

REPORT TITLE: GRANT REVIEW UPDATE

16 SEPTEMBER 2020

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Malcolm Prince, Cabinet Member for Sport, Leisure and Communities

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WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

The Council provides funds to support the work of voluntary and community organisations in Winchester district, recognising the valued range of services they provide.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the following funding initiatives:

- Grant review 2018 – Strategic and Priority Outcome fund allocations – paper CAB3079
- Small grant programme – changes to the approach and allocations 2019/2020
- The launch of Crowdfund Winchester

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Note the outcomes achieved as a result of the Strategic and Priority Outcome fund allocations in 2019/20.
2. Agree that the small grant programme continues to be operated in the new style of an interactive grant panel, involving ward councillors.
3. Delegated authority be given to Corporate Head of Engagement in consultation with the portfolio holder cabinet member to make minor revision and improvement to the grant award process and priorities for the Small Grants and Crowd Funding to ensure these remain accessible, effective and responsive to changing needs and issues that may arise over the course of a funding period.

IMPLICATIONS:**1 COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES**

- 1.1 The Council's grant programme focusses funding toward the priorities set out in the Council Plan.

Tackling the Climate Emergency and Creating a Greener District

- 1.2 The Council's community and voluntary sector grants programme supports projects that contribute to this outcome priority.

Homes for all

- 1.3 The Council's community and voluntary sector grants programme supports projects that contribute to this priority.

Vibrant Local Economy

- 1.4 People's health and wellbeing are an important factor in sustaining employment and being able to benefit from, and contribute to, the District's economic opportunities. Inclusive economic growth is important to our community's prosperity.

Living Well

- 1.5 The Council's community and voluntary sector grants programme supports projects that contribute to this outcome priority.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 The general fund grant budget for 2020/2021 reduced by £25,000 from the previous year as organisations were required to detail a reduction in funding over the 3 year application, in line with the recommendations of the 2018 grant review. One exception to the rule was Citizens Advice Winchester which has increased slightly year on year:

FUND:	2019/2020	2020/2021
Strategic Fund	£448,000	£448,000
Priority Outcomes Fund	£90,627	£64,822
Crowdfund Winchester: Communities Positive Change Fund	£35,000	£35,000
Small grant programme	£30,000	£30,000
TOTAL	£603,627	£577,822

2.2 There are no financial implications as a result of these recommendations.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

3.1 This report seeks authority to agree continuation of the small grants programme. Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 gives the Council a general power of competence, the council has the power to receive or gift grant funding and to enter into a grant agreement where there is good reason to do so. Authority to implement the decision of cabinet and to enter into the legal agreement is under the scheme of delegation to Service Lead – Legal in Part 3.4 of the Council Constitution

3.2 All funding must have sufficient checks in place to ensure that the funds are applied for the purpose to which the Council provides the grant. Grant agreements include safeguards such as robust monitoring requirements, financial checks (for the strategic and priority outcomes funds) and regular reporting.

3.3 There are no procurement implications as a result of these recommendations.

4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no additional workforce implications as these programmes are managed within the existing staff resources.

5 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

6.1 The Council's grant programme was consulted upon as part of the review in 2018. This included the proposal to launch a crowdfunding platform to enable eligible local groups and organisations to raise funds for projects.

6.2 Frequent communication takes place with organisations funded via the Strategic Fund.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Projects that have negative or detrimental impact on the environment or are counter to the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency will not receive Council grant.

7.2 The Greener Future Fund has been established as part of the Council's crowdfunding programme that is designed to specifically benefit projects that are seeking to reduce the carbon footprint of the district. This fund is only for not for profit organisations as the budget is derived from the recycling bank credits.

8 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 The Council has a duty of care under the public sector equality act to turn their mind to the applicability of the decision on vulnerable groups /persons at the point of the decision making.
- 8.2 An equality impact assessment (EIA) was completed for the Council's grants programme. The EIA was reviewed and approved at the Cabinet meeting in December 2018. The EIA included the crowdfunding platform within its scope, consequently a new or revised EIA is not deemed necessary.

9 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 The chosen supplier of the crowdfunding platform has passed the Council's pass / fail requirements in terms of data security and processing.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 10.1 Detailed eligibility, financial stability and due diligence assessments are undertaken by the Council in relation to larger grant awards including the strategic and priority outcomes grants.

Prior to embarking on a live project checks are made by the provider of the crowdfunding platform in relation to verifying and checking organisations operating and bank account status.

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
<i>Community Support</i> Local organisations and communities do not respond to the crowd funding opportunity or small grants.	The Council and supplier will provide support and will extensively promote the platform for applicants. Voluntary sector support service will assist grant applicants.	Local groups and organisations can develop their own campaign and raise money from the 'crowd' to increase funding coming into the sector.
<i>Financial / VfM</i> The cost of implementing the new online crowdfunding system does not (and may not for year 1 due to the pause in relation to COVID-19) give the return on investment in terms of additional investment generated via fundraising, and efficiency of staff time in administering funds.	The implementation stage has been supplemented by a support package from the supplier to ensure organisations are able to succeed in generating funds.	The Council has the potential to put its own projects on the platform in order to raise public funds that contribute towards their delivery.

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
<p><i>Legal</i> New online crowdfunding platform fails or is abused and results in a legal challenge.</p>	<p>The crowdfunding platform provider undertakes assessment and verification checks to ensure the project is appropriate and delivered in accordance with the purposes of the fund</p>	<p>The proposals will enhance the delivery of projects with a social value to the Winchester district.</p>
<p><i>Innovation</i> The use of a new online grant system results in organisations not being able to access grants.</p>	<p>The chosen supplier demonstrated a proven track record in operating, managing and supporting such platforms. The Council and supplier will provide support for applicants. Investigation was undertaken with other local authorities to understand and learn from any implementation issues.</p>	<p>Online systems present greater opportunity to engage communities willing to support local projects, helping to build local capacity and participation.</p>
<p><i>Reputation</i> Failure or misuse of the platform causes negative press and public sentiment.</p>	<p>The service/system specification requires the monitoring and vetting of content and projects to ensure no bogus or inappropriate material is posted on the site.</p>	<p>The innovative use of online systems that gives greater access to funding and can potentially support a greater number of local projects.</p>

11 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

11.1 In December 2018 the Council approved a new grants programme, comprising four elements:

- a) Strategic Fund
- b) Priority Outcomes Fund
- c) Small grants
- d) Crowdfunding

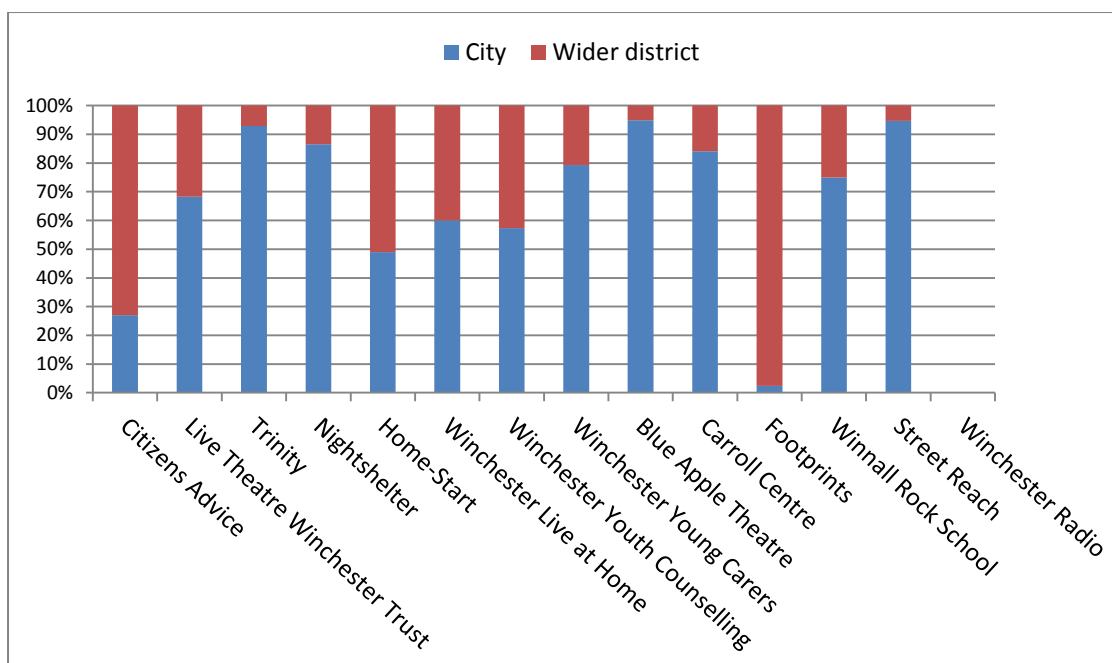
Strategic and Priority Outcome Funds

- 11.2 The Strategic Fund is open to those that hold a unique position in the market and deliver support to the community that the Council values as sole providers of these services. They are direct awards rather than being subject to an open bidding exercise, due to the sole provider position they hold, with an agreement for a period of three years.
- 11.3 The Priority Outcomes Fund is a competitive process focused on contributing to the priority outcomes of the Council Plan and open to organisations that provide a range of services to a diverse group within communities across the District, but which are not sole providers of that type of service. Once again the agreement is for a period of three years, to a maximum of £15,000 per annum.
- 11.4 The total value for the Strategic Fund and the Priority Outcomes Fund for 2019/20 was £538,627. In the case of both funds there was an approach of a gradual reduction in funding, stepped down over the three years to deter organisations from over reliance on the council grant. This approach was approved by Cabinet in paper CAB3079, with authority for decisions delegated to the Corporate Head of Engagement and with funding for 20/21 and 21/22 to be agreed in principle, subject to final budget approval.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
<u>Strategic Fund</u>			
Citizens Advice Winchester	£180,000	£191,000	£205,000
Live Theatre Winchester Trust	£168,000	£164,000	TBC
Trinity	£80,000	£75,000	£70,000
Winchester Nightshelter	£20,000	£18,000	£16,000
<u>Priority Outcomes Fund</u>			
Unit 12 CIC (last year of award)	£16,000	£0	£0
Home Start Hampshire	£10,000	£9,000	£8,000
Winchester Live at Home	£10,000	£9,000	£8,000
Home Start Winchester	£8,650	£7,785	£6,920
Winchester Youth Counselling	£8,000	£7,500	£7,000
Winchester Young Carers	£7,500	£6,000	£4,500
Blue Apple Theatre Company	£7,500	£5,625	£3,750
The Carroll Centre	£6,510	£5,520	£4,395

Footprints	£4,217	£3,317	£2,417
Winnall Rock School	£3,500	£3,200	£2,900
Street Reach	£5,000	£4,500	£4,000
Winchester Radio	£3,750	£3,375	£3,000

- 11.5 Two of the Strategic Fund organisations (Citizens Advice and Live Theatre Winchester Trust) were also deemed eligible and appropriate for funding of £20,000 each from Winchester Town Forum. No decisions are required about grant allocations at this time, as the in principle decisions for 20/21 and 21/22 were subject only to final budget approval.
- 11.6 It is important for Cabinet to understand the outputs and outcomes that resulted from the funding in 2019/20 so the information that follows summarises what was achieved by the collective efforts of the 15 funded organisations.
- **20,177** people given advice or assistance on issues including finance/debt, benefits, housing, parenting and life skills
 - **£1,501,722** additional income secured for vulnerable clients
 - **2,680** counselling sessions provided
 - **430** training sessions delivered on subjects including cookery/nutrition, sustaining tenancies, job finding/interview skills, parenting, mentoring and coping skills.
 - **1,114** drop-in visits to day centre or youth services
 - **824** people benefitted from a respite break or activity
 - **7,274** exercise sessions for the elderly
 - **96,000** attendees at approximately **750** performances or events
- 11.7 Some of the funded organisations primarily serve people from the city area – for example Trinity, Winchester Nightshelter and the Carroll Centre. Other services are provided across the district and vary in the proportions of clients from the city and wider district. Below is an indication of where clients originate from:



Figures for the two Home-Start organisations have been combined into one line in the chart above. No report has been received to date from Winchester Radio.

11.8 It is also important to reflect on the vulnerable nature of many people that are accessing and benefitting from these services. The majority of these people fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Debt or financial hardship
- Homelessness
- Mental health issues
- Alcohol or substance misuse
- Difficult family / home life circumstances
- Isolation and/or loneliness
- Disability

Small Grant programme

11.9 The grant review in 2018 concluded that a more proactive and face to face approach should be adopted in order to better engage with local communities and organisations that benefit from the councils grant aid. Councillors were also invited to play a more active role in the distribution of funds and the new approach shortened the time in which the decisions on grant awards are made.

- 11.10 The budget for the 2019/2020 small grants was £30,000 and two rounds of funding panels were held (October 2019 and February 2020), at which various ward councillors joined officers to meet the applicants. The panels were held across the district in cluster locations.
- 11.11 The panel funded 44 applications totalling £16,810. Three applications were withdrawn and one application rejected as not eligible. A summary of the grants awarded is shown at [appendix 1](#). A further £3,490 was awarded to five communities towards the cost of VE day celebrations, though these have not taken place so the need for these grants will be reassessed.
- 11.12 A similar fund operates in the Winchester town area under the control of Winchester Town Forum. Details of that fund and the grants awarded to organisations in the town area during 2019/20 can be found in [appendix 1 to report WTF285](#).
- 11.13 Feedback from councillors is that they have been encouraged by the interaction with applicants and that the panel has been a positive experience; that they are more engaged with the process; and have a helpful insight into the projects and how they support our residents and inject life into our local communities.
- 11.14 The Small Grant programme has been put on hold in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. No face to face meetings can be held due to restrictions on groups of people meeting so the panels could not operate in their usual way. We also need to consider whether one-off projects such as these are the most suitable use of funding this year, or whether funding needs to be directed to help ensure that organisations survive the current challenges. Work is currently being undertaken to get a better understanding of the impact on the sector.
- 11.15 It is disappointing that demand for the small grants fell significantly below the available budget in 2019/20. It is possible that the programme is too 'static' and needs to be more dynamic and flexible to meet changing needs and priorities - for example, in recent years there has been local interest in activity linked to events such as VE Day and Olympic Games.
- 11.16 Once the restrictions associated with COVID-19 are over, it is recommended that the Small Grant programme continues to be operated in the new style of an interactive grant panel, involving councillors, but with priorities to be agreed on an annual basis to reflect key events or initiatives that complement Council Plan priorities.

Crowdfund Winchester

- 11.17 Crowdfund Winchester was launched on 5 February with the one-off 'Projects that Matter' programme with the aim of raising the profile of the new platform and identifying some projects to showcase the potential of crowd funding. The five winners, offered £2,000 matched funding, were as follows:

Organisation	Org type	Project	Status
<i>Minimal Waste Markets</i>	Social enterprise	Market providing services and goods with minimal packaging waste to include repairs and education.	Due to COVID not sure if proceeding
<i>Taste of Wickham</i>	Community group	Taste of Wickham event: showcase of Wickham and the surrounding area, introduction of new element.	Cancelled due to COVID
<i>Brightful</i>	Community Interest Company	Purchase of a software license to support 5 apprentices with some dedicated online training and coaching support.	Underway
<i>FirstBite</i>	Social enterprise	Community cooking with parents and children, focusing on a whole family approach - cooking and eating together.	Awaiting launch of funding campaign
<i>Winchester Amateur Boxing club</i>	Community group	Defibrillator and equipment.	Campaign completed successfully

- 11.18 The big success story has been Winchester Amateur Boxing club, which succeeded in raising £2,057 from 51 supporters and has been matched by £2,000 from the council, making a total of £4,057.
- 11.19 The crowd funding platform, is now hosting three different funds on behalf of Winchester City Council:
- a) *Communities Positive Change Fund* is focussed on:
 - (i) Services/activities which deal with communities needs, such as isolation, low income, homelessness, mental health and physical inactivity; and
 - (ii) Positive change around environmental quality, increasing usage of digital applications, services and products, enhancing sustainability, green technologies, creativity and innovation and business growth.
 - b) *Greener Future Fund* supports not for profit organisations with projects that are seeking to reduce the carbon footprint of the district.
 - c) *Winchester Town Community Fund* is a Town Forum fund for projects that benefit residents of the town in at least one of the outcomes approved by the Forum – inclusion, environment and wellbeing.

11.20 It was always expected that the number of applications to the council funds would initially be low. COVID has not helped and to date there have been six further applications to the council funds of which four didn't meet the eligibility criteria, one is under review and one approved. A social media campaign is about to start that will raise the profile and should significantly increase the number of applications.

11.21 It should be noted that the platform can also be used by local organisations as a way to raise funding even if they choose not to apply directly to the council for support. A great example is Play to the Crowd (Theatre Royal), which launched a [survival appeal](#), raised over £50,000 in three days and currently has £80,930 from 1,213 supporters.

12 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

12.1 No alternative options have been assessed at this stage.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

CAB3079; COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR GRANTS REVIEW; 12 DECEMBER 2018

Other Background Documents:-

Funding themes and priority outcomes

2019/20 grant performance reports

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 - Small grant allocations 2019/2020