

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 28 JUNE 2016

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

ANNUAL REPORT ON DISCRETIONARY COMMUNITY GRANTS
PROGRAMME 2015/2016

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This is an update and review of grants allocated between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016.
- The report also seeks the approval of the Executive to changes in the Grants Policy to support new corporate priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY SCRUTINY:

That:

(A)	changes to the Grants Policy as set out in Essential Reference Paper 'B' which now support new corporate priorities, be recommended for approval by the Executive.
(B)	the maximum amount for a Community Activities grant be immediately increased from £500 to £1,500 (as detailed in paragraph 2.19)

1.0 Background

1.1 In June 2014, Community Scrutiny agreed it would receive an annual grants report to coincide with the grant giving cycle. The committee requested that a mid-year update be included in the Member's Information Bulletin.

1.2 The purpose of grant giving is so that the Council can facilitate improved health and wellbeing, sports, cultural and civic opportunities and bring about positive change at the local level – supporting the efforts of the many volunteers in East Herts. A copy of the updated policy can be found in **Essential Reference**

Paper 'B.' Priorities for grant giving are listed in Section 3.0 of this policy.

1.3 Grant giving most often contributes to non-statutory activities within the council's new priority actions of:

- Residents living active and healthy lives
- Support for our vulnerable families and individuals
- Communities engaged in local issues
- Attractive places
- Vibrant town centres

1.4 Managed by the Engagement and Partnerships team, the discretionary grants programme also addresses key issues identified in the East Herts Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2013-2018).

1.5 Members are asked to note that the discretionary grants budget available for allocation in 2015/2016 was £138,700. An additional £7,393 of capital became available for reallocation when a project could not go ahead.

1.6 Last year, the committee agreed to relax certain eligibility criteria to ensure that grants were made available to as wide a range of eligible groups as possible with a focus on reaching out to smaller groups who have not had funding from the council before. A mini grants scheme was established.

2.0 Report

2.1 During 2015/16 financial year, 150 capital and revenue grants were awarded. This is up from the 131 last year. The table below provides a breakdown of awards

Area of funding	No. of requests	No. of grants awarded	Budget
Summer Activities	21	21	£25,000
Community Activities	103	82	£29,600
Performance to Excellence	19	19	£4,100
Community Capital	41	28	£80,000

2.2 Both the capital and revenue grants budgets were fully spent.

2.3 The following table shows the types of activities funded in 15/16. Members are asked to consider the allocations in context of the district's demographics and whether they consider there to be any gaps.

Activity	Number awarded	Amount
Support to or provision of sports and physical activity only, including any specifically for vulnerable residents	13	£10,066
Support for one-day community events, including any specifically for vulnerable residents (Victory in Europe & Silver Sunday celebrations) and summer activities	48	£16,195
Sports, play equipment	7	£14,950
Childrens Play Schemes - high volume	5	£3,164
Support to or provision of arts, culture, education, leisure, community services and summer activities for children and young people	16	£10,680
Support for vulnerable residents	16	£13,299
Development of young athletes	19	£4,100
Training of volunteers	4	£1,080
Upgrade/refurbishment of community facility	8	£38,685
Items of equipment to improve efficiency of a community facility and/or community infrastructure (CCTV)	14	£31,899

2.4 The council's preference in grant giving is to areas that have received little or no New Homes Bonus (NHB) money. As all five towns have been passed a significant amount of funds through the building of new houses, the council's policy is to first fund projects in the rural areas. This preference relates to capital projects only.

- 2.5 Policy also requires that applicants obtain an endorsement for their project from the East Herts councillor representing the area mainly being served. If this is not provided, the application will not be considered for a grant. This endorsement reassures Officers that the group is bona fide. Feedback from applicants about this process was generally good, though there were some who found councillors hard-to-reach.
- 2.6 The next section of the report addresses each area of funding in more detail.
- 2.7 **Summer Activities (sports and play)** – The intent of the fund is to provide fun and exciting activities for children and young people over the summer holidays that support their personal, emotional and adolescent development. The most common use of the grant was bringing in extra “specialised” staff with the added value of helping organisations build their reputation and increase membership.
- 2.8 Twenty-one grants (up from 16 last year) were awarded to registered charities, sports clubs, village hall management committees and school partnerships.
- 2.9 The mid-year report in the 28 November 2015 Member’s Bulletin has more details on this area of funding.
- 2.10 **Community Activities** – The intent of this fund is to support voluntary and community groups whose work at the neighbourhood level enhances the quality of life for residents in East Herts, especially those who are vulnerable or who need more support than others.
- 2.11 The total number of grants awarded in this area was 82. The majority of grants were awarded to organisations that are reliant on volunteers to raise funds and deliver activities. Of the grants awarded, 22 were mini-grants of £200 or less.
- 2.12 Eight grants (10%) were awarded to organisations that either had never applied to the council before or had not received a grant in the past five years.
- 2.13 More than 100 groups applied to this scheme and 82 received a grant; resulting in a success rate of approximately 80%. The scheme was oversubscribed by £10,000.

2.14 The reasons funding was not approved varied but ranged from: the organisation was a commercial organisation or had already received a general revenue grant from the council; the activity/organisation was not a priority or not in financial need or the application was incomplete or requesting a grant for a capital item rather than operational costs.

2.15 A geographic breakdown of grant allocations is shown below:

Location	Number of grants	Percentage
Rural	34	41%
Bishop's Stortford	19	23%
Buntingford	6	7%
Hertford	13	16%
Ware	3	4%
Sawbridgeworth	6	7%
All	1	2%

2.16 From information provided by applicants, it is estimated that more than 14,176 individuals benefitted from the Community Activities Grants pot. This does not include those that said their projects benefitted the general public.

2.17 This fund addressed health and wellbeing issues by awarding

- 9 grants that provided support to or provision of sports and physical activity sessions, plus two grants for sports/play equipment
- 45 grants that supported one-day events – many of which encouraged use of green open spaces and healthy activities
- 10 grants that enhanced provision of arts, cultural, educational, leisure and community service at the neighbourhood level
- 12 grants that were specifically directed at supporting vulnerable residents (health inequalities)
- 4 grants that trained up volunteers (capacity building)

2.18 A full list of grants can be found on www.eastherts.gov.uk/grants and includes such groups as: Hormead Parish Council, Mind in Herts, Buntingford Tennis Club and Holy Trinity Night Shelter in Bishop's Stortford.

2.19 Officers recommend that the maximum grant be increased to £1,000 so that there is the ability to fund innovative projects that promote health and wellbeing and sustained lifestyle change and, at the same time, reduce the administration burden of paying out so many small grants.

2.20 **Performance to Excellence Grants (Sports and Arts)** – This long standing programme is geared to helping 11 to 18 year olds who live in the district to achieve excellence in their chosen area of either sports or arts. In total, 19 grants were awarded to young people for such sports as athletics, badminton and football. This pot was also oversubscribed, resulting in some applicants receiving £100 instead of the full £250.

2.21 Members are asked to note that this grant pot supports exceptional sporting talent and it is not unusual for the council to support a young athlete over several years as many continue to develop and go on from county level to national and sometimes international competitions.

2.22 A geographic breakdown of grant allocations is shown below:

Location	Number of grants	Percentage
Rural	5	26%
Bishop's Stortford	4	21%
Buntingford	0	0%
Hertford	2	11%
Ware	7	37%
Sawbridgeworth	1	5%

2.23 **Community Capital (Large and Small)** - The intent of this scheme is to support renovation/refurbishment of well-used community facilities or the purchase of large items of equipment to improve these facilities. The maximum grant that can be awarded is 10% of the total available budget (£80,000).

2.24 In 2015/16, the council awarded 28 grants to projects benefitting residents in East Herts – nine large grants and 19 small of £2,000 or less. Since the scheme was oversubscribed by £38,400, applications were assessed to identify those that most closely met the council's strategic objectives, would make the most difference to participants or the community and could be achieved in the one year time frame.

- 2.25 Agreed policy is that organisations that have not applied before are a priority. Eight grants (29%) were to organisations that either had never applied to the council before or had not received a grant in the past five years.
- 2.26 Forty-one applications were submitted to the council under this scheme – 28 were awarded a grant; resulting in a 68% success rate. Requests for grants were turned down either because applications were incomplete, there was no evidence of consultation/community support, the amount of money still to raise within the time frame was unrealistic, the project was not a priority for the council, there was not enough evidence of need or the organisation had already received a capital grant from the council in the financial year.
- 2.27 Grant giving was spread around the district with at least one grant awarded in each town. Sawbridgeworth topped the list with three grants. Projects in 18 villages received grants (64%). As per policy, applications for projects in the towns were deferred until after consideration of rural applications. This year 10 grants (36%) were awarded to projects in the towns including Ware Drill Hall and Bishop's Stortford Shopmobility.
- 2.28 From information provided in applications, it is estimated that more than 63,207 residents of East Herts benefitted from these grant-funded projects. This does not include those that said their projects benefitted the general public.
- 2.29 This fund addressed health and wellbeing issues by awarding
- 5 grants for sports/play equipment – all encouraged use of green open spaces and healthy activities
 - 1 grant that specifically supported vulnerable residents
 - 8 grants for upgrade/refurbishment of a community facility – ensuring a fit-for-purpose place for people to meet
 - 14 grants to improve efficiency of community facilities – indirectly supporting the provision of arts, educational, leisure and cultural activities
- 2.30 A full list of awards is on www.eastherts.gov.uk/grants and includes such groups as Action to Benefit the Community, Future Hope, Hertford Heath Parish Council and Much Hadham Recreational Trust.

2.31 Members might be interested to know that a report on rural isolation, which was submitted to Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny on the 14 June, recommended that grant funding be used to fund local initiatives such as good neighbour schemes. The report also stated that targeting grant giving at geographic areas that are less well served in terms of community facilities would help address rural isolation.

2.32 **East Herts Community Health and Wellbeing Fund Phase 1 14/15 (Herts County Council public health district offer; £200,000 over two years)**

2.33 At Community Scrutiny last year, it was asked that an update on funding from this area be included in this report. The aim of this programme, which is administered by the Environmental Health Promotion Officer, is to provide a way in which healthy lifestyle outcomes can be improved for East Herts communities by targeting specific areas of health inequality.

2.34 In early 2015, the Executive agreed that £200,000 would be set aside to match fund the public health offer from Herts County Council. Officers are currently awaiting further clarification on specific criteria for the allocation of this fund.

2.35 As part of the wider scheme, a small grants pot of £10,000 was established to support local organisations delivering mental health or physical activity outcomes through a minimum six-week intervention. Ten awards were given including school sensory garden, physical activity trail and youth café.

2.36 A Members Working Group was set up by the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee in June 2015 to visit projects and bring them to “life” for the committee. As of February 2016, six projects had been visited and further visits are planned; all received a positive endorsement.

2.37 Details of these 10 projects plus the 11 funded through the strategic pot can be found in Appendix 1.

2.38 Monitoring and Feedback

2.39 Since 2010, applicants have been required to submit a monitoring form detailing the outcomes of grant award. Thirty-three surveys were received and 19 said they would not have been able to go

ahead with the project without the council's support. The following is a selection of feedback received.

"The grant enabled me to run a weekly chair-based exercise class for 20 senior citizens... it is also an opportunity to meet others for companionship to alleviate loneliness. We finish with refreshments. Some of those who come have been encouraged to come to our monthly luncheon club." Hertford St Andrews Church, £398 for activity club for seniors

"...To us as a management committee this means we have hopefully eradicated the chances of the rear roof being vandalised. This means that rather than spend money on repairs we can look toward buying new play equipment and concentrating on enhancing the inside of the building. The new fence is a great enhancement to the site and was long overdue..." Sawbridgeworth Young People's Recreation Committee, £4,229 toward fencing around the building

"...The grant was the foundation for cross community action" Datchworth Sports Club, £500 for a cabinet to hold a defibrillator on village green.

"We took a playground where some equipment was over 30 years old and turned it into an amazing community resource with a range of equipment for children of all ages and abilities in bright colours. The opening event was attended by more than 150 children; rave reviews. The playground is a roaring success and has been used from sun up to sun down over the Easter holidays....Has created a real "heart" in our community...." Hertford Heath Parish Council, £8,000 to redevelop playground, matched funding from parish council, Riversmead Housing and Awards for All.

"We organised a New Year Tea Party with musical entertainment for seniors from the village. This gave many the opportunity of much-needed social contact. Also purchased selection of board games for our afternoon social meetings. Here is a comment from an attendee: "It was lovely to meet people I hadn't seen for a long time....the arrangement for transport was wonderful. I loved singing along to the well-known songs performed by the Walkern Players." Walkern and Sandon United Reform Church £200 for 1-day event

"The application process caused Furniture Friends to become more structured: a written constitution has been drawn up and financial control improved." Datchworth Furniture Friends £500 for furniture recycling scheme

3.0 Fundraising Online

3.1 This scheme, set up two years ago, provided 29 free subscriptions to online fundraising charity www.Localgiving.com.

3.2 The purpose of this initiative was to encourage voluntary and community groups to explore other ways to raise money, awareness and support online, thus helping reduce their

dependence on grants. All groups requesting a grant from the council and awarded a grant are informed about this opportunity.

3.3 To date, 21 groups have joined Localgiving. A total of £17,230.38 has been raised by those groups. Five of the groups are still active members – Herts Aid, Celtic Harmony, Learners Community Library, Carers in Hertfordshire and Thorn Grove Primary School PTA. Six subscriptions are still available to voluntary groups in East Herts.

4.0 East Herts Community Chest (formerly East Herts Fund for the Future)

4.1 In May 2014, the Executive agreed a recommendation proposing that a new operating partnership between East Herts Council and the Hertfordshire Community Foundation (HCF) be established to make this fund more effective. This partnership ensures a closer involvement of the chairman and vice chairman of the council to aid in fundraising and assessment of grants.

4.2 During 2015/2016 the chairman of the council and others helped raise money for the East Herts Community Chest. The total amount of donations received to the fund during this year was **£1,788.98**. This includes:

- **£1,189** that was received in relation to the 14/15 campaign. These funds were taken into consideration when awarding the 14/15 grants and it was agreed at the panel the remainder would be returned to the endowment fund to help build the capital.
- **£600** was received between July 2015 and 31st March 2016 in relation to the 15/16 campaign.

As per policy agreed with a Member Steering Group in 14/15, 25% of donations will go toward building up the endowment and the remaining 75% will be made available for grant giving.

4.3 Applications to the fund were opened in November 2015 with a view to awarding grants in March 2016. Due to the small number of requests received, the application deadline was extended. In the end, the applications were assessed at HCF, approved in principle by the HCF grants panel and sent out to EHC panel members (including the 15/16 Chair, Vice Chair and EHC Engagement and Partnerships Officer) by email in May 2016 for final consideration and approval. A total of £2,472 was distributed

by way of five grants to organisations that most closely met the fund's priorities. A full report of the Fund's performance and grants made will be sent to EHC later in the year.

5.0 Communications

5.1 In the last half of 15/16 financial year, uptake from the media in regards to local grants was positive. In the period September 2015 to March 2016, four press releases relating to grants were sent out and picked up online as well as on social media, with three of them being used in the relevant papers, giving a publication rate of 75%."

5.2 Information about the availability of grants was posted on the council's website and other partners' websites. Members were informed about the various funding rounds via Members Information Bulletin and dedicated emails as well as to subscribers of the Network newsletter and subscribers to Grants/Press releases and Community News bulletins via Gov.Delivery.

5.3 Link Magazine featured the following grants information:

- September 2015 – Availability of Capital Grants featuring Anstey skate ramp and availability of PEX Grants featuring budding actress Gabriella Morgan and also a general notice re the availability of Community activity Grants
- Winter 2015 – Availability of Capital Grants featuring new kitchen at Future Living and availability of PEX Grants featuring ballerina Sarah Budd and snowboarder Mikey Searing. Community Activity Grants were publicised featuring the Silver Sunday events. Summer Activities funded with Summer Activities grants were also featured.
- Spring 2016 – Moving Mums were on the front cover with a feature inside about the scheme funded by a Health and Community Wellbeing Fund Grant. Applications were welcomed for Community Activity grants for Queen's birthday celebrations. There was also an appeal for organisations to apply for summer activities grants

5.4 The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 came into effect on 6 August 2014 and, as per this legislation, information on grant decisions is made available on the website.

This also meets requirements for the new Local Government Transparency Code.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 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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