

Scrutiny Committee report



Report of Head of Corporate Strategy

Author: Jayne Bolton

Telephone: 01235 547626

Textphone: 18002 01235 547626

E-mail: jayne.bolton@southandvale.gov.uk

Wards affected: All Wards

Cabinet member responsible: Matthew Barber

Tel: 01235 547693

E-mail: matthew.barber@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

To: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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Capital Community Grant Scheme

Recommendations

- (a) That scrutiny committee considers and provides comments to cabinet on the new capital community grant policy and procedure as detailed in appendix 1 of this report.
- (b) That scrutiny committee considers and provides comments to cabinet on the allocation of the grants budget to the area committees as detailed in paragraph 9 of this report.

Purpose of Report

1. To consider a new capital community grant policy and procedure as detailed in appendix 1 of this report.

Strategic Objectives

2. The council has a corporate priority to offer support to local communities by offering grants to voluntary and community organisations who are delivering projects and services that support the council's own objectives or those in need.

Background

3. In 2011/12 the council awarded £99,135 in community grants to 50 separate voluntary organisations, to date £70,358 (71%) has actually been paid to these organisations. The balances remaining are mainly due to match funding requirements. These grants were for a mixture of capital, ongoing revenue and one off event expenditure.
4. As part of the budget setting for 2012/13 it was decided to remove the community grants budget from the revenue budget and replace it with a capital community grant scheme. This means that grants can now only be given towards projects for capital expenditure.

Options

5. The suggested criteria for the new capital community grant scheme are similar to those used by the area committees over the last 12 months. The key difference is that the scoring element relating to how a project contributes to the council's corporate priorities or the vale's community strategy has been removed. The focus of the scoring is now on the level of local need which will be identified through consultation evidence provided by the organisation applying for the grant.
6. The committee/cabinet may wish to consider whether there should be a scoring element within the criteria that shows how a project links to the new corporate priorities.
7. A new section on the viability of a project has also been added to the scoring system, this will help to identify the projects that are most likely to be successful and claim grant payments within the appropriate time scales.
8. The scoring system is similar to that adopted by South Oxfordshire District Council which will enable officers to facilitate the scheme using the shared staff resources currently available.

Allocation of budgets to area committees

9. In 2011/12 the community grant budget was calculated by dividing the total budget available by the percentage of the electors in each area. There are various options available to the council to allocate this grant budget and a summary of three options is listed below: (more detailed information is included in appendix 1).

Option 1 The allocation of funds is calculated by dividing the available budget by four (the number of area committees). For example £100,000 divided by 4 = £25,000 per area committee.

Option 2 The funds are allocated to each committee on a per councillor basis. The rationale being that each councillor has approximately the same number of electors, so this ensures that the funds are distributed evenly.

Option 3 The funds are allocated to each committee by calculating the number of parishes x £525 and the number of electors x 60 pence in each area. The rationale being that the funds are distributed more evenly. These figures and formula are based on recommendations from a previous scrutiny committee meeting.

10. The committee/cabinet is asked to consider which of these options it prefers.

Financial Implications

11. The council has a recurring annual capital allocation of £100,000 in its capital programme funded from its capital receipts reserve to offer in capital grants to local community projects.

Legal Implications

12. The area committees have delegated authority from the previous Executive to determine grant applications. There is also a delegated authority for the head of corporate strategy in consultation with the chair of the relevant area committee to determine grant awards up to £1,000.

Risks

13. As with most grant schemes there is a risk that projects are not successful and grant awards are not drawn down. The viability section included within the scoring criteria will mitigate this risk. Any project that fails or which cannot meet the grant conditions will not receive its grant award and the grant will be cancelled. These decisions will be taken by the head of corporate strategy. The funds will be available to award grants to other applicants. The head of corporate strategy will also determine any requests for extensions of time when a grant is due to expire.

Conclusion

14. The new capital community grant policy and procedures have been developed with a scoring criterion that is easy to understand for the benefit of the potential applicants to the scheme. The scoring criterion is familiar to the area committees who have previously used it when considering community grant applications.