete information will delay the assessment.

- iii. A list of applications received is circulated to councillors on a monthly basis. Councillors are able to view the applications received by appointment with the Community Strategy Officer. Councillors have seven days (from the date of being notified) to request further details. Applications to be presented to a meeting are normally discussed with the Chair of the committee before the date of the meeting.
- iv. Applicants, should they wish to, can attend the meeting so, at the beginning of the meeting, they can make a statement in support of their application. Applicants who would like to make a statement must notify one of the Council's Democratic Service Officers (tel: 01235 520202) before 10 am on the day of the meeting.
- v. Area Committees are free to decide, on an annual basis, which of the priorities listed in the Vale Community Strategy (aside from the Council's priorities) they wish to identify as their priorities for funding in that year
- vi. If an Area Committee feels that longer term grant funding (supported by a service level agreement) rather than a one off payment is appropriate it shall be able to refer the matter to the Executive for consideration.
- vii. Grant awards will be publicised with the issue of a media release and information on the Council's website.
- viii. If an application is successful payments are to be made by the Community Strategy Officer. The applicant will be advised of any conditions relating to the payment of the grant.
- ix. If an application is unsuccessful the applicant will be advised about the reasons why the application has been unsuccessful.
- x. Grant applications for less than £500 must conform to the grant scheme objectives but are not normally presented at a committee meeting. These applications are decided in consultation with the Chair of the relevant committee. These applications must be accompanied by an estimate of cost for the project or service.
- xi. Councillors can award a grant of the amount applied for, or a lesser amount, or decline an application. Councillors can specify conditions that relate to the payment of a grant. Please note that because the Council has a limited budget, councillors may sometimes have to decline an application that conforms to the Council's grant scheme objectives and criteria.

#### **All organisations applying for a grant:**

- a) must be properly constituted and non-profit making;
- b) must be properly managed, hold regular meetings and have audited accounts;
- c) all projects must comply with disability discrimination legislation, the Council's equal opportunities policy and race equality scheme and must be open to all sections of the community ( accepting that some projects or services may be focussed on certain sections of the community e.g. young people, people with disabilities);
- d) will have to submit up-to-date accounts, balance sheet, a breakdown of charges and costs for the project or service and details of membership fees;

- e) will have to show evidence and results of their own fund-raising efforts;
- f) will have to show evidence of having sought financial support by county, town or parish council or parish meeting. Applicants are also encouraged to seek support from appropriate members of the Vale Strategic Partnership Board;
- g) will be required to show evidence of having applied to at least two other sources of funding in addition to the district council and local town or parish council;
- h) must show local community involvement and support;
- i) must comply with an agreed timetable for the completion of the project or service;
- j) will need one estimate for project or service work to the value of less than £2,500;
- k) will need at least three written estimates for project or service work valued at £2,500 or more;
- l) will need to show evidence of a costing exercise for project or service work valued at more than £15,000.

**Applications will not be considered for:-**

- a) Activities which have already taken place by the time that a committee meets to decide the application
- b) Activities which promote a party political or religious viewpoint
- c) Activities which are already receiving funding from a department within the Council
- d) Services which are clearly the responsibility of another statutory body
- e) Activities organised by a National Organisation that does not or does not intend to have a local presence within the Vale
- f) Vocational training that should be funded by an employer, an individual or statutory body
- g) Grants that only benefit individuals and not the community as a whole

**Conditions**

- a) Only one grant for a particular project or service will be awarded to an organisation in any one financial year.
- b) Applications must show costs exclusive of VAT and applicants should indicate whether or not they can reclaim VAT.
- c) All projects must comply with disability discrimination legislation, the Council's equal opportunities policy and race equality scheme. Further details can be found at [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk)
- d) All projects must have the required consent prior to payment of grant (e.g. planning permission, building regulations approval, landlord's consent).
- e) Applicants must ensure that they have adequate insurance and that they carry out appropriate checks on staff and volunteers if they work with vulnerable groups.
- f) Grants must be spent solely for the purpose for which they are given.
- g) If an applicant receives offers of funding that amount to more than the total cost of the specified project or service the Council must be notified so that the Council's grant allocation can be amended accordingly.
- h) To assist in monitoring the use of a grant a grant monitoring form will be completed by the grant recipient six months and twelve months after the

receipt of the award. Also the Council (councillors and/or council officers) must be able to visit the grant receiving organisation and the project location. Any visit will be made by prior appointment.

- i) In the event of an organisation or project failing, the grant being used for a purpose other than that for which it was awarded, the project not being started within twelve months of the award (or by the agreed date) the Council reserves the right to reclaim the whole or part of the grant or any unspent grant or any equipment purchased with the grant. Decisions will be made on a case by case basis.
- j) The District Council's support is to be acknowledged on all publicity for the project and service normally by the inclusion of the Council's logo and by wording: 'assisted by a grant from the Vale of White Horse District Council'.
- k) Any building or structure that has been grant funded must have a prominently displayed sign or plaque showing the Council logo and stating "Assisted by a Community Grant from the Vale of White Horse District Council".

Failure to comply with these conditions may result in loss of eligibility for grant aid.

## Community grant scheme from 1 April 2011 onwards

The Council has a very limited budget for discretionary grants to town and parish councils and voluntary or community organisations, (including clubs and societies) wholly or partly based in the Vale of White Horse District (the Vale). The Council seeks to support community initiatives. You can apply for funding towards a wide variety of different community projects or services. The Council will not fund projects or services that are more appropriately funded by other organisations and it will not act as the sole funder of a project. It requires that applicants demonstrate widespread support by obtaining most of its funding from other organisations. Projects will have to show some financial contribution from other sources, for example their own funds, their local parish council or support from other funding organisations. 'In-kind' contributions will be considered.

All projects must comply with disability discrimination legislation, the Council's equal opportunities policy and race equality scheme (see [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk)) and must be open to all sections of the community (accepting that some projects or services may be focussed on certain sections of the community e.g. young people, people with disabilities).

### What can be applied for?

The scheme will fund both capital and revenue expenditure, such as spending on buildings, extensions, equipment, one-off events, activities etc. A project or service must show how it supports the council's corporate priorities and the priorities of the Vale Community Strategy ([www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk))

### How much can be applied for?

Applicants can apply for grants from £500 up to a maximum of £5,000.

### Who can apply?

Applications will only be considered from town and parish councils and voluntary or community organisations that are properly constituted and non profit making. All applicants may apply for revenue or capital grants.

## Grants will not be considered:

- without the relevant permissions (if applicable) such as planning, building regulations or landlord's consent
- for retrospective works or services
- for activities that promote a party political or religious viewpoint
- services which are clearly the responsibility of another statutory body
- activities already funded from another department at the council
- vocational training that should be funded by an employer, or individual or statutory body
- that only benefit individuals and not the community as a whole.

## Assessment methodology for community grant applications

All applications will be assessed using the scoring system shown below. Applications that score the highest number of points are more likely to be funded.

## Contributing to the Vale Community Strategy up to 60 points

Scores of up to 60 points are available dependent on how well the project contributes to the following priorities:

- healthier communities
- improving the quality of life for older people
- safer communities
- fostering a greater sense of the community
- a good understanding of town and parish priorities
- involving young people
- helping those without a car to access services
- affordable homes
- good quality homes

Does the project contribute to at least one of these priorities? Scores are based on how well a project contributes to a particular priority.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• access to good quality green spaces, sports, cultural and leisure facilities</li> <li>• addressing economic weaknesses</li> <li>• building on our economic strengths</li> <li>• maintaining and enhancing the health and vitality of market towns</li> <li>• a low carbon Vale</li> <li>• living with extreme weather</li> <li>• using resources wisely</li> <li>• reducing waste and increasing recycling</li> <li>• a high quality natural and historic environment.</li> </ul>	
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Applications that do not score more than **19 points** in this section will not be scored further and will be withdrawn from the assessment process.

**Contributing to the Council’s own priorities up to 40 points**

Scores of up to 40 points are available dependent on how well the project contributes to the following priorities:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• meeting people’s need for housing</li> <li>• supporting a vibrant local economy</li> <li>• rising to the challenge of climate change</li> <li>• helping to maintain a safe Vale</li> <li>• keeping the Vale a clean place to live.</li> </ul>	<p>Does the project contribute to at least one of these priorities? Scores are based on how well a project contributes to a particular priority.</p>
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**Consultation  
up to 20 points**

<b>consultation</b>	To what extent has the relevant community been consulted and participated in putting the proposal together? The broader and more extensive consultation will score more points.
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**Local need  
up to 20 points**

<b>meeting a local need</b>	How strong is the evidence of local need? Evidence from parish plans or gathered through various consultation exercises to support the project will score more points.
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**Community benefit  
up to 20 points**

<b>community benefit</b>	Who will benefit from the project? The wider number of beneficiaries the better. Projects that help to assist minority groups will score more points in this section.
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**Finance  
up to 15 points**

To encourage funding of projects from a variety of sources applicants are encouraged to ask for smaller grant awards. In this section, the smaller the grant amount requested equates to a higher number of points. Scores of up to 15 points are available dependent on the percentage of the project costs requested:

<b>percentage of project cost</b>	<b>Points available</b>
Up to 20 percent of the project costs	15 points
21 – 40 percent of the project costs	10 points
41 – 60 percent of the project costs	5 points

**Summary of scoring system  
maximum score 175 points**

The maximum score is 175 points made up as follows:

<b>assessment factor</b>	<b>maximum points available</b>
priorities of the community strategy	60
priorities of the Council	40
consultation	20

local need	20
community benefit	20
finance	15
<b>total points</b>	<b>175</b>

Applications scoring over 115 points will be eligible for an award, **subject to budget availability:**

<b>total points score</b>	<b>recommendations</b>
150 or more	officers recommend that the project is a funding priority
125 or more	officers recommend that the project receives some funding
115 or less	officers recommend that the project does not receive funding

## **General conditions of all grants**

Grants must be spent solely for the purpose they are given. All grants will be offered for a period of one year from the date of the decision.

Only one grant for a particular project or service will be awarded to an organisation in any one financial year. The Council's support must be acknowledged on all publicity for the project or service.