

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 25 JUNE 2013

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH, HOUSING AND
COMMUNITY SUPPORT

UPDATE ON COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMME

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This is a review of grant allocations for the period 1/10/12 to 31/3/13.

<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY SCRUTINY: That:</u>	
(A)	the Committee notes and supports the progress being made by Officers to allocate grants according to agreed policies;
(B)	approves the proposal that service organisations continue to be eligible to apply for a Christmas Party grant as long as they apply in partnership with the beneficiary organisation, if reasonably possible (Para 2.16);
(C)	confirms that grants should be awarded as a priority (Para 2.32) to capital projects that can be completed within the year; and
(D)	considers whether they would like the Hertfordshire Community Foundation to present information on “dormant funds” in East Herts (Para 3.1)

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Following a resolution by the Executive in 2012, it was agreed that Community Scrutiny would receive twice-yearly reports on community grant allocations. The purpose of community grants is to help take forward the Council's aims in people, place and prosperity.
- 1.2 The first report was received on 20 November 2012. This is the second report looking at the grants awarded between 1 October 2012 and 31 March 2013.
- 1.3 Members are asked to note that the total community capital budget for 2012/13 was £198,600. This included slippage from previous years.
- 1.4 The total revenue budget for 2012/13 was £53,490, including an additional amount of £10,000 from the New Homes Bonus for Jubilee and Olympic celebrations.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 During the second half of the financial year (1 October 2012 to 31 March 2013), 89 capital and revenue grants were awarded, totalling £33,229, as shown in the table below.

Theme	No. of requests	No. of grants awarded	Budget allocated
Summer Activities Fund 2012	0	0	0
Olympic/Jubilee Events	0	0	0
Christmas Parties (Senior Citizens and People with disabilities)	55	55	£3,264
Councillor Engagement	8	6	£469.52
Performance for Excellence	17	17	£4,100
Community Capital 2 nd round - rural	15	11	£25,395
Total	93	89	£33,229

- 2.2 This brings the total allocation for the financial year 12/13 through the Council's competitive grants programme to £135,269 – distributed to 193 different groups for a wide range of projects and services.
- 2.3 The Council's wishes to give some precedence in grant giving is to areas that have received little or no New Homes Bonus money. As all 5 towns and some of the larger villages have been passed significant funds through the building of new houses, the Council's policy is to first fund projects in the rural areas. Projects in the towns may be considered later in the year if the budget is unspent.
- 2.4 All applicants for a grant are required to obtain an endorsement for their project from their Ward Councillor. This provides an opportunity for Members to engage with volunteers who are providing support such as health and social care, leisure, recreational and other services to residents in their ward. Members are asked to be sure that they only endorse projects that are for residents living in their ward.
- 2.5 The next section of the report addresses each area of funding in more detail.
- 2.6 **Christmas Parties (Senior Citizens and people with disabilities)**
- 2.7 This pot provides small grants to organisations serving senior citizens and people with disabilities so that they can arrange parties during this holiday season. Parties are subsidised at the rate of £1 per person. Fifty-five grants were awarded to the following types of organisations:

Grass roots groups	20
Housing Association and Sheltered Housing Residents Associations based at (Circle Support = 10; Riversmead = 5; Genesis = 1)	17
Service organisations	2
Churches	2
Sports Club	1
Registered Charities	11
Registered Childrens Charity	1
Individual, not related to housing assn.	1
Total	55

- 2.8 The largest grant was awarded to Age Concern Ware which organised six parties for their various clubs including: dance, keep fit and whist at a cost of £295. The next largest grant went to Hertford Baptist Church (£185) to organise three parties for various groups in their congregation.
- 2.9 It is important to acknowledge that these events are platforms for the Council to engage with large groups of frail, elderly people on the Ageing Well and Health Inequalities agendas.
- 2.10 An evaluation of the programme was conducted and information reported in the Members Bulletin in January 2013. Of those who responded, the average age of those attending the events was 73 years and 1,460 people attended the various events.
- 2.11 Notably, 15 percent of respondents said they would not be able to run their event without Council funding. This included such groups as Stanstead Abbots and District Evergreen Club, Sele Senior Citizens, Walkern Over 60s Committee and Thundridge Cricket Club which organises an event for 100 senior citizens in Thundridge and surrounding villages.
- 2.12 Others said they would be able to hold an event without support from the Council, but this would mean the elderly guests would have to pay more and it may not be sustainable. One comment was that the “event would have to be on a reduced scale or with an extra contribution from members, which some might find difficult.”
- 2.13 Some of the comments received are listed below:

*“Our event has been run for 37 years – actively looked forward to – and can be one of the few times per year that some residents are able to meet up..”
Thundridge Cricket Club*

*“An opportunity to celebrate Christmas with other people. A large percentage of members live alone and wouldn’t otherwise have company.”
Thorley Open Door Senior Citizens*

“It gave them choice of what they wanted to do. For some, they usually keep themselves isolated. This was a chance for them to come out of their flats and join in. By doing this, it makes them feel better in themselves” - Circle Support, Ferndale Sheltered Scheme, Much Hadham

“Such occasions are a valuable therapy in combating depression which is a

frequent result of stroke.” - Hertford and Ware Stroke Club

- 2.14 In 2013/14, the long-running Christmas Party budget will be incorporated into a new revenue pot (Small Community Grants) and brought in line with Council policy on awarding revenue grants. All applicants can apply for £50 up to £500.
- 2.15 This policy states that "organisations can not pass a Council grant on to another organisation." Strict adherence to this policy means that certain applicants (e.g. service organisations) will become ineligible to apply.
- 2.16 It is suggested, therefore, that the Council makes an exception for service organisations. It is proposed that these organisations should be encouraged to move toward a partnership approach and submit a joint application with the beneficiary organisation, if reasonably possible (Recommendation B). In addition, the lead applicant must make it clear that a Council grant enabled the costs of the party to be reduced to members of the beneficiary organisation. Service organisations will still be able to apply for a grant to hold parties for their members who are senior citizens.
- 2.17 In the future, the Council will prioritise: parties that would not happen without Council support, parties where an informational talk is happening, and parties that take place on Christmas Day.
- 2.18 **Councillor Engagement**
- 2.19 In the second half of the year, six grants were awarded for public meetings and events that engaged the community. This included grants for:
- Hire of Hunsdon Village Hall for Police Liaison meeting (Cllr Newman)
 - “Meet Your Councillor” event (Cllrs Burlton, Hollebon and Wyllie)
 - Consultation on enhancements to Tudor Square, Ware (Cllr Bedford)
 - Presentation evening for Air Cadets, Ware (Cllr Warman)
 - Public meeting at Havers Community Centre on the conversion of local pub to a Tesco Store (Cllr Woodward)

- Support of BBQ for a residents association of John Dyde Close (Cllr Symonds)
- 2.20 Unfortunately, not all the grants were paid out as a number of events were cancelled or delayed.
- 2.21 This was a new grant product that took longer than anticipated to market. As a result, some of the underspend was used to top up the Christmas Party grant budget. A request has been submitted by the Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services to carry forward the remaining underspend in this budget into 13/14. It is considered that since the Localism agenda has been embedded and community engagement and leadership has been given a higher profile following the stimulus of peer challenge and the Action Learning Sets cohorts, the carry forward will be of benefit.
- 2.22 Of the requests that have been submitted but did not receive an allocation, this was because either the request did not fit the funding criteria or the event had already happened.
- 2.23 In 2013/14, this budget will be incorporated into the new Small Community Grant scheme. Members will be able to apply to run events that engage with the community.
- 2.24 **Performance to Excellence Grants (Sports and Arts)**
- 2.25 Seventeen applicants were funded from April 2012 to March 2013 and the entire budget of £4,100 allocated. Almost 50 percent were first-time applicants not previously funded and the bulk of the applications came from Ware and Hertford with two from Stanstead Abbots and one from Bishop's Stortford. Measures are in place to try and address the balance.
- 2.26 The type of sports funded included: golf, triathlon, cricket, badminton, squash, carriage driving, track & road cycling, swimming, basketball, and athletics with this athlete being talent spotted for the British Winter Olympic Bobsleigh Team 2014. Three applications for dance/arts were also funded.
- 2.27 **Community Capital (Rural Priority – Large and Small)**
- 2.28 In October 2012, the Council awarded £12,920 for six projects in rural East Herts. Four of these were for projects under £2,000

and the Council awarded full funding. These projects included the purchase of play and sports/leisure equipment and replacement of a roof in a recreational centre. Of these six projects, four have already completed and claimed their grant well within the time limit.

- 2.29 As per policy, Officers deferred applications for projects in the towns until later in the year. In January 2013, five grants were awarded to these town-based projects, totalling £12,475. The projects included a kitchen refurbishment, flooring and lighting in a sports club, portable lights and new lightweight stackable chairs for an arts centre. Further details on these projects, which were in Sawbridgeworth, Bishop's Stortford, Ware and Hertford, can be found on www.eastherts.gov.uk/grants
- 2.30 Over five years ago, the Council changed its policy on how long successful applicants have to fundraise, complete the project and claim their grants from three years to one year. This deadline can be extended in special circumstances where the delay is beyond the applicant's control.
- 2.31 In practice, this means that the Council is more likely to fund projects where the Council's grant completes or almost completes the applicant's fundraising target. As a result in January 2013, two applications for very large capital building projects were turned down as Officers considered it unrealistic that they would be completed within the required time limit – due to the significant amount of money still to be raised. It was considered there was a risk that grant money could be tied up in projects that took a long time to happen.
- 2.32 Members are asked to confirm that that they would like Officers to continue to implement this policy (Recommendation C).
- 2.33 Other deferred town-based applications were withdrawn from consideration at the request of the applicant because they had obtained the funding they needed from another source.
- 2.34 Since 2010, successful applicants have been required to submit a monitoring form detailing the outcomes of a capital grants project. An analysis of the feedback received shows that Council grants enable volunteers to improve usage of buildings and ensure services are fit-for-purpose but also serve as a catalyst to spur the community on to achieve more. The following is a selection of

written feedback received. This type of information is regularly included in Members Bulletin.

*“The grant towards the project by the Council has been a great boost to the community. The continuing work has created great interest in the village and it has brought people together to offer their help in a multitude of ways. For example : Retired people have been offering their services for no charge. Machinery has been lent at no charge. Someone has offered to pay the labour for a local lad who is deaf to plaster the interior walls. Gravel has been delivered to the site at no charge. **Benington Village Hall – Awarded £10,000 from the Community Capital 2012/13***

*“We spent the money on a new Tamper Unit for the childrens play area. Children are playing together of mixed ages, grand parents are enjoying watching the children play. Teenage children helped us remove equipment. This project has brought the communities together. The whole village is thrilled that our small rural community has the latest up to date play equipment.” **Bramfield Village Hall Management Committee – Awarded £9,005 from Community Capital 12/13***

*“This grant has been used to buy 18 lockers for the changing rooms at Ware Lido Out Door Pool. Before this grant, Ware Lido had no lockers and swimmers had to leave their possessions on the poolside. The provision of lockers has made the Lido a more attractive facility for people to use.” **The Priory Charity – Awarded £1,000 from Community Planning 11/12***

*“The grant has been used to purchase five laptops, together with relevant software, mice, power supplies and cases.....Our most unique event will be to enable all our clients to renew their bus passes online. None of this would have been possible without... the EHDC grant. The arrival of this equipment has enabled local people with little or no experience of the internet to gain competence and proficiency in a technology which ever more impacts our lives in the 21st century.” **High Wych Memorial Hall IT café – Awarded £2,000 from Community Capital 12/13***

*The grant has been used to contribute to the cost of refurbishment of toilets at the scout hut inclusive of providing a disabled toilet, refurbishment of the kitchen area to provide full kitchen facilities including cooker and fridge and ‘catering style’ sink to allow catering for the many users of the building. Windows have been replaced to provide a warmer and brighter environment. Without the grant, we wouldn’t have been able to improve the facilities or environment of the building. Moreover, by doing so it has highlighted the poor state of the rest of the building leading to a ‘volunteers weekend.’ **1st Bishops Stortford and Hockerill Scout Group – Awarded up to £8,920 from Community Capital 2011/12***

- 2.35 For many applicants, it is the first time they have applied for a grant. Thus, when they are successful, it gives them a degree of confidence to apply to other grant-making bodies.

2.36 **Grant to Local Giving charity**

2.37 The Council has recently commissioned the charity Localgiving.com to offer 30 small, local voluntary and community groups in East Herts a free subscription to the site. Training on how to fundraise online will also be provided. The purpose of this new initiative is to encourage groups to identify alternative funding sources and reduce their dependency on grants. For more details on this initiative see www.eastherts.gov.uk/grants. Currently, there are very few East Herts groups on the site www.localgiving.com but the Council is hoping this initiative will change that.

3.0 **Other sources of funding for small, local groups**

3.1 As well as the Council's direct grants, Members may also be interested to hear about work to identify "dormant" funds and how these monies can be released to benefit groups in East Herts. Members are asked to consider whether a presentation on this topic by the Hertfordshire Community Foundation (HCF) would be of interest (Recommendation D)

3.2 An example of this type of fund is the East Herts Fund for the Future. The aim of the endowment fund is to build a growing, lasting source of support for charities and voluntary groups doing valuable work in the community of East Herts and to meet the most pressing needs of the District.

3.3 Officers are currently working with Cllr Mayes, whose late husband Cllr Derek Mayes started up the fund, and HCF to identify how the capital can be increased so that more money is available to allocate. The current value of the Fund is approximately £43,000 – 4% of this can be awarded each year, resulting in a grant budget of £1,682.

3.4 Town and Parish Councils are also sources of small amounts of funding and applicants to the Council are expected to approach their town or parish for a grant at the same time they apply for a grant from the district. It is Council policy not to fund projects that are considered to be the main responsibility of another statutory body.

4.0 Marketing/Publicity

- 4.1 In the past 12 months, uptake from the media in regards to local grants has been positive, but not as strong as it could be. Eight press releases were picked up and used in the relevant papers, against 15 that were sent out, giving a success rate of just over 50 percent.
- 4.2 Five of these were printed in the last three to four months, with the others being spread out over the eight month period before that.
- 4.3 Actions have been taken to improve uptake and recently a member of the communications team met with a reporter on Herts Mercury editorial team. It was agreed that all grant press releases will be sent directly to her, hopefully ensuring an improved rate of successfully printed articles. Since this arrangement was made, two grant press releases have been sent to her, both of which were used, with reminders being printed in the following issue.
- 4.4 Availability of community grants are also promoted through our website, social media services, and Link magazine and stakeholder partners such as the East Herts and Broxbourne Council's for Voluntary Service, Active East Herts Community Sports Network, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Community Foundation.
- 4.5 Announcements are also sent via email to Parish Chairman and Parish Clerks and groups on the Engagement and Partnerships' database. Members are notified of grant deadlines through the Members Bulletin.

5.0 Implications/Consultations

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

Background Papers - None

Contact Member: Councillor Linda Haysey, Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support
linda.haysey@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer: Will O'Neill, Head of Communications, Community
Engagement and Cultural Services
01992531594
will.oneill@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author: Claire Pullen, Engagement and Partnerships Officer
(Grants)
claire.pullen@eastherts.gov.uk