

EXECUTIVE 30th September 2021

Report Title	Community Funding Policy – Grants up to £25,000
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Executive Member	Executive Member for Housing & Communities, Councillor Andy Mercer

Key Decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1974	

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Community Funding Policy – Grants up to £25,000

Appendix B – Outline of the funding criteria from predecessor authorities

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To seek approval from the Executive for the Community Funding Policy – Grants up to £25,000 for North Northamptonshire Council.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The purpose of the report is to seek approval from the Executive for the Community Funding Policy – Grants up to £25,000.
- 2.2 Prior to Vesting Day, each District and Borough had their own policy and procedures for distributing small grants on an annual basis to support either individual, sport and community groups or capital works.

- 2.3 This report proposes the introduction of a North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) approach to distributing available funding in a fair, efficient and effective manner.
- 2.4 This policy is to cover the distribution of small grants, up to £25,000, following the receipt of applications on a quarterly basis and assessed against the policy criteria.
- 2.5 At this time, it is envisaged that grants distributed during the current financial year will be up to a maximum of £5,000. However, the policy has been developed to allow scope in future financial years to consider greater funding to local community groups.
- 2.6 Future work will include the development of a voluntary sector (Communities) strategy and a policy and procedure will be developed, in line with NNC's standing orders, for the distribution of commissioned services within the voluntary sector for long term projects.
- 2.7 For the financial year 2021/22 the assumption is that budgets will remain as per previous years at a former District and Borough level but managed collectively as North Northamptonshire Council. However, going forward to 2022/23 the budgets will be consolidated.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Executive:
- a) Approves the Community Funding Policy – Grants up to £25,000 to support community activities.
 - b) Delegates authority to the Executive Member for Housing and Communities, in consultation with the Assistant Director, Housing & Communities, to take any further decisions and/or actions required to implement this policy.

Reasons for Recommendation

- Approval will provide a consistent approach for the distribution of funding to support community activities.
- The Policy will resource external bodies to assist in the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives and priorities.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 Prior to the formation of North Northamptonshire Council, the previous district and boroughs had their own approach to small grant funding, which offered a financial contribution to projects that were of benefit to community organisations and groups their area.
- 4.2 Community Funds have in the past contributed to the delivery of Council's objectives by involving community representatives in identifying local needs.

4.3 Grants have previously enabled organisations to deliver successful initiatives involving sport, health, reducing poverty and have helped to carry out environmental improvements around the previous districts and boroughs.

5. Issues and Choices

5.1 Without a Community Funding Policy, there is a risk that funding could be allocated ad hoc and without appropriate management and monitoring. With the introduction of this policy, allows for a consistent structured approach to grant giving across North Northamptonshire.

5.2 A consolidated Policy to provide grants of up to £25,000 to continue supporting local needs on an annual basis is proposed.

5.3 The aim of the Council's new Grant Scheme is to support voluntary and community groups in carrying out activities that enhance the quality of life for local residents and increase their involvement within the community.

5.4 The predecessor authorities previously provided small grants as follows:

Previous Authority	Grant Name	Individual Grant Amount (£)	Budget (£)	Application Window
Corby	Small	500	10,000	Nov & Feb
	Health & Wellbeing	2,000		Scheme Completed
	Arts	750		Scheme Completed
East Northamptonshire	Member Empowerment Fund	3,000	40,000	Open 12 months Financial Year
Kettering	Individual Small	50	20,000	Open 12 months Financial Year
	Small	1,000		Open 12 months Financial Year
	Capital Community Fund	500 - 2,500	40,000	1 Apr - 31 May
	Capital Community Hall	500 - 5,000	32,000	1 Apr - 31 May
Wellingborough	Small Community	500	11,000	Open 12 months Financial Year
	Community Capital			Scheme completed
TOTAL			153,000	

5.5 **Appendix B** provides the previous application criteria along with the items that were excluded for funding. These were taken into consideration while drafting the new policy, to ensure a consistent approach for the new authority.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

6.1.1 For the current financial year, the assumed budget available for this small grant funding policy remains the same as set for 2020/21 and as such £195,000 is available for 2021/22 (which includes a carryover of £42,000 from Kettering).

Previous Authority	Grant Name	Budget (£)
Corby	Small	10,000
East Northants	Member Empowerment Fund	40,000
Kettering	Individual Small	20,000
	Small	
	Capital Community Fund	40,000
	Capital Community Hall	32,000
	Carry Over from 2020/21	42,000
Wellingborough	Small Community	11,000
TOTAL		195,000

6.1.2 Small value applications up to £2,500 will be assessed and awarded on a rolling basis throughout the financial year, with applications over £2,500 assessed on a quarterly basis.

6.1.3 For 2021/22 the fund will be managed by those Officers from the former district and boroughs who previously managed their local community fund applications.

6.1.4 However, a new Community Funding Strategic Oversight Board will be formed and will provide updates to the Executive Member for Housing and Communities, Executive, Ward Members and the Corporate Leadership Team.

- The Community Funding Strategic Oversight Board will have representation from across the Council as well as the Children's Trust. Ward members will be consulted with on grant applications within their area.

6.2 Legal

6.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from the proposals.

6.3 Risk

6.3.1 The overall aim of the Community Funding process is:
'To have a consistent, customer focused process with relevant assessment and evaluation procedures with appropriate monitoring systems in place.'

6.3.2 There is the additional risk that the funding would be inconsistent across NNC by Officers continuing to use previous district and borough policies and procedures, which could potentially affect the reputation of the council.

6.3.3 By having this policy in place, it allows funding to be distributed to small local community organisations, without which much of the beneficial work that these groups undertake in their local area would not transpire.

6.4 Consultation

6.4.1 Consultation has been undertaken with some key strategic voluntary sector partners to inform this policy. These partners were chosen as they represent a board range of organisations within the voluntary sector; under-represented groups and vast experience of either applying for funding or as a grant distributor:

- VCSE Assembly
- Northamptonshire Black Communities Together
- Northamptonshire Community Foundation
- Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils (NCALC)

6.4.2 The feedback from these groups centred around making the process for small grants applications as accessible, fair and equitable and as simple as possible, with support and key points of contact available to groups in the Council or in VCSE infrastructure bodies.

6.4.3 Once further work commences on our approach to strategic grant giving and commissioning for voluntary sector funding, further consultation will be undertaken with key stakeholders including Members, local VCSE infrastructure organisations and strategic partners.

6.5 Consideration by Scrutiny

6.5.1 This has not been reviewed by the Scrutiny Commission; therefore no comments or recommendations have been received.

6.5.2 An early draft of the policy was considered by the Executive Advisory Panel for Service Delivery, which was supportive of NNC's commitment to grant giving to the VCSE and wanted to ensure information on groups and organisations applying and receiving grants is shared with Ward Members.

6.6 Climate Impact

6.6.1 The policy seeks to encourage organisations to consider the environmental and climate impact of their projects, in line with the council's priorities in this area.

6.7 Community Impact

6.7.1 Through the grant application process, the Council aim to fund projects that demonstrate that funding will be used to support the council's priorities and in addition to:

- supporting volunteering, community involvement, neighbourhood and community led activities;
- enabling voluntary youth action and the development of services for young people;
- preventing homelessness, improve social mobility and tackle inequality; and promote social inclusion and community resilience.

6.7.2 The objectives of this Community Funding Policy are to ensure that all funding and grants allocated will also:

- target resources to meet identified needs;
- maximise leverage (for example match funding);
- maximise sustainability (economic, environmental and social);
- achieve greater accountability and openness; and
- provide guidance to officers, members and voluntary and community organisations on the Community Funding Policy in relation to community funding and support of local groups.

7. Background Papers

7.1 In preparing this report and the policy, the previous grant policies and/or procedures of the former district and boroughs were reviewed and taken into consideration for the proposals.