

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 20 NOVEMBER 2012

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH, HOUSING AND
COMMUNITY SUPPORT

UPDATE ON COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMME 2012

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This is a progress report on the Community Grants programme, following the amendments made to policy by the Executive on 10 January 2012.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY SCRUTINY: That:

(A)	the Committee notes and supports the progress being made by Officers to allocate grants according to the new policies
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1.0 Background

1.1 Following recommendations made by Community Scrutiny Committee, the Executive resolved that the following would be created:

- A) a one-off Jubilee and Olympic Fund;
- B) a general community capital pot – rather than several separate Pots;
- C) a simpler application process for projects costing less than £2,000 – sign off still the responsibility of the Director.

1.2 It was also agreed that the scoring process for projects estimated to cost more than £2,000 would continue and that Officers would meet to review previously funded projects and report on a twice yearly basis to Community Scrutiny. This is the first of such reports.

- 1.3 As a result of these policy changes, the total community capital budget for 2012/13 is £198,600 including slippage.
- 1.4 The total revenue budget for 2012/13 is £49,390, including an additional amount of £10,000 from New Homes Bonus for Jubilee and Olympic celebrations.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 During the first two quarters of the financial year (1 April to 30 Sept), 104 capital and revenue grants were awarded, totalling £102,040, as shown in the table below.

Theme	No. of requests	No. of grants awarded	Total budget allocated
Summer Activities	26	25	£24,947
Olympic / Jubilee	74	67	£17,790
Community Capital Large & Small 1 st round - rural	20	8	£59,186
Councillor Engagement	7	4	£117
Performance for Excellence (Arts & Sports)	0	0	0
Total	127	104	£102,040

- 2.2 The next section of the report addresses each area of funding in more detail, including reasons why some applications are not successful.

2.3 **Summer Activities**

- 2.4 This grant pot is to provide activities for five to 19 olds and is administered in partnership with Broxbourne and East Herts Council for Voluntary Service (CVSBEH). This programme was oversubscribed; the total amount requested was £36,111 from a budget of £25,000.

- 2.5 Twenty-five grants were awarded, nine to first-time applicants. The table below shows a breakdown of successful applicants.

Type of organisation	No. receiving a grant
Organisations working with disability and vulnerable groups	5
Sports organisations	7
Holiday clubs	4
Art organisations	2
Theatre	2
Organisations specifically working with 12 to 19 year olds	2
Other	3
Total	25

- 2.6 One application was unsuccessful because Officers considered that it a weak bid for small numbers of participants and did not fit into the spirit of the programme. In order to keep to budget, the grant panel part-funded most applicants. One applicant turned down the offer of a grant because they considered they could not go ahead with the activity unless they were fully funded.
- 2.7 More than 2,980 different children and young people took part in these grant-funded activities. This is up from the 2,268 who attended in 2011.
- 2.8 A priority of the programme is to maintain a geographic balance of provision. See the breakdown below – some organisations cover multiple areas.

Villages	5
Bishops Stortford	5
Hertford	6
Ware	3
Sawbridgeworth	2
Buntingford	1
District-wide	4

- 2.9 Monitoring of the scheme showed that organisations providing sports activities exceeded their predicted target numbers of participants. For example Standon and Puckeridge Tennis Club predicted that 80 children and young people would attend – 132 attended taking part in a week of tennis on newly refurbished courts. Hertford Museum's Animal Roadshow had double the attendance they predicted. Holidays Clubs, Theatre groups, Arts

and teenage provision just missed their target.

2.10 Some feedback comments are listed below:

"I was able to continue working during the holidays knowing that my son was in a safe place and having fun. The staff were lovely, really friendly. He was a bit nervous at first but they were so friendly he soon settled."

"They enjoyed the opportunity to explore new activities that they would not normally do at home. They liked mixing with other children and making new friends. It was a chance to have supervised play away from the home environment, "free" from mum and dad but still supervised, monitored and supported. It allowed them to develop a degree of independence and provided something to look forward to during the summer holidays."

"About time Hornsmill got some attention for children. A fantastic service that brings the community together. A big thank you to the staff who are fantastic with the children and parents. My children are now 14 (twins), a few more excursions with this age group would be good. Once again, thanks."

2.11 Following a meeting between the CVSBEH Officer and the Engagement and Partnerships (Grants) Officer and Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support, it was agreed that the programme would continue to encourage participation from a wider selection of voluntary and sports groups and encourage more voluntary organisations to deliver activities in partnership with schools and through Active East Herts (Community Sports Network).

2.12 **Jubilee and Olympics celebrations**

2.13 This was a very popular one off grant programme. It was more than three times oversubscribed its original budget of £6,400 and attracted many first-time applicants. The positive response resulted in New Homes Bonus money being used to top up the budget to £17,790.

2.14 Of the 67 grants awarded, 12 went to groups specifically supporting older people and vulnerable children, such as Childrens' Integrated Play Schemes (CHIPS) and Over 60s Clubs. The grants were given towards the costs of organising events that would bring people together in a fun, friendly way, and contribute

to a sense of community and neighbourliness. The table shows a breakdown of successful applicants:

Type of organisation	No. receiving a grant
Residents groups	18
Parish council	12
Village hall/recreation committee	10
Charities	6
School partnerships	5
Older person's groups	5
Other	4
Friends of groups	3
Church	2
Business	2
Total	67

2.15 Applications that were unsuccessful were those where Officers considered that the grant would not make a significant difference and that the event would go ahead without a grant from this authority.

2.16 Most of the events organised were Jubilee themed. The breakdown geographically is as follows:

Villages	33
Bishops Stortford	11
Hertford	11
Ware	8
Sawbridgeworth	3
Buntingford	1
Total	67

2.17 If applicants achieved their estimated targets, it is possible that this grant programme reached 18,000 people in East Herts.

2.18 An evaluation of the programme resulted in positive feedback and the indication that many hundreds of volunteers organised the events. For example, Wodson Park Trust involved 90 volunteers from nine community groups and 12 volunteers from local charities to help put on its "have a go" event, which reportedly increased attendance at Active Senior classes and applications

from children to join the gymnastics club. Some feedback is listed below:

“...outdoor events like the old fashion sports and fun run attracted in excess of 60 competitors... The Come and Try it approach was particularly successful in the children and seniors section. One of the best things about the Family Fun Day was the number of people who said they didn't realise just how much happens at Wodson Park or who had never visited before.”

“It is easier to stop and talk to someone . . . when you know their name and have the shared experience of a party.”

“A real celebration that has produced friendships, social groups and support networks.”

2.19 **Community Capital (Large and Small)**

2.20 The first funding round in June was oversubscribed with requests totalling £114,928. Of the 20 applications, eight were successful and grants were awarded to village hall management committees and a parish council.

2.21 Of the remaining 12, ten applications were for projects in the towns and these, in line with the policy of priority to applicants in rural areas, were deferred until after the second funding round in October. Two applications were considered ineligible because they were already in receipt of a capital grant from the Council. In the past, applications have been unsuccessful for other reasons including:

- Project is outside the Council's funding criteria
- No evidence of need or community support/consultation
- Project is the responsibility of a statutory organisation
- Project has already started
- Project is to benefit a building for which the applicant does not have a long-term lease
- Free reserves are too large, no financial need demonstrated

2.22 Since 2010, successful applicants have been required to submit a monitoring form detailing the outcomes of the project. This information is regularly posted in the Members Bulletin. Some of the comments are as follows:

“My daughter enjoys the walk and wooden carvings. The whole area has been opened up, good for local children and the community.....” Quote from local resident on woodland access project in the Pines Woodland

“The viability of the hall has been maintained...school meals can continue; health and safety addressed.” Albury Village Hall

“The new fence completes our communal garden area. This enables children to play securely and safely from the road. Older and disabled residents benefit from good access via the path and can enjoy a newly installed garden bench. The new fence also improves the appearance of the area and matches the rest of the development.” Dixons Court Residents Association

“Members have found the introduction of this equipment to be of great value. The process of unrolling and re rolling heavy carpets has always been a problem due largely to the age and declining health of many members, and the weight of the carpets themselves. The equipment the Council have very kindly granted aid for has most certainly relieved this situation, and enable the strain to be taken by the equipment rather than the backs of members.” Hertford Heath Bowls Club

“This grant helped us replace a very old piece of play equipment..... To save money we had a working party of 10 people help remove the old equipment. I have seen grandparents, mums and dads chatting together while the children play, it has really brought the whole community together. The whole village is thrilled that this small rural community has the latest up to date play equipment.” - Bramfield Village Hall

“To be able to continue using the facilities - as the fencing was a health and safety risk. The provision of this grant enabled the club to secure funding from Sport England so that all the fencing could be replaced thus ensuring the club’s future for a long time.” Standon & Puckeridge Tennis Club

“The equipment and items purchased have been very useful and essential to the smooth running of Safety Net. We would have found it very difficult to accomplish certain tasks without this funding.” Safety Net, mental health charity

2.23 Payment of a large grant is subject to a site inspection on completion.

2.24 Applicants for capital grants tend to be submitted from the same organisations year after year, usually those that have premises, the required match funding and the skills and capacity among volunteers. The new application for projects under £2,000 has partially addressed this problem as the Council is able to fully fund the project. Both organisations that received a small capital grant had not applied to the Council in the recent past.

2.25 New this year is a condition that all grant applications are endorsed by the local Ward Councillor.

2.26 Councillor Engagement

2.27 This is a new pot that Members can use to engage with their residents and run public meetings to discuss local issues. For more details and Guidance Notes go to this link:

www.eastherts.gov.uk/councillorenagementgrants

2.28 To date, seven requests have been submitted and grants have been awarded for:

- Hire of a hall by Newton Residents Association in Bishops Stortford to discuss Circle Living's proposal to demolish garages on Trinity Way and build flats. 60 people attended. (Cllr Norma Symonds).
- Hire of a Watton at Stone Community Hall for a public meeting to discuss the planting of a Jubilee Wood by the Abel Smith Estate and interested volunteers. 50 people attended a meeting on 14 September. More details can be found on www.woodhallestate.co.uk (Cllr Nigel Poulton).
- Hire of Priory Charity for a meeting to discuss the future of the Musley School and to form a residents action group in order to create a community facility. (Cllr Malcolm Alexander).

2.29 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 consultation had already happened.

2.30 This pot is proving difficult to spend. Members are encouraged to take advantage of the funding. If a grant is to be made for the hire of a hall or to pay for publicity, payment will be made directly to the supplier on submission of invoices. If a Councillor uses the

grant for refreshments for the meeting, this will be reimbursed to the individual via payroll.

2.31 General notes

2.32 Across the grants programme the Council is keen to award grants to a wide range of different groups, especially those that have not applied before. Members can help by:

- Encouraging groups to speak to Grants Officer, Community Engagement Team, before submitting an application;
- Advising that groups read the **Guidance Notes** before completing application and visit the advice page on the Council's webpage, <http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=10146>;
- Advising that groups must be able to demonstrate need or community support for the project and explaining that the Council might be able to help with this through the Councillor Engagement Grant www.eastherts.gov.uk/councillorengagementgrants
- Referring groups to Council Officers or the CVSBEH if they need guidance on how to constitute themselves or need support on completing the application form
- Reminding groups that the budget for grants has reduced so they might wish to consider exploring other funding sources. Suggest that they visit Herts County Council's Funding Information Gateway on <http://www.hertsdirect.org/your-community/funding/>
- Referring volunteers on village hall management committee to the East Herts Village Hall Network, next meeting is Thursday, 10 January 2013 at Aston Village Hall, 1.30pm.
- Writing articles for newsletters or tweeting about the availability of grants

2.33 Members are asked to note the success of the community grants and the wide variety of applicants but also to note gaps in the type of groups that apply and to consider how they intend to spend their Councillor Engagement grant.

3.0 Implications/Consultations

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

Background Papers

None.

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