

## Policy Committee – 15<sup>th</sup> December 2015

### Member Ward Grants



#### Report of the Chief Executive

Lead Member: Councillor Linda Brockbank, Working with Communities

Ward(s) affected: All

1. **Purpose of Report** – To set out a number of options for delivering a Community Grants Programme across Craven including incorporating Ward Member Grants
2. **Recommendations** – Members are recommended to:
  - 2.1 Approve the establishment of Ward Member Budgets and set aside a budget of £500 per ward member
  - 2.2 Run a pilot scheme to start from the next financial year (2016/17) following Council election in May 2016, combining the small and medium Community Grants with the Ward Member budget process and therefore increase the Ward Member Budget to £1,000 per Ward Member.

#### 3. **Report**

##### **Introduction**

- 3.1 The Council has a long standing commitment to empowering people and organisations to do more to help communities throughout Craven. Community Grant schemes have been established to help local community and voluntary sector organisations to deliver local services in line with the Councils' priorities as set out in its Council Plan. The schemes also support local citizens to become more actively involved in their communities.
- 3.2 For over the past 15 years Craven District Council has helped local people to provide community run events, services and facilities in their towns and villages by providing funding through the small and medium community grants scheme for awards between £100 and £1,000. Members agreed to include budget of £16,000 in the 2014/15 and 2015/16 revenue budget setting process (Minute POL.563).
- 3.3 In addition the Leader of the Council, Cllr Richard Foster gave a commitment to introduce Ward Member budgets, allowing every District Councillor to respond to local needs by recommending the allocation of small amounts of money (an initial

suggestion was made of £500 per ward member) to support projects or activities that benefit the communities they represent.

3.3 Ward Member budgets would:

- Increase levels if community engagement at a very local level
- Allow flexible and timely funding of very small initiatives within communities which provide flexible and immediate solutions
- Help communities help themselves
- Enhance the social, economic or environmental wellbeing of the community

#### 4. Small and Medium Community Grants – current process

- 4.1 All community grant decisions are made by the Community Grants Sub-Committee which meets 4 times a year. Successful applicants are then sent a grant offer letter detailing the amount of funding awarded and terms and conditions of the grant.
- 4.2 The current budget for Small and Medium Grants for 2015/16 is £16,000 and is funded from the Councils Revenue Budget.
- 4.3 Between 2010/11 and 2014/15 a total of 126 Small and Medium Grants were awarded totalling £98,58. A wide variety of community projects have been funded through this grant scheme and the positive impact of the funding can be seen in every ward in Craven. Supported projects include village hall refurbishments, support groups for older people, arts and heritage projects, activities for young people, energy efficiency projects, sports groups and facilities, community festivals and events, playgrounds, community run libraries, and environmental improvements.
- 4.4 On average CDC grant funding made up 5.3%% of the total costs for each project. This means that each £1 of grant funding awarded by Craven District Council was matched by £18.84 of funding from other sources bringing in a total of £1,857,615.73 additional funding to benefit community projects in Craven.
- 4.5 Over the last two financial year (2013/14 and 2014/15) there has been an underspend of the Community Grants budget of approx. £2k per year and so the Community Grants pot could potentially be reduced to deliver a saving.
- 4.6 A copy of the application form, guidance notes and assessment criteria can be found at Appendix A
- 4.7 A copy of a spreadsheet showing the geographical spread of grants is given in Appendix B

#### 5 Ward Member Budget recommended processes

##### 5.1 Application

Application Form - A copy of the draft application form and application criteria can be found at Appendix B. An online version will be made available on the CDC website as well as paper copies that can be downloaded or given out by Members.

Each member is responsible for assessing, agreeing and evaluating each initiative against the criteria given in Appendix B. Each member must satisfy themselves that the use of the funding would not bring the Council into disrepute or result in fraudulent or illegal activity.

## 5.2 Decision Making

5.2.1 Details of the decision making process including authorisation, protecting the interests and reputation of the Council and Monitoring arrangements can be found in Appendix D

5.2.2 Each District Councillor will be provided with forms (a draft copy of the recommendation form can be found at Appendix D) on which to make their recommendations for funding.

5.2.3 In performing this role local Members will be expected to work with a range of partners and stakeholders including parish councils, local community groups, town teams, County Councillors and the Lead Member for Communities in order to draw evidence for the funding decisions they make.

## 6 **Sharing of Budgets**

6.1 Ward budgets can be used to fund joint projects between two or more wards providing each ward has identified the same issue and there are clear benefits for the residents in each ward. Ward Members should liaise with each other in order to discuss possible pooling of resources for their ward and for those activities or projects that benefit more than one ward or neighbourhood.

## 7 **Monitoring of Grants**

7.1 A annual update report covering spending in each ward will be produced, explaining how funds have been allocated. This will be submitted to the Council's Audit and Governance Team. A list of projects/activities/groups receiving funding will also be published on the Council website.

7.2 All projects/groups/activities awarded funding will be sent a monitoring form which must be completed and returned within twelve months of the grant being awarded and a copy will be provided to the relevant ward member.

## 8 **Grant Delivery Options:**

### 8.1 **Run the small and medium Community Grants Scheme and Member Ward Budgets as two separate schemes**

**Advantages**

- More transparency and accountability – not just reliant on Ward Members to make the decision
- Community grants – greater consistency of assessing the applications across the district
- Officers can support groups to develop projects and support capacity building as this is their area of expertise and ensures knowledge is shared across the district

**Disadvantages**

- Running two separate schemes will increase back office costs as officers will have to service two schemes including the Community Grants sub committee
- Could be confusion between the two schemes

**8.2 Combination of Small and Medium Community Grants and Member Ward Budgets****Advantages**

- Will deliver revenue savings as will not have to service a Community Grants sub committee
- Will make the grant process more streamlined and ensure community groups have easy access to potential funding as not tied into committee deadlines
- Will enable Ward Members to respond to local needs and empower members to make responsive local decision - making and ensure the funding goes to those most deserving.
- Will ensure an even distribution of grants across the district

**Disadvantages**

- The responsibility will fall on Members to make funding decisions which is an added responsibility to their duties as a local Councillor.
- Some funding decision made by members may not be supported and they may become more likely to receive allegations or complaints against them of misuse of public money
- Members will be making decisions in isolation

**9 Implications****Financial Implications**

£15k - funded from the Revenue Budget

£15k - funded from the New Homes Bonus. Please note this funding is time limited and will only continue whilst the Council continues to receive New Homes Bonus.

**Legal Implications** – The Council is empowered under the Localism Act 2011 (General Power of Competence) to authorise expenditure benefiting local communities.

12. **Contribution to Corporate Priorities** – This would contribute to Corporate Priority Working with Communities

13. **Risk Management** –

Members may become more likely to receive allegations or complaints against them of misuse of public money. The risk can be mitigated by each member:

- Ensuring the criteria is followed
- Sharing knowledge and information with other members
- Considering the perception some people may have of a decision
- Considering how a decision enhances, not detracts from the Council's reputation.
- Avoiding making funding decision at pre election periods as stated in application process

4.5 **Equality Impact Assessment** -

The Council's Equality Impact Assessment Procedure **has been** followed. An Equality Impact Assessment **has not** been completed on the proposals as completion of **Stage 1- Initial Screening** of the Procedure identified that the proposed policy, strategy, procedure or function **does not have** the potential to cause negative impact or discriminate against different groups in the community based on •age • disability •gender • race/ethnicity • religion or religious belief (faith) •sexual orientation, or • rural isolation,

5. **Consultations with Others** –

Legal Services  
Financial Services

6. **Access to Information : Background Documents** –

Report of North Yorkshire County Council –County Councillor Locality Budgets  
South Norfolk Council – Members Ward Budget application Form

7. **Author of the Report** : Sharon Hudson, Communications and Partnerships Manager, Tel: 01756 706246 Email: shudson@cravenc.gov.uk

Note : Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.

8. **Appendices** –

Appendix A – Current small and medium Community Grants application form and guidance notes

Appendix B – Spreadsheet showing geographical spread of Community Grants awarded throughout the district

Appendix C – Draft application form and process for Ward Member Budget

## Appendix D – Draft Member Recommendation Form and Process