

REPORT TITLE: WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM GRANT ALLOCATION PROPOSAL

11 SEPTEMBER 2019

REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Anne Weir, Portfolio Holder for Local Economy

Contact Officer: Susan Robbins Tel No: 01962 848 461 Email srobbins@winchester.ogv.uk

WARD(S): TOWN WARDS

PURPOSE

This report sets out a proposal to create a Winchester Town Fund as a specific grant fund to be accessed through the Council's crowd funding platform. The eligibility criteria, the outcomes to be achieved through this grant fund and the level of financial contribution per eligible project are described below and follow from the Council's strategic strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Winchester Town Forum approve:

The creation of a Town Fund to be made available via the Council's crowd funding platform.

The Town Fund delivery outcomes of Inclusion, Environment and Well-being, as set out in the Detailed Proposals section, against which grant funding applications are to be assessed.

A match funding limit per project submitted on the crowd funding platform for the Town Fund of 50% or £2,000 which ever is the less.

The match funding contribution from the Town Fund will only be offered when the project has secured, from the public investment pledges, a value of 25% of the target

total project expenditure.

- a. The option to revise or withdraw the grant offer of match funding contribution if the organisation fund raising for the project fails to reach its stated target expenditure.
- b. That one project per organisation in a single financial year is eligible for funding through the Town Fund.
- g. That authority is delegated to Corporate Head of Service for Engagement to approve grant allocation and to enter into grant agreement, monitor and in circumstances where reasonable and grant offer criteria and conditions are not met to withdraw from the funding arrangement.

IMPLICATIONS:

1 COUNCIL STRATEGY OUTCOME

- 1.1 The Council's community and voluntary sector grants programme contributes to all four priorities in the Council Strategy. The crowd funding platform is one of the funding streams approved under the grants review completed in December 2018 and supports the Council's aim to be innovative in the way resources are used.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 The Town Forum considered its grant budget at the 17 January 2019 meeting and approved an allocation of £27,000 for the Citizen's Advice Bureau and Small Grants Fund. This allocation left £33,000 of the Winchester Town Forum grant budget uncommitted for the 2019/2020 financial year. The Council's crowd funding platform, currently being procured, was identified as a suitable method by which this unallocated budget could be offered as a town fund grant.
- 2.2 The new crowd funding platform would provide a process for funding specific projects that meet outcomes agreed by the Town Forum and that meet the special expenses requirements.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no procurement implications as a result of the recommendations in this report.
- 3.2 The Town Forum may distribute grants in accordance with its agreed criteria. Due weight must be given in terms of equalities duties, procedural fairness

and any statement of intent. It is therefore necessary to ensure that the application procedure and the award of grants are based upon evaluation criteria that are in themselves open and transparent and non-discriminatory in nature. Should the Town Forum distribute funds not in accordance with these principles, then it could be at risk of legal challenge. Therefore following the completion of the grants process an equality assessment should be undertaken in respect of all the recipients of the grants and consider whether further action is required in order to ensure that the Town Forum is compliant with its section 149 duty.

- 3.3 The Council, and hence Town Forum, is obliged, to “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness” as a best value authority under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999. Therefore, the Town Forum must also make provision within the arrangements to monitor the use of the grants to ensure that the anticipated benefits from the use of the money are achieved by the grant recipient.
- 3.4 It therefore follows that the grant should only be given upon agreement of an appropriately drafted agreement which allows the Council a sufficient and proportionate level of monitoring of the use of the grant. The report requests approval to establish a fund and eligibility criteria for a grant to be accepted. A grant fund offered through the crowd funding platform would need to comply with the Council’s overall grant programme and special expenses legislation. Officers are aware of these requirements which are taken into consideration in this report. A grant offer letter and grant agreement will be completed for each successful application prior to commencement.

4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no additional workforce implications as the crowd funding platform, applications, grant agreement and monitoring etc. will be 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 crowd funding platform to enable eligible local groups and organisations to raise funds for projects.

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 Environment is proposed as funding outcome to support projects that positively contribute to sustainability and carbon reduction.

8 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSEMENT

8.1 An equality impact assessment (EIA) was completed for the Council's grants programme. The EIA was reviewed and approved at the Council's December Cabinet meeting. The EIA included the crowd funding 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 online crowd funding platform is required to carry out a data impact assessment.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
<p><i>Community Support</i></p> <p><i>Local organisations and communities do not respond to the crowd funding opportunity.</i></p>	<p>The Council and supplier will provide support and will extensively promote the platform for applicants.</p>	<p>Local groups and organisations can develop their own campaign and be actively involved in putting forward projects.</p>
<p><i>Financial / VfM</i></p> <p><i>The cost of implementing the new online system does not give the return on investment in terms of additional investment generated via fundraising, and efficiency of staff time in administering funds.</i></p>	<p>The implementation stage has been supplemented by a support package from the supplier to ensure organisations are able to succeed in generating funds.</p>	<p>The Council has the potential to put its own projects on the platform in order to raise public funds that contribute towards their delivery.</p>
<p><i>Legal</i></p> <p><i>New online platform fails or is abused and results in a legal challenge</i></p>	<p>Supplier will provide the necessary assurance and liability insurances. A process to vet and check content will be carried out by the platform provider A standard funding agreement will be completed.</p>	
<p><i>Innovation</i></p>		

<p><i>The use of a new online grant system results in organisations not being able to access grants.</i></p>	<p>The chosen supplier will be required to demonstrate a proven track record in operating, managing and supporting such platforms.</p> <p>The Council and supplier will provide support for applicants.</p> <p>Investigation was undertaken with other local authorities to understand and learn from any implementation issues.</p>	<p>Online systems present greater opportunity to access communities willing to support local projects, helping to build local capacity and participation.</p>
<p><i>Reputation</i></p> <p><i>Failure or misuse of the platform causes negative press and public sentiment.</i></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 **Background**

11.2 In March 2019 the City Council Cabinet approved a new grants programme, following an extensive review of the existing approach. The new programme included a series of funds with clear priority outcomes, application process and evaluation criteria, with aim of making the programme more transparent, fair and equitable. The crowd funding platform was one the funds approved.

11.3 At its January 2019 meeting the Winchester Town Forum agreed its grant budget for 2019/20. A contribution of £27,000 was made to the Strategic Fund and to the Small Grants. The remainder of £33,000 was to be allocated to a fund that was directed specifically at the town wards and would meet special expenses legislation. The Council's crowd funding platform to be launched in October 2019 provides a mechanism by which such a Town Fund can be established. The specific Town Fund would be in addition to the £35,000 district wide fund.

11.4 **Details of Proposals**

11.5 Town Fund Priorities

11.6 It is proposed that the Winchester Town Fund will have three outcomes against which projects will have to demonstrate they deliver benefits to town ward residents to be considered eligible for funding. Projects are able to contribute to one, two or three of the outcomes.

- a) Inclusion support for schemes that:
 - (i) Create new activities and provide opportunities for people to participate in community life.
 - (ii) Target activities and support for:
 - over 65's, this may include inter-generational approaches
 - young families
 - young people under the age of 16
- b) Environment - support for schemes that:
 - (i) Demonstrably reduces the town's carbon footprint.
 - (ii) Develop and encourage healthy and sustainable travel options.
 - (iii) Install and maintain green technologies, including energy generation, storage and distribution.
 - (iv) Deliver facilities and building management systems that reduce consumption and waste.
 - (v) Undertake practical works which benefit Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) or priority species.
 - (vi) Protect and encourage priority species as identified within the Winchester Biodiversity Action Plan.
 - (vii) Deliver events, activities, training or engagement that encourage people to gain a greater understanding of their local wildlife and places.
- c) Wellbeing – support for schemes that:
 - (i) Create positive activities for young people. Inclusive and accessible projects/schemes for all young people which raise aspirations, promote life skills and leisure and recreational activities, and targeted to young people needing specific or additional support.
 - (ii) Enable self help strategies/coping mechanisms and education around mental health.
 - (iii) Increase the amount of opportunities for people to make healthy lifestyle choices and become regularly active.

- (iv) Develop ideas and innovation to reach new audiences and increase their participation in the arts to improve their sense of mental, psychological, social and physical wellbeing, and to promote social engagement.

11.7 Grant Application and Award Process

- 11.8 Organisations apply to have their project listed on the crowd funding platform. To be eligible project activity must specifically target town ward residents, who need to be the primary beneficiaries. It is not enough for the applying organisation to be located in the town wards. The applying organisation must not have already received a grant from the Town Fund in that financial year. Proposals are vetted to ensure they are from an eligible organisation and not proposing any project or activity that is not supported by the Council, as per the grant application processes for the Community and Voluntary grants programme.
- 11.9 Once vetted, against set eligibility criteria including financial viability of the organisation and proposal, the project is added to the crowd funding platform and a period of fund raising begins. Applicants will be supported and assisted in this by both the Council and the platform provider, but the onus is on the applying organisation to promote their project to their local community and supporters and gain pledges of financial support.
- 11.10 The Town Fund will contribute 50% or up to £2,000 whichever is the less. It is usual practice to only make a provisional grant offer once a certain level of local fundraising has been achieved. It is recommended that this trigger be set at 25% of project costs. Advice will be taken from the platform provider as to the upper limit that should be set for the financial value of projects.
- 11.11 Once the project has been successful in raising all the funds needed to proceed, a formal grant offer will be made and if accepted, the applicant will be required to enter into a formal grant agreement with the Council.
- 11.12 In line with the Council's other grant funds it is recommended that only one project per organisation is supported through the Crowd funding platform per financial year. In addition, priority will be given to those organisations that are not currently in receipt of other Council grant funding.

12 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 12.1 At the 17 January 2019 meeting the Town Forum considered the Priority Outcome funds established under the grant review but this was not able to meet the special expenses requirement.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

WTF267 TOWN ACCOUNT BUDGET FOR 2019/20 - 17 JANUARY 2019

CAB3079 COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR GRANTS REVIEW - 12
DECEMBER 2018

Other Background Documents:-

Funding themes and Priority Outcomes

APPENDICES:

None