

Committee: COMMUNITY

Agenda Item

Date: November 9, 2006

9

Title: GRANTS

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Summary

1. This report provides Members with details of requests from Members of the Area Panels following the Community Project Grant allocation round for 2006/07.

Recommendations

2. That the East Area Panel's request for the outstanding balance of £3,351 be carried forward to the next financial year, ring fenced for the "other settlements".
3. That the Committee agree to the South West Area Panel's proposal that £4,000 is no longer ring fenced for the larger settlements (i.e., Saffron Walden, Stansted Mountfitchet, Great Dunmow and Thaxted).
4. That the Committee consider increasing each Area Panel's allocation for grants by £10,000 per annum.
5. That the Grants and Strategic Partnership Officer offers proactive support in the preparation of any applications that are being made and that all Parish and Town Councils are provided with regular information as how to access information on potential grant opportunities for large scale applications (over £100,000).

Background Papers

6. Minutes from Area Panel Meetings

Impact

- 7.

Communication/Consultation	Representatives from Town and Parish Councils were in attendance at all the Area Panel Meetings.
Community Safety	Not applicable

Equalities	Certain projects enable hard to reach groups to access services at a localised level
Finance	Financial implications are set out within the body of the report
Human Rights	Not applicable
Legal implications	Not applicable
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

8. At the meeting of the Community and Leisure Committee on 7 September 2004, Members requested that the Grant Review Task Group meet with Town and Parish Council Clerks from the four main settlements to explore ways of improving the fairness of the grant schemes and to discuss general grant funding.
9. It was considered that Town and Parish Councils are well established, statutory, elected bodies – the closest tier of government to the people and therefore well placed to be aware of parishioner needs in relation to facilities and services. In addition, they undertake economically many functions, thereby providing added value, which would otherwise have to be provided by the Council. By working in closer partnership, it is considered that even more could be achieved.
10. There was a concern that because Town/Parish Councils for the urban parishes have larger budgets that there is an expectation that they should receive no grant funding from the Council. In addition, there was a concern that urban parishes also have to provide many more services, and therefore, have a higher level of Council Tax to raise than those of a predominantly rural parish.
11. With regard to added value, it was agreed that residents of rural parishes enjoy the facilities and services provided in the “hub” parishes but do not contribute to the costs – which enables their Council Tax to generally remain at much lower levels.
12. The Task Group recommended that the Community and Leisure Committee recommend to the Resources Committee that the existing Community Project Grant Scheme budget of £24,000 capital funding be increased by £16,000 (ring fenced for the four main settlements) and that all Parish Councils in the District be eligible to apply for funding irrespective of their

population size. Subsequent to this decision being made, the Community Committee agreed that any decisions relating to Community Project Grant allocation should be made by the area panels.

13. To this end, the Panels were allocated the following resources:-
 - (a) East Area Panel - £4,000 ring-fenced for Great Dunmow, £4,000 ring-fenced for Thaxted and £6,666 split among the remaining settlements.
 - (b) South West Area Panel - £4,000 ring-fenced for Stansted Mountfitchet, £6,666 split among the remaining settlements.
 - (c) North Area Panel - £4,000 ring-fenced for Saffron Walden, £6,666 split among the remaining settlements.
 - (d) £4,000 be retained internally for District wide promotions, e.g., signage etc.
14. The Community Project Grant Scheme is open to any properly constituted voluntary organisation or similar body in the Uttlesford District such as Village Hall Committees, Community Shops, Town and Parish Councils, Community Associations, play and recreation clubs and groups. Applications from churches/religious authorities, schools, sports and arts groups **are not** eligible.

Which projects are eligible?

15. The minimum grant available is £100 and the maximum is £3,500. Grants are considered towards expenditure incurred in the provision of any of the following:
 - development of land for recreational purposes, including environmental improvements.
 - buildings/facilities that are available for community use e.g. village halls, community centres, public conveniences etc.
 - car parks and access roads to car parks directly associated with a community use building.
 - children's play areas, including equipment and safety surfacing.
 - improvements, refurbishment or extension to any of the facilities outlined above.
 - essential equipment that contributes significantly to the aims and objectives of the project.

- training or a one-off staffing cost that contributes significantly to the development of the project or increases benefits to the community. (Wages and salaries cannot be paid).
16. The Area Panels have all allocated monies towards grant applications that were received for this financial year. However, all of the Area Panels expressed concerns at the equity of the allocation process. It was considered that the District is growing in population size and that increased developments throughout the District would require an increase in facilities that are being offered to the local populace.
 17. Bearing in mind that the Community Project Grant is a capital allocation, Members considered that where there had been an under-spend in the allocation of grant monies this financial year that the remaining balance should be carried forward to the next financial year.
 18. Members were also concerned that there are a number of projects being developed over a period of time that require substantially more funding than is available. To this end, they requested that greater support should be provided on an on-going basis in terms of information as to potential sources of external funding and how best to deal with making successful applications to alternative funding organisations.
 19. Members considered that subject to the comments in Paragraph 9 that the eligibility criteria are robust. However, they considered that it would be appropriate to consider increasing the amount of money available to each Area Panel by a further £10,000 p.a., thereby achieving additionality and best value though matched funding from external sources. Similarly, it would enable more projects to be completed and offer increased facilities to local residents and visitors to the District. This would mean that the budget required would increase from £40,000 to £70,000 per annum.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
All projects must be completed after 1 st April and before March of any financial year	Not all applicants are always able to complete on time	Low	A progress report will be made to the relevant area panel in March of each financial year
Increasing the capital allocation by a further £10,000 to each area will have an affect on the Council's annual budget	High	Medium	By increasing the budgetary allocation, more sources of external funding will be attracted into the district