

Area Committee West – 17th March 2010

8. Community Grants Strategy and Forward Plan 2010-2014 (Executive Decision)

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Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to recommend a Community Grants Strategy and Forward Plan (2010-2014) to guide the management of available budgets.

Public Interest

This report gives advice to members on managing offers of financial support to local community organisations through their Community Grants scheme.

Recommendations

To adopt the Community Grants strategy as detailed in this report.

Background

Through their Community Grants scheme Area West Committee has been able to offer financial support to projects and organisations that contribute to the well being of local communities for a number of years.

With each new round of grant applications, it is made clear that the grant is a “one-off” that may not be repeated and should not be taken as an ongoing annual commitment.

However, it is now recognised that the offer of regular financial assistance to eight local organisations has allowed a certain level of dependency to build up.

My report to the Joint Area Committee West on 15th April 2009 explained why it was necessary to put a strategy in place that would ensure local community organisations did not come to rely on an annual grant as a source of sustainable long term core funding and that the organisations had been advised that, in any event, funding support to them would cease in or before April 2014.

Future Grants Strategy

Although these options were considered, it is not proposed that the eight organisations receive no further funding, nor that they continue to be offered funding at current levels for as long as possible, depending on the available budget.

The strategy now proposed aims to reduce financial dependency in a fair and transparent way, allowing time for organisations to develop other funding streams and increase income/reduce costs to enable their continued success.

It is recommended that there is a phased reduction in the grant levels offered to the eight organisations. Whilst the awarding of grants would still be subject to an annual application and approval process the maximum amount available to each organisation would be reduced by 20% each year, using the 2009 awards as a baseline.

The following table shows how this would work based on a 2009 grant award of £5,000 (1) and the maximum amounts to be made available each year (2).

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
	Award (100%)	80%	60%	40%	20%
(1) Grant to Local Organisation (Max)	5,000	4,000	3,000	2,000	1,000
(2) Totals (Max)	46,411	37,129	27,847	18,564	9,282

The organisations to whom this strategy would apply are;

Chard Museum
 Crowshute House
 Chard Young People's Centre
 CRESTA
 Crewkerne Aqua Centre
 Crewkerne Heritage Centre
 West One Youth and Community Centre
 Ile Youth Centre

By following this strategy, it will also be possible to create a budget to fund grant applications from local community organisations for new one off projects, including help with business planning and fund-raising. The amount that can be made available will depend on the level of required contributions to savings, and the success of the above organisations in finding alternative sources of funding or reducing their costs but it is felt that around £5,000 is realistic and achievable in 2010, with more in future years.

New applications for support towards annual running costs will no longer be considered.

Financial Implications

The pressure to reduce all of the Council's budgets is still severe, especially on those that are discretionary like the community grants budget.

So that members, officers and local community organisations can have confidence in their ability to deliver this strategy, especially in the later years it is recommended that the balance of the Area reserve be allocated to underwrite it, pending future budget setting.

Corporate Priority Implications

Managing well delivered efficient services.

Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)

None.

Equality and Diversity Implications

This strategy recommends extended support for organisations that work to promote social cohesion.

Background Papers: *Report to Joint Area Committee - West - 15th April 2009.*