

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

21 November 2012

TOWN FORUM SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (ECONOMIC PROSPERITY)

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RECENT REFERENCES:

WTF164 – [Core Grant Allocations for 2012/13, 25 January 2012](#)

WTF174 – Town Forum Grants - 7 June 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At the last meeting of the Forum, Members agreed to establish a small grants programme independent of the General Fund grants schemes (Report WTF174 from 7 June 2012 refers).

It was agreed that the Town Account Grants Informal Group would meet to consider the criteria and operation of the new programme, in order to bring proposals back to this meeting.

This paper sets out the proposals of the Group for adoption by the Town Forum, including the delegation of the necessary authority to determine and award grants.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Town Forum

- a) approves the proposed detail of the Town Forum Small Grants Programme as set out in section 2 of this report; and;
- b) delegates authority to the Assistant Director (Active Communities) to determine and award small grants to applicants for the Town Forum Small Grants Programme, in consultation with the Town Account Grants Informal Group, based on these criteria as of the start of the 2013/14 financial year – subject to approval of the Small Grants budget as part of the Town Forum's wider budget planning process.

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TOWN FORUM GRANTS – THE PROJECT FUNDING SCHEME

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (ECONOMIC PROSPERITY)

DETAIL:

1 Introduction

1.1 Since the end of last year, there have been discussions about the Town Forum's involvement in the City Council's wider grants programmes. At their meeting in June, Members decided that a separate small grants scheme should be introduced to give the Forum an independent means to support voluntary organisations based in the Town area. Report WTF174 which was considered at the meeting identified a sum of £5,000 for this purpose, and the amount is included in the budget papers elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting.

1.2 At the request of the Forum, a meeting of the Town Account Grants Informal Group was convened in October to discuss how such a scheme might operate. Membership of the Group consisted of Councillors Collin, Prowse, Pines, Tait and Witt (although Cllr Witt was not able to attend the meeting).

1.3 This paper sets out the Group's proposals for adoption by the Town Forum.

2 Scope and Criteria

2.1 Members of the Group proposed the following:

- a) *Grant Awards*: the maximum size of grant will be £500. In the event of exceptional circumstances (to be determined at the discretion of the Group), a larger sum may be considered.
- c) *Timing*: £5,000 is a relatively small total so it was agreed that the scheme would be piloted with a one-off allocation process, taking place in June. If there were an emergency request later in the year, there may still be scope to accommodate this via the General Fund grants reserve. Town Forum Grants will be reported back to the next meeting of the Forum, but would be paid in the meantime to avoid lengthy delays for applications.
- d) *Assessment*: assessment of applications will be conducted by the Town Account Grants Informal Group, supported by the Funding and Development Officer. In order to ensure that the process is simple and quick for applicants, it is proposed that the Group then advises the Assistant Director (Active Communities), to whom Town Forum needs to give delegated authority to determine the grants and then issue payments with the necessary funding agreements (modelled on the agreements used already for the General Fund Small Grants).

- e) *Criteria*: the Group felt that the criteria should be kept as open as possible, as follows:
- i) organisations must serve the people of the six unparished Wards, although Town Forum would be open to partnership funding with surrounding parishes (eg Badger Farm).
 - ii) applications must be for one-off items of expenditure, not overheads or ongoing costs.
 - iii) allocations must demonstrate the support of the local Ward Member (eg in the form of a letter).
 - iv) applicant organisations must be a constituted body or a new organisation working towards this status.
 - v) organisations should demonstrate community benefit.
 - vi) other organisations can apply on behalf of or be the accountable body for smaller or temporary organisations.

f) *Recognition and promotion of the scheme*: recipients will be required to acknowledge the funding support on printed materials/website. The programme would be promoted via the City Council's website, and through Town Forum Members in their own Wards.

- 2.2 The Group also agreed that the application form should be kept short, and should be easy to complete to encourage applicants. They felt the scheme should be as inclusive and accessible as possible. A set of guidance notes will be produced to support applicants, and this would include a list of Ward Members with their contact details.

3 Alternative Decision Making Process

- 3.1 The Group had wished to retain ownership for Town Forum of the entire decision-making process, without the support of officers. In order to do this, Town Forum would need to delegate authority to a new Town Account Grants Sub-Committee to award small grants. As the decision would be made by a Group of Members - rather than Informal Group working towards a recommendation to be determined by a later meeting of the Forum - the meeting would need to be properly constituted and held in public, so that decisions are seen to be open, transparent and accountable.
- 3.2 However, the Council's custom has been to not accept public participation on grant applications as it was considered as "special pleading", which could disadvantage those who were unable to attend the meeting and those less able to communicate at meetings. This bar to public participation is referred to in the Members' Protocol on Grant Applications, which prevents Members with Personal and Prejudicial Interests to speaking in support of organisations with which they have a personal connection before leaving the room. Therefore, the Forum would have to consider whether they wish to discontinue this practice and allow public participation on grant applications.
- 3.3 Another issue the Forum would need to consider in establishing a properly constituted meeting is the potential for Members' personal and prejudicial interests rendering the meeting inquorate. The standard quorum for Council

meetings is three members, and it is therefore recommended that the new Sub-Committee consist of at least six members to avoid this eventuality.

- 3.4 In view of these considerations, this Report proposes a simpler form of decision-making based on powers delegated to officers but implemented in consultation with the existing Town Account Grants Informal Group. Decision-making will still be transparent and consistent, because it will be based on clear policies and procedures and reported back to the next meeting of the full Town Forum.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

3 COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CHANGE PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 3.1 The awarding of grants is a core element of the Council's commissioning approach: funding is awarded to organisations which can deliver services supporting the outcomes and priorities of the Community Strategy. In particular, grants support the Active Communities outcome of the Community Strategy.
- 3.2 Many of the voluntary organisations are supported in accordance with the general power of competence in S1 Localism Act 2011. This outlines a local authority's power, subject to certain limitations, to do anything that individuals generally may do. It is relevant to partnership working with community organisations.
- 3.3 The Council should have regard to the Community Strategy when making grants. The restrictions Localism Act 2011 do not preclude any of the 2012/13 grants currently approved. Additionally some awards can be made under powers outlined in S19 Local Government Act 1976 – "not-for-profit making recreation projects", S142 Local Government Act 1972 – "information/advice services -:" and S145 Local Government Act 1972 – "promotion of the arts".

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 4.1.1 A sum of £5,000 is identified in the budget paper elsewhere on this agenda to fund the Small Grants Programme.
- 4.1.2 This sum represents the approximate amount being paid in 2012/13 as a contribution to Core Grants for voluntary organisations which are not currently classified as 'Partner Organisations'.
- 4.1.3 By choosing to allocate this amount to a new Small Grants Programme, there will potentially be some additional pressure created on the General Fund grants budget for 2013/14 and in subsequent years.
- 4.1.4 An estimated annual internal charge of £2,000 has been included in the Town Account budget forecast. This charge is based on the amount of time anticipated to be spent by the Council's Funding and Development Officer on supporting the Town Forum scheme.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

5.1.1 There is a degree of financial and reputational risk to the Town Forum associated with providing support to an external organisation. In this case, however, the size of award is relatively small and the level of risk is consequently also low.

5.1.2 This kind of risk is managed by publishing clear criteria for the scheme, and by making awards in a transparent and consistent way. Whilst the size of grant awards does not merit close scrutiny of the applicant organisation, some basic checks will be made to assess whether the applicant has the knowledge and capacity to deliver the initiative for which funding is sought.

6 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

6.1 None

7 APPENDICES:

None