

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 27 JULY 2010

REPORT BY HEAD OF COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL SERVICES

REVIEW ON COUNCIL'S DISCRETIONARY COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMME

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- The purpose of this report is to summarise changes to policy and criteria for the council's discretionary grants schemes within the customer and community directorate
- The report seeks Members approval to make changes to criteria and policy

<u>RECOMMENDATION FOR: Community Scrutiny Committee</u>	
(A)	That Members consider the recommendation of Corporate Management Team (CMT) and approve the proposed criteria and policy changes to grant schemes falling within the remit of the Customer and Community Services.

1.0 Background

1.1 The aim of the Council's discretionary community grants programme is to improve social, economic, and environmental well being; contributing to four council priorities as set out in Essential Reference Paper A attached to the report.

1.2 A recent review of the grants that the Council distributes identified that the Council has seventeen schemes. All seventeen contribute to the shared ambitions in the new Sustainable Community Strategy for East Herts (2009 – 2024).

- 1.3 Eleven of these schemes are operated by teams in Customer and Community Services. The scope of this report is restricted to those schemes only.
- 1.4 Organisations or individuals must meet existing minimum criteria before they can be considered for Council funding. This criteria is listed in Essential Reference Paper B.
- 1.5 Applications are scored on existing secondary criteria listed in Essential Reference Paper C.
- 1.6 Scoring of applications is conducted by various Officer Groups and recommendations are passed to the Portfolio Holder for community development, leisure and culture and the Director of Customer and Community Services for final approval.

2.0 Report

2.1 A recent review (undertaken by Officers in consultation with the Portfolio Holder) and Equalities Impact Assessment concluded that the discretionary grants programme could be improved if it was:

- Easier to access
- More responsive to all sections of the community
- More closely linked to the delivery of Council objectives
- More closely linked to the delivery of the new East Herts Sustainable Community Strategy
- Publicised more widely, especially to eligible sections of the community that are under-represented in terms of grant recipients
- Using eligibility criteria and secondary criteria in a consistent way across the board

2.2 Proposed changes are to both policy and scoring criteria.

2.3 The following section summarises changes or renewed emphasis to policy and sets out the elements that will be used to assess applications in the future. The changes are:

2.3.1 A new preference of small, local community groups and charities. Members have indicated that they are keen to fund

projects or activities that make the most difference to those involved and contribute to one of the shared ambitions listed in the East Herts Sustainable Community Strategy.

- 2.3.2 A new preference for first-time applicants.
- 2.3.3 A new preference for projects that are directed at, or of particular relevance to, under-represented groups.
- 2.3.4 A new preference for applicants that are installing energy efficiency measures in their community buildings – in line with SCS ambition of reducing carbon emissions. This preference is only relevant to the capital grant schemes.
- 2.3.5 A renewed commitment to fund projects that are directed at, or of particular relevance to, people experiencing some type of deprivation (such as unemployment and income poverty, housing, living environment, access to services, education and skills, crime among others).
- 2.3.6 A renewed commitment to fund projects that are directed at or of particular relevance to, people living in an identified area of rural disadvantage.
- 2.3.7 Essential Reference Paper D shows how existing secondary criteria would be changed if the above proposals are agreed by Members.
- 2.3.8 A new flexibility and discretion for Officers to waive the requirement to have one-third the total project cost at time of application and to find 50% match funding for certain applicants:
 - emerging and under-represented new groups
 - when the building project is in an identified deprived community

Approval of this policy change means that applicants may receive a grant for more than 50% of project costs. This change is a response to the recession and in line with the

principles embedded in the new Sustainable Community Strategy.

2.3.9 A renewed and joined-up approach to publicity linked to the East Herts Local Strategic Partnership. This would mean all eleven schemes are promoted as a package rather than as individual schemes.

2.4 This next section sets out new criteria and processes.

2.4.1 A new question in the application forms about personal or prejudicial interest

2.4.2 A removal of the question in the application form that asks groups to provide evidence of partnership working - as it was thought this was biased to larger charities.

2.4.3 A higher weighting for the current criteria of use of voluntary labour – in line with the new Sustainable Community Strategy’s ambition of strengthening social cohesion and empowering communities.

2.4.4 A new expectation that grant recipients will agree to have the names of their groups included in the Council’s consultation database.

2.4.5 A new expectation that recipients of grants over £5,000 will submit an evaluation form to the Council indicating the different the project made to people’s lives.

2.4.6 A new set of deadlines and Officer assessment panel for the Community Planning Grants – bringing this scheme in line with the others, ensuring consistent scoring and making it more likely that funding is spent by the end of the financial year.

2.4.7 A new 2-tiered assessment process consisting of:

- A validation by the customer and community services administration team (See Essential Reference Paper E for Flow Chart) to check that essential eligibility criteria (Essential Reference Paper B) are met and discussion with officers as to whether a waiver can be applied

- An Officer assessment of secondary criteria (Essential Reference Paper C to be applied to all schemes

3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 If the proposal for changes to policy and criteria is approved by Members, officers recommend that the changes are introduced in two phases. The capital schemes would adopt the changes in phase 1 and be open for applications in September/October 2010. Phase 2 would bring on board the revenue schemes in 2011.

3.2 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within Essential Reference Paper A.

Background Papers

“Review of Council Grants and the Sustainable Community Strategy” January 2010

“Equalities Impact Assessment on Discretionary Grants Programme”

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ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

<p>Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives (delete as appropriate):</p>	<p>Promoting prosperity and well-being; providing access and opportunities <i>Enhance the quality of life, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.</i></p> <p>Pride in East Herts <i>Improve standards of the neighbourhood and environmental management in our towns and villages.</i></p> <p>Caring about what's built (and) where <i>Care for and improve our natural and built environment.</i></p> <p>Shaping now, shaping the future <i>Safeguard and enhance our unique mix of rural and urban communities ensuring sustainable, economic and social opportunities including the continuation of effective development control and other measures.</i></p>
<p>Consultation:</p>	<p>Discussions with other officers administering grant schemes</p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Financial:</p>	<p></p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>None</p>

GRANT SCHEMES IN CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Scheme Name	What is funded	Budget in 2009/2010
Community Capital Grants Scheme	Large scale capital projects	£83,000
Partnership Investment Fund (Capital)	Leverage to pull in external funding for large scale capital projects	£38,000
Community Planning Grant Scheme (Capital)	Small items of equipment	£20,000
East Herts Village Hall Challenge (Best Run Village Hall) (Capital)	Competition for rural village halls, large scale building works	£11,000
Councillor Revenue Grants	Running costs for small community groups and health and social care charities	£8,000
Community Revenue Grants		£5,000
Arts Revenue Grants	Running costs for community arts projects	£10,000
Performance to Excellence Grants Sports (Revenue)	Special schemes geared to helping 11 to 18 year olds residents achieve sporting and artistic excellence	£4,000
Performance to Excellence Grants Arts (Revenue)		
Summer Activities Grants (Revenue)	Project funding for community groups offering activities for children and young people during the summer holidays	£25,000
Local Environmental Action Fund (LEAF)	Project funding for community groups running environmental improvement projects	varies

For information only: The other 6 schemes include: Historic Buildings Grants, Decent Homes, Disabled Facilities Grants, Charitable Rate Relief, Christmas and Holiday Parties

EXISTING ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Voluntary and community organisations, town and parish councils and other organisations must:

- be a properly constituted voluntary or community group serving residents of the East Herts District area
- be financially viable and show evidence of properly managed accounts
- have a real financial need for the grant
- have an open-door membership policy and services must be accessible to all types of people
- not already be in receipt of a grant from the same type of scheme
- not already started the project or event
- not plan to redistribute the grant to any other person, body or organisation – as through a fund raising appeal

Individual applicants (young people) are eligible for Performance to Excellence Grants (Arts and Sports) and Councillor Revenue Grants for personal endeavors. Individuals must be residents of East Hertfordshire or go to school in East Hertfordshire and comply with the above relevant criteria.

EXISTING SECONDARY CRITERIA FOR SCORING

Applicants are judged on the extent to which they:

- Help the council achieve its corporate priorities
- Help the council achieve specifically identified priorities in the East Herts Together Community Strategy (2003)
- Target excluded (disadvantaged) groups from the following list: people living in rural areas, people with a physical illness, people with a mental illness, older people, young people, ethnic minorities, people living in deprived areas, people with a disability, people with learning disabilities, unemployed people, people on low income, women and special interest groups.
- Support those experiencing rural or other geographic disadvantage
- Is a new application by an organisation that has not received council funding in the past
- Work with other relevant partners
- Consult clients/service users to find out what they think about the service provided
- Show involvement with local people, in terms of donated voluntary labour

Essential Reference Paper D

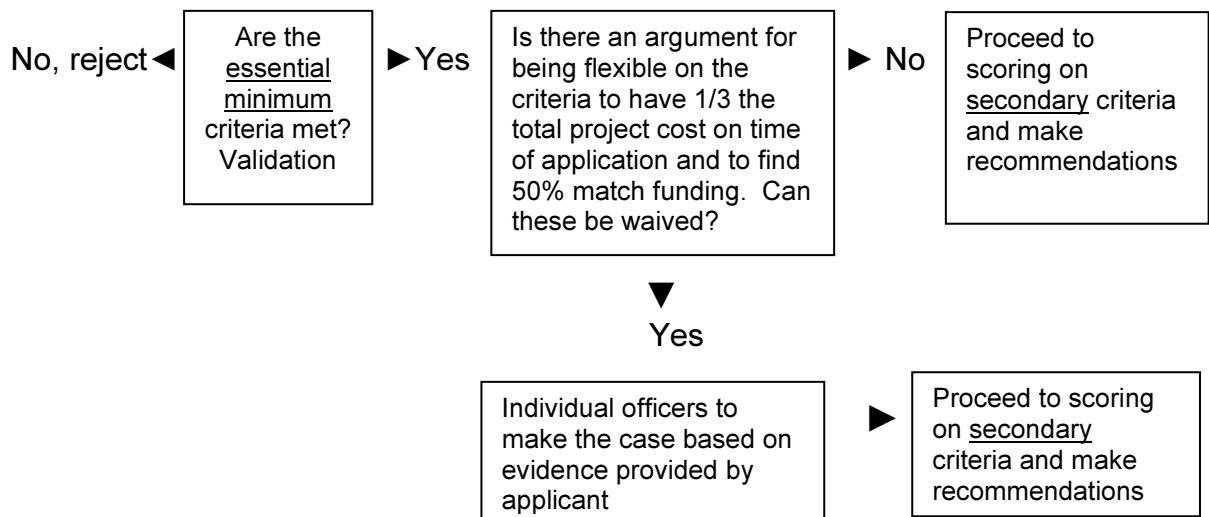
RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO EXISTING CRITERIA

Existing Secondary Criteria	Proposal
Help the council achieve its corporate priorities	Stays the same
Help the council achieve specifically identified priorities in the East Herts Together Community Strategy (2003)	Help the council achieve the themes and shared ambitions of the new East Herts Sustainable Community Strategy (2009-2024)
	A new preference of small, local community groups and charities.
Target excluded (disadvantaged) groups from the following list: people living in rural areas, people with a physical illness, people with a mental illness, older people, young people, ethnic minorities, people living in deprived areas, people with a disability, people with learning disabilities, unemployed people, people on low income, women and special interest groups.	<p>A new preference for projects that are directed at, or of particular relevance to, under-represented groups.</p> <p>And</p> <p>A renewed commitment to fund projects that are directed at, or of particular relevance to, people experiencing some type of deprivation (such as unemployment and income poverty, housing, living environment, access to services, education and skills, crime among others).</p>
Support those experiencing rural or other geographic disadvantage	A renewed commitment to fund projects that are directed at, or of particular relevance to, people living in an identified area of rural disadvantage.
Is a new application by an organisation that has not received council funding in the past	A new preference for first-time applicants.
Work with other relevant partners	A removal of the question in the application form that asks groups to provide evidence of partnership working.
Consult clients/service users to find out what they think about the service provided	Stays the same.
Show involvement with local people, in terms of donated voluntary labour	A higher weighting for the current criteria of use of voluntary labour.
	A new preference for applicants that are installing energy efficiency measures in their community buildings

PROPOSED VALIDATION PROCESS AND FLOW CHART

It is proposed that the Administration Team for Customer and Community Services takes on the role of conducting a formal assessment of whether submissions meet minimum criteria. If the answer is “No” to any of the questions below then the application is rejected.

- Does the project complement and take forward a Council priority?
- Does the project specifically help take forward one of the shared ambitions in the Sustainable Community Strategy? If so which one?
- Is the applicant serving residents of East Herts?
- Has all the required paperwork been included?
- Does the group have an open-door membership policy where services are open and accessible to all types of people?
- Is the applicant already a recipient of the same type (capital/revenue) of East Herts grant?
- For Community Planning Grants, is the Community Voice Chair in support of the project?
- Is the local Parish or Town Council in support of the project?
- Has evidence been supplied of properly managed accounts?
- Does the applicant appear to be in good financial health?
- Does the project appear to be viable?
- Is the one-third required in place? (Community Capital Scheme and PIF only). Refer to officer responsible for the scheme to determine if applicant qualifies for a waiver.



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