

Extract of adopted Cabinet minutes from 1 June 2012

Capital community grant scheme

Cabinet considered the head of corporate strategy's report that proposed a new capital community grants scheme.

Councillor Dudley Hoddinott was invited to ask his questions to Cabinet on the community grants scheme. He asked:

1. when would the revenue grants scheme be available and open for review?
2. how much money would be available for revenue projects that communities could apply for?
3. was the re-establishment of a revenue grants scheme a 'u-turn'?

In reply to Councillor Hoddinott's questions, the officers reported that the revenue scheme would be considered by Cabinet on 15 June, and it had a £50,000 budget for 2012/13.

The report set out three options to apportion the capital grants budget for 2012/13:

- Option 1 - dividing the available budget by four (the number of area committees).
- Option 2 - allocating funds on a per councillor basis as each councillor had approximately the same number of electors, ensuring that the funds would be distributed evenly
- Option 3 - calculating the number of parishes x £525 and the number of electors x 60 pence in each area

Cabinet noted that the Scrutiny Committee had considered the same report on 24 May and had made suggestions. Cabinet considered these and responded as set out below:

Scrutiny Committee's suggestion	Cabinet's response
The council should provide examples of capital projects that might be successful under the new capital grants scheme as the public might not be aware of the difference between capital and revenue expenditure in local government terms	Agree this proposal but there should also be examples of schemes that might be successful under the new revenue grants scheme
The council should inform applicants that there would be a separate revenue grants scheme at a later date	Agreed – publish details of the schemes on the website
Applications should be allowed from charitable bodies and community interest companies	Agreed
Area committees should consider the grant applications. (One Scrutiny Committee member had suggested an alternative to the area committees distributing grants funds, that councillors should each have an amount to spend on projects in their ward as they thought fit. However, this suggestion did not receive the committee's	Agreed – area committees would continue to determine grant applications

Scrutiny Committee's suggestion	Cabinet's response
support, as this would result in each councillor having a very small budget. The committee considered that it would be better to pool resources and determine grants collectively through area committees.)	
Where area committees initiate their own schemes, these must be subject to a formal agreement for ownership, liability and future maintenance, for example, perhaps through the formal involvement of a third party	Agreed
The scheme eligibility criteria needed clarification on the difference between items such as repairs, maintenance, and professional fees, which were not normally eligible for capital grants, and refurbishment, which might be	Agreed – officers to clarify the criteria before publication
Each applicant should always obtain support of their parish or town council, and ideally an appropriate financial contribution	Agreed but it must be the applicant's responsibility to declare that they have achieved their parish council's support
Where an area committee was in support of a scheme that had not met all of the criteria (e.g. had yet to obtain planning permission or achieve parish/town council support), the committee should delegate approval of a grant, subject to the criteria/conditions being met. Authority should be delegated to the strategic director/head of service, following consultation with the relevant area committee chairman	Agreed that an application could be delegated for approval subject to a condition to achieve town/parish council support. However, applications must <u>not</u> be delegated for approval subject to planning permission being sought; this must be a pre-requisite of applying for a capital grant.
The scheme eligibility criteria should be amended to read 'applications will <i>normally</i> be considered if organisations/projects meet the following eligibility criteria...'	Disagree – use the wording as suggested originally in the officer's report as this is clearer, by removing the word 'normally'
The committee strongly preferred budget allocation option 2: funds to be allocated to area committees on a per councillor basis (10 votes), over option 3 (2 votes) and option 1 (no votes)	Cabinet preferred budget allocation option 3, as this brought greater equality than the other options, ensuring a more even distribution across all four areas
The councillor numbers for each area should not be shown as actual councillor places on each committee as the Hanneys	Agreed - but not relevant to Cabinet's preferred budget allocation option 3 that is based on number of parishes and number

Scrutiny Committee's suggestion	Cabinet's response
and Longworth wards were split between two areas. The councillor numbers should be amended to read: Abingdon 16, North East 11.5, South East 15, West 8.5	of electors
Where an area committee does not spend its capital grants budget during a year, this should be carried forward to the following year, if capital accounting rules allow	Agreed, subject to area committees seeking Cabinet approval to carry forward funds to the following year.

Finally, the Scrutiny Committee had asked to review the detailed guidance to applicants for this scheme, either at the next Scrutiny Committee meeting or by other means before the guidance was published. Cabinet supported this.

RESOLVED: To

- (a) approve the new capital community grant policy and procedure as detailed in appendix 1 of the report, subject to the following amendments:
- The officers shall publicise examples of capital projects that may be successful under the new scheme and revenue proposals that may be successful under the separate revenue grants scheme, as the public may not be aware of the difference between capital and revenue expenditure in local government terms. Scrutiny Committee to review the detailed guidance to applicants for this scheme before the guidance is published
 - The council shall inform applicants that there will be a separate revenue grants scheme, to be considered by Cabinet on 15 June 2012
 - Applications shall be allowed from charitable bodies and community interest companies
 - Area committees shall consider the grant applications
 - Schemes initiated by the area committee must be subject to a formal agreement for ownership, liability and future maintenance, for example, through the formal involvement of a third party
 - The officers to clarify the scheme eligibility criteria on the difference between items such as repairs, maintenance, professional fees, and refurbishment
 - Each applicant must always obtain support of their parish or town council, and ideally an appropriate financial contribution and shall be required to confirm this by marking the application form
 - Where an area committee is in support of a scheme that has not met all of the criteria (e.g. has yet to achieve parish/town council support), the committee may delegate approval of a grant, subject to the criteria/conditions being met. Authority should be delegated to the strategic director/head of service, following consultation with the relevant area committee chairman
 - Any planning permission must be obtained before capital grant applications can be considered
 - Where an area committee does not spend its capital grants budget during a year, this may be carried forward to the following year, but permission must be sought from Cabinet

- (b) agree to distribute the grants budget between the four area committees by calculating the number of parishes in each area committee's area x £525 and the number of electors x 60 pence in each area (option 3); and
- (c) authorise the head of corporate strategy to withdraw or extend a capital community grant.