

REPORT TITLE: TOWN FORUM GRANT PROGRAMME

15 SEPTEMBER 2022

REPORT OF CHAIR OF THE TOWN FORUM: Cllr Mike Craske

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WARD(S): TOWN WARDS

PURPOSE

This paper reports on the Town Forum community grants awarded in 2021-22 and proposes the grant programmes for the current financial year 2022-23.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Town Forum notes:

1. the achievements and successes of the small grants programme in 2021-22;
2. the impending review of the Crowdfund contract;
3. the important role of Members in supporting the community engagement process and encouraging grant applications; and

That Town Forum approves:

4. delegated authority be given to the Corporate Head of Economy and Community to approve the grant criteria and allocations, in consultation with the Town Forum Informal Vision Group
5. reopening the small grants scheme with immediate effect with the following updates:
 - a) increasing the maximum award from £500 to £1,000 to in response to the

- cost of living crisis and rising inflation
- b) amending the criteria to include an element of core costs, where the cost of living is having an impact on the organisation
- 6. reopening the Crowdfund Winchester Town Community Fund with immediate effect until 15 November 2022 with the following updates:
 - a) amending the criteria to include an element of core costs, where the cost of living is having an impact on the organisation
- 7. the £40k grant budget is used flexibility to allocate funds between different grant programmes to meet the demand for small grants and crowdfunding

IMPLICATIONS:**1 COUNCIL PLAN OUTCOME**

- 1.1 Tackling the Climate Emergency and Creating a Greener District
- 1.2 The Town Community Fund supports projects that contribute to this outcome through the Environment priority
- 1.3 Homes for all
- 1.4 The Town Community Fund supports projects that contribute to this outcome through the Inclusion priority and the Town Forum Small Grants support projects that contribute to this outcome through the Community Benefit priority.
- 1.5 Living Well
- 1.6 The Town Community Fund supports projects that contribute to this outcome through the Wellbeing priority and the Town Forum Small Grants support projects that contribute to this outcome through the Community Benefit priority.
- 1.7 Your Services, Your Voice
- 1.8 The funding programmes aim to be open, transparent and inclusive. Winchester Town Forum (Town Vision including Town Account grants) Informal Group are consulted as part of the assessment process.
- 1.9 The Crowd funding platform makes effective use of technology to enable community projects to raise the funds they require. It leverages additional funding to extend the reach of Council-funded projects and enable projects to gain publicity for their work.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 The small grant and crowdfund programmes form part of the Town Forum grant budget for 2022/23, which remains the same as the previous year and as noted in budget paper WTF306:

FUND:	2021/2022	2022/2023
Strategic Fund:		
Citizens Advice Winchester District	£20,000	£20,000
Play to the Crowd	£20,000	£20,000
Crowdfund Winchester:		
Winchester Town Community Fund	£33,000	£33,000
Small grant programme	£7,000	£7,000
Contribution from General Fund	£1,500	£1,500
TOTAL	£81,500	£81,500

- 2.2 The Town Fund contributes a total of £40,000 towards the small grant and crowdfund programmes, with a further £1,500 coming from the General Fund in recognition of the district wide benefit.
- 2.3 In order to support the cost of living crisis and to address the rise in inflation in the recommendations we are proposing to increase the level of the small grant award from £500 to £1000.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 gives the Council a general power of competence, to enter into a grant agreement provided there is good reason to do so. Authority to enter into the 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 provide the grant. Grant agreements include safeguards such as monitoring requirements.
- 3.3 There are no procurement implications as a result of these recommendations.

4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no 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 Town Forum's Informal Group discussed the proposals set out in this report at a meeting on 31 August 2022.
- 6.2 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. The contract with Crowdfunder ends in December 2022 and a review of the scheme is in progress, the results of which will be discussed at Health and Environment Policy Committee in December.
- 6.3 There is an ongoing programme of publicity for the grants programme including promotion of schemes in newsletters, social media and at funding events.
- 6.4 Currently in discussion with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities regarding applying the relaxed criteria to general fund grants.

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 support.

8 PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

- 8.1 The Council has a duty of care under the Public Sector Equality Act to consider the impact of the decision on vulnerable groups /persons. In the case of these grants, this consideration takes place at the point of the decision making.

9 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 Small grant applications are managed through a bespoke system, which has been designed with in-built data controls that are in line with the GDPR regulations and the council's Data Protection Policy.
- 9.2 The Crowdfunder platform has passed the council's pass or fail requirements in terms of data security and processing.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Financial Exposure The cost of the Crowdfunder platform does not give the expected return in terms of additional investment generated via fundraising, and efficiency of staff time in administering funds.	Support from the supplier and from officers helps organisations to succeed in generating funds.	
Exposure to challenge Challenge of decision to award funds	Clear and transparent assessment process with defined criteria. Dialogue with applicants to support organisations through the process.	Signposting to alternative funding sources increases potential to lever in funding to sustain services.
Innovation Risk that organisations are not innovative with the funding provided	Innovation encouraged through dialogue	

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
<p>Reputation</p> <p>Failure or misuse of the Crowdfunding 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>
<p>Achievement of outcome</p> <p>Funding does not result in expected outcomes that align with council criteria and priorities.</p>	<p>Clear application criteria, grant allocation process and monitoring will ensure grant scheme outcomes are met.</p>	
<p>Community Support</p> <p>Local organisations and communities do not respond to the crowd funding opportunity or small grants.</p> <p>Community opposition to decisions that are made.</p>	<p>The Council and Crowdfunder will provide support and will extensively promote the grants to applicants.</p> <p>Clear and transparent grants processes</p>	<p>Local groups and organisations can develop their own campaign and be actively involved in putting forward projects for grant funding and Crowdfund Winchester.</p> <p>Promote the positive outcomes achieved by funded organisations.</p>
<p>Timescales</p> <p>Only 6 months of the financial year now remain and there is a risk that not all budget will be spent</p>	<p>Allow flexibility in allocation of funds between different grant programmes</p> <p>Member involvement to help promote grant schemes</p>	

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
<p>Project capacity</p> <p>Insufficient staff available to implement the changes to the grant systems and process.</p>	<p>Changes required are minor and project timeline including updates required will minimise impact on resources.</p>	

11 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

Town Forum Small Grants

- 11.1 Appendix 1 summarises the 24 applications received and the resulting 19 grant awards made from the Town Forum small grants budget in 2021-22
- 11.2 The small grants programme continues to be a success, receiving a good number of applications from a variety of organisations across all five town wards. However, there has been anecdotal feedback from the voluntary sector that increasing costs mean that an upper grant limit of £500 can be a disincentive.
- 11.3 This rise also includes a request for a proportion of core costs where the cost of living is having an impact on the organisation. This should enable and encourage organisations to deliver small scale projects more effectively and increase their service delivery.
- 11.4 It is proposed that the Town Forum Small Grant Scheme opens with immediate effect, with some small changes as follows:
- a) increasing the maximum award from £500 to £1,000 to address the cost of living crisis and rising inflation
 - b) relaxing the criteria to include core costs where the cost of living is having an impact on the organisation – this is consistent with the approach being considered for district Small Grants

Crowdfund Winchester – Town Community Fund

- 11.5 Appendix 2 summarises the projects supported by the Town Community Fund since the launch of Crowdfund Winchester in early 2020, No Crowdfunder awards were made from the Town Fund budget in 2021-22. Like this year, the Grant programme was only opened in September and anecdotal evidence suggests there was low interest in the Crowdfunding platform due to groups in recovery mode from the financial effects of COVID.
- 11.6 Appendix 3 summarises the Crowdfunder match-funding grants awarded to projects in the town area in 2021-22. These were made from the General

Fund as the applications were made while the Town Community Fund was closed.

- 11.7 The Crowdfund Winchester platform contract ends in December 2022 and a review is being undertaken to decide the next steps beyond this. Members of the Town Forum Informal Vision Group will be consulted as part of this review and the outcome of this work will be discussed by the Housing and Environment Policy Committee in December.
- 11.8 In the meantime it is proposed to reopen the Town Community Fund immediately, for applications until 15 November 2022, allowing campaigns sufficient time to secure match funding before the end of the contract period.
- 11.9 It is proposed to relax the criteria to include core costs where the cost of living is having an impact on the organisation – in line with other Crowdfund Winchester grant programmes.

Ensuring Budget Spend

- 11.10 Since only half the year remains to make grant awards, a number of steps will need to be taken to ensure that the grants budget is allocated as fully as possible within the boundaries of the grant schemes.
- 11.11 There will be an ongoing programme of publicity for the grants programme including promotion of schemes in newsletters, social media and at funding events. In addition, Town Forum Members are well placed to assist in the promotion of grants to organisations in their wards. To help with this, a grants information pack for Members will be created to ensure they have all the information required to enable them to speak with confidence to local organisations about the programme.
- 11.12 Grants advice to organisations will continue to be given by the Funding and Development Officer. In addition, funding advice drop-in sessions will be run to help advise potential applicants and support them through the application process.

12 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 12.1 The grant budgets could remain closed while work continues to identify plans for implementation of the Winchester Vision. This would further delay the award of grants in the town area, so is not felt to be a viable option. When the vision planning work is commissioned and executed, it will happen with the oversight of the Forum's Informal Vision and Grants Group.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

WTF276: WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM GRANT ALLOCATION PROPOSAL; 11 SEPTEMBER 2019

WTF285: TOWN FORUM GRANT PROGRAMME UPDATE; 19 MARCH 2020

WTF302: CORE FUNDING GRANTS PROGRAMME 2022-2025; 10 NOVEMBER 2021

Other Background Documents:-

None

APPENDICES:

1. Small grant applications received and grant awards made from the Town Forum small grants budget in 2021-22
2. Projects supported by the Town Community Fund, Crowdfund Winchester, 2020-21
3. Crowdfunder matched funding grants awarded in 2021-22 from the General Fund

Appendix 1

Organisation	Application Value	Grant Awarded	Ward	Notes
Winchester StreetReach	£499.00	£499.00	St Barnabas	Football goals
MUNCH	£500.00	£500.00	St Bartholomew	Cooking equipment for workshops
Unit 12 CIC	£500.00	0	St Bartholomew	Application withdrawn
Redeemer Winchester CIO	£500.00	0	St Paul	Unsuitable - declined
MHA Communities –	£499.20	£500	St Michael	Equipment to make venue covid-safe
Pregnancy Crisis Centre	£500.00	0	St Bartholomew	For replacement item – invited to reapply
WINACC	£500.00	£316.00	St Michael	Part funded-some items already purchased
Hyde900	£272.40	0	St Bartholomew	Funds already spent. Invited to reapply
Friends of the Family	£500.00	£500	St Michael	Help to set up new group
Unit 12	£500.00	£500.00	St Bartholomew	Equipment for events
Winchester Mediation Service	£500.00	£500.00	St Bartholomew	Publicity materials
Two Saints	£489.95	£489.95	St Bartholomew	Equipment
Pregnancy Crisis Centre	£500.00	£500.00	St Bartholomew	Publicity costs
MUNCH	£500.00	£0.00	St Bartholomew	Previously funded
Winchester Go LD	£496.00	£496.00	St Bartholomew	Equipment and marketing material
Stanmore Community Assoc.	£500.00	£500.00	St Luke	Projector
Friends of St Cross Hospital	£500.00	£500.00	St Michael	IT equipment
The Carroll Centre	£500.00	£500.00	St Luke	Air purifier to make venue Covid safe
St Cross Cricket Club	£264.00	£264.00	St Michael	Sanitary bins
Winchester Castle FC	£500.00	0	St Bartholomew	Not set up- reapplied in 2022-23
Weeke Community Association	£500.00	£500.00	St Barnabas	Equipment for children's club
Home-Start Winchester	£500.00	£500.00	St Barnabas	Phones to enable remote family support
Young Carers	£500.00	£500.00	St Michael	Wellbeing packs
Party in the Park	£500.00	£500.00	St Luke	Equipment hire to support event
Total	£11,521	£8,565		

Appendix 2

2020-2021 Awards to town based organisations from Town Fund				
Organisation	Project	Total Raised	WCC Match	No. unique backers
The Winchester Lido Sports Association	The Lido heritage facade restoration project	£9,810	£3,000	97
ENCORE Youth Theatre	Dark and Bright Musical	£6,370	£1,000	74
Unit 12	Covid-19 Survival	£18,504	£1,500	86
Winchester Young Carers	Wellness Packs for Young Carers	£4,550	£2,000	26
Happy Healing Hut	Creating our new team	£6,175	£1,125	17
Move Momentum	#MoveMomentumMarch - Help us keep classes running!	£9,601	£1,000	77
Total		£55,010	£9,625	

2021-22 Awards to town based organisations from General Fund				
Organisation	Project	Total Raised	WCC Match	No. unique backers
Winchester Poetry Festival	Poet on the High Street	£4,582	£1,500	69
Blue Apple	Summer Show	£4,010	£750	107
Vineyard Churches	Vineyard Youth Bus	£5,100	£1,500	38
Total		£13,692	£3,750	214